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LWV Duluth President Jane Hovland and Environmental Action Chair Lisa Fitzpatrick

The impact of human behavior on our environment has many bellwether indicators. From mammals, to insects, amphibians, fish and vegetation, we know that we have not been good stewards of what our lands supported 100 years ago. Pesticides, wetlands degradation, climate change, industrial pollution, and urbanization have all had impacts on species in our state. I have attached a list of species listed by the MN DNR and/or US government as endangered or threatened in our state. We have not been good stewards of our natural world.

Wild rice is one of those species that is no longer thriving in Minnesota. Besides its spiritual and cultural significance to Native People in our state, it is a unique nutritional source, high in protein. It also serves as a bellwether -- an indicator of environment health (or lack thereof) particularly in wetlands, lakes, and waterways where wild rice grows. Protecting wild rice from pesticide and sulfate pollution would have greater environmental benefits for many other species, including humans.

Sulfate pollution and pesticide use are direct threats to the health of wild rice in our state, acknowledged by Governor Dayton's Task Force on Wild Rice (2018-2019). The report called for coordinated action to protect beds of wild rice and acknowledged the significance of wild rice for Native People.

Six years later we are still trying to protect wild rice from sulfate sources that have continued to degrade wild rice beds in the state. We want to point out one of the key recommendations from the Task Force was establishing a Wild Rice Stewardship Council that included a comprehensive, statewide management program to highlight the protection of wild rice, particularly from pesticide and sulfate pollution. The report highlighted the cultural significance of wild rice: "Both Minnesota Tribes and Northern Minnesota communities are concerned about how choices Minnesota makes regarding wild rice and water quality standards will affect their cultural survival. spiritual, cultural, nutritional, and economic significance of wild rice (manoomin/psin) to tribal communities."

Unfortunately, protection of the state grain of Minnesota has not happened since the 2019 report. Pesticide use as well as mining activities have threatened wild rice. What we have

learned is that people and corporations cannot be relied upon to “do the right thing;” instead, requiring regulation of their activities through a permitting process. LWV Duluth and its Environmental Action Committee support this bill without reservations. It is critical to the preservation of such an important species.

https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/ets/endlist.pdf