

## SF1247\_Kristi Lentz\_Testimony in Support of Bill

As a resident of Minnesota who is concerned about the preservation of healthy lifeways and foodways in the region, I urge the senate to approve SF1247 to recognize the inherent right of uncultivated wild rice to exist and thrive in Minnesota. Our region has depended on wild rice since time immemorial, and it falls on us to protect its integrity for future generations, as well as in the current moment.

Wild rice is essential to the flourishing of our state's economy, peoples, cultures and ecosystems. Because consumers increasingly demand healthy foods, and wild rice is among the most nutrient-dense grains available, the flourishing existence of wild rice will boost economic sustainability for our region, as well as protect human health and nutrition not only regionally but through the entire continent.

As a personal note, as someone with multiple food intolerances, I deeply value that wild rice can be grown without the use of pesticides, fertilizers, or harmful chemicals. We need to preserve this natural and organic food resource for human health and flourishing.

Wild rice is also cultural staple for Minnesota and the local Indigenous Nations, so its preservation strengthens our regional identities.

Finally, wild rice plays a critical role in local ecosystems by absorbing carbon dioxide and creating a healthy habitat for fish. Can you imagine a Minnesota without a healthy fishing culture?

Preserving the integrity of wild rice thus has economic, health, cultural and ecological benefits for every resident of our region, and it is on all of us as Minnesotans to actively defend its right to exist and to thrive. Thank you for your support of SF1247.

- Kristi Lentz, Resident of Bemidji, MN