

Written Testimony in support of the wild rice act:

My name is Lux Knudsen Cowles, I grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota and I currently live in South Minneapolis. I'm testifying today in support of the Wild Rice Act.

In 2020, while recovering from surgery, a friend gifted me a bag of wild rice with several recipes attached. For the next week I prepared and ate wild rice almost every day as a breakfast porridge and in various soups. Because of this experience I personally relate to wild rice as a nourishing and healing food, and as a gift given in the context of supportive community.

Currently, I am completing a master's degree with a focus on Eco-Justice at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Through the course of my studies I have become convinced that active engagement in mutually responsible relationship with our surrounding ecology and with Indigenous peoples like our Dakota and Anishinaabe neighbors—to whom we are treaty-bound and with whom we are mutually dependent on shared ecological wellbeing—is the most impactful way we can ensure a present and future, sustainable life worth living here in Minnesota. Protecting wild rice protects water quality, which in turn protects human and more-than-human ecological well-being here. Protecting wild rice also upholds treaty reserved rights, both supporting the continuance of Native sacred and cultural relations and ensuring that the State of Minnesota meets its legal commitments.

I believe that the Wild Rice Act is so important because it secures a commitment to uphold treaty agreements with Indigenous peoples, and to safeguard ecological wellbeing into our state laws. I urge you to please pass SF 1247 / HF 2134 the Wild Rice Act to encode responsible relationship into our state laws and protect wild rice for all future Minnesotans. Thank you.

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Lux Knudsen Cowles
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My name is Alison (Doe) Hoyer, and I grew up in Rochester, Minnesota and I currently live in South Minneapolis. I'm testifying today in support of the Wild Rice Act.

When I was seventeen, I was a Rotary Youth Exchange student in Brazil. In preparation for my exchange year, we were instructed to bring something unique from our state as a gift for our host families. I ended up bringing wild rice to share, and it was perhaps the first time I recognized that wild rice is unique to Minnesota, only growing here. This cemented for me the realization that wild rice is *special*. I still bring wild rice as a special gift when traveling elsewhere, and I have since developed a relationship with wild rice through cooking.

In college, I studied linguistics at Macalester and later went on to complete a seminary program at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Something I still think about regularly from my seminary coursework is a short article by the Potawatomi ethnobotanist Robin Wall Kimmerer. In the article, she points out that the English language uses “it” to refer to the natural world, rendering a species like wild rice as inanimate in our grammar. But, she points out, the natural world *is* alive. As a linguist, I share this to point out that the English language we speak conditions us to think about wild rice as an inanimate object, as an “it.” But our Anishinaabe and Dakota relatives recognize wild rice as kin, as a valued and sacred species with inherent rights to exist and thrive.

I believe that the Wild Rice Act is so important because it helps all of us to recognize wild rice as special, as alive, as sacred, and as inherently worthy of existing. I urge you to please pass SF 1247 / HF 2134 the Wild Rice Act to secure this knowledge in our state laws and protect wild rice for all future Minnesotans. Thank you.

Greetings, legislators and members of the House and Senate environmental committees.

My name is Lynn Sue Mizner. I am a retired scientist with 30 years of experience in aquatic biology, fisheries management, environmental science and forestry, including work with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Minnesota DNR. I currently operate a diversified farm in northern Aitkin County and am a township supervisor.

I am concerned about the ways that counties and lakeshore property owners are using pesticides in shoreland areas, and in water bodies themselves, to control unwanted vegetation and invertebrates. I have been aware for some time that these herbicides, insecticides and molluscicides are being used in ways that may threaten the survival of native species, including Manoomin -- native wild rice or *Zizania palustris*. I learned a couple of years ago that counties are using herbicides to spray gravel pits and roadsides. At that time I became concerned, because in the watery environment of northern Minnesota, rainfall is very likely to carry those chemicals into ditches and then into rivers, streams and lakes. Even though herbicides are commonly thought to degrade in sunlight, label warnings show that in cold, dark waters such as we have in northern Minnesota they may have a half-life measured in years rather than in days. That means they could inadvertently affect native vegetation in lakes and flowages, specifically wild rice.

Invasive aquatic species such as Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) are being discovered in Minnesota lakes and are often treated with herbicide or by mowing/harvesting. These activities are very disruptive to native plants, including wild rice, and to their habitat. Mapping native wild rice beds is an important first step in protecting this

important and globally rare natural resource for future generations. I encourage you to support legislation that will protect and map Manoomin in Minnesota.

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My name is Richard Ricketts, and I am writing to you from a farm in northern Aitkin County in support of SF 1247 and HF 2134. I would appreciate your consideration of the following points as you deliberate this piece of legislation.

Firstly, I believe it is imperative that the United States of America uphold its obligations and promises made. The 1854 Treaty with the Chippewa, specifically Article 11, guarantees tribal hunting and fishing rights within the ceded territory. While the treaty explicitly mentions "hunting and fishing," established legal precedent, as affirmed by the Supreme Court, demands a broader interpretation. The canons of treaty construction, which include interpreting treaties as tribes understood them, resolving ambiguities in their favor, and construing them liberally, necessitate that these rights encompass all activities integral to tribal life at that time. Given the historically documented and culturally vital role of wild rice in the sustenance and traditions of Minnesota's Chippewa tribes, it is indisputable that gathering wild rice falls squarely within the scope of these treaty rights. (See: *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians*, 526 U.S. 172 (1999) and *State v. Clark* 282 N.W.2d 902 (1979) for US and Minnesota State Supreme Court affirmation of these canons.)

Secondly, beyond treaty obligations, the protection of wild rice is critical due to its role as a keystone species in Minnesota's aquatic ecosystems. Wild rice is acutely vulnerable to environmental stressors. Research consistently demonstrates the detrimental effects of warmer water temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events on wild rice growth and reproduction. This legislation would help to establish practices that would not further harm this species in its presently vulnerable state. Boat wakes, water level variations, and invasive species, whose proliferation is accelerated by diminished ice cover, pose a significant threat to wild rice, particularly during its vulnerable 'floating-leaf' stage. As a keystone species, wild rice plays a disproportionately large role in maintaining the structure and function of its ecosystem. Its presence supports a complex web of life, providing habitat and food for waterfowl, fish, and other aquatic organisms. Loss of wild rice can trigger cascading effects, destabilizing entire wetland ecosystems (See: University of Minnesota, Ecological Importance of Northern Wild Rice, 2020).

While some may raise concerns about regulatory burdens, the proposed structure does allow for mechanisms to find exceptions, ensuring flexibility and addressing specific circumstances. Importantly, these mechanisms now include the tribes in decision-making processes, aligning with the treaty signed and acknowledging their inherent sovereignty and expertise in managing these ecosystems. This inclusion is particularly crucial when considering actions to prevent the encroachment of invasive species that may harm the ecosystem,

including wild rice. There is an alignment of incentives to find the optimal tradeoff between invasive species management and maintaining the integrity of the wild rice ecosystem, as both the state and the tribes share the goal of long-term sustainability.

Finally, let us consider the economic implications. Minnesota's tourism sector, a significant contributor to our state's economy, is inextricably linked to the health of our aquatic ecosystems. Protection of this keystone species ensures the health of the entire ecosystem it supports. Degraded water quality and diminished wildlife populations, consequences of environmental neglect, directly impact recreational activities such as fishing, boating, and birdwatching, resulting in substantial economic losses. It is important to note that the tourism sector offers many more opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurship, contrasting sharply with the capital-intensive nature of possibly regulated industries like large-scale agriculture and mining.

While certain industries or agricultural practices may present arguments against this legislation showing an economic impact, focusing on short-term economic gains tied to commodity futures or finitely exploitable resources ignores the fundamental principle of long-term economic sustainability. Investing in the protection of our natural resources, like wild rice and the ecosystem it supports, provides the foundation for a more stable and resilient economy, less vulnerable to market fluctuations and resource depletion. This proactive approach ensures that future generations can benefit from both our natural heritage and a prosperous economic landscape.

In conclusion, supporting SF 1247 and HF 2134 is not a matter of choosing between environmental protection and economic development. It is a matter of fulfilling promises and obligations (a core American value that should not be compromised), safeguarding a vulnerable ecosystem, and ensuring the long-term economic resilience of Minnesota.

Please support the Wild Rice Act (SF 1247, HF 2134). Wild rice, known as manoomin (Anishinaabe) and psin (Dakota), is a keystone species of Minnesota's ecosystems, economy, and cultural traditions.

Wild rice provides critical habitat and food for wildlife, including waterfowl, fish, and aquatic insects and plays a crucial role in maintaining the health and balance of our lakes, rivers, and wetlands. Natural stands of wild rice stabilize shorelines, reduce erosion, and improve water quality by filtering excess nutrients from the water. The protection of wild rice is vital to safeguarding Minnesota's diverse aquatic ecosystems.

Minnesota is the nation's leading producer of wild rice. Traditional wild rice harvests support hundreds of jobs in rural communities, and wild Rice habitats benefit waterfowl hunters, who contribute approximately \$43 million annually to Minnesota's economy.

For many Indigenous communities in Minnesota, wild rice is more than a food source--it is deeply embedded in their identity. Since time immemorial wild rice harvests have been an honored tradition and a sacred practice, connecting people to the land, water, and ancestors.

Protecting wild rice honors the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples here in Minnesota and upholds our fiduciary responsibility.

As a volunteer water monitor (with the MPCA and non-profits) I witness our healthy wild rice waters, as well as waters that once supported wild rice. With 60% of Minnesota's waters impaired, it is imperative that we protect what remains. The Wild Rice Act (SF 1247, HF 2134), recognizing the inherent right of our state grain to thrive in Minnesota, is an important step in the right direction.

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Aaniin/Boozhoo

My name is Ogemaamiigiz Ikwe (Audrey Thayer) My grandmother, my mother, my relatives have all riced in our beautiful Minnesota lakes and rivers. I believe, as far back as the 1930s, the health of wild rice beds has been a serious concern of the damage to our rice, the cleanliness of the water. It is the lifeblood of the Anishinaabe people. The wild rice is of the people. It defines who we are as Anishinaabe people as far as I can remember, and history brings us to the seven generations past and now future generations relying on the rice.

In 1939 Minnesota passed a law outlawing mechanized harvest and limiting how and when wild rice could be harvested. This was important not to destroy the rice beds.

Minnesota has enacted other protective policies, including limiting the number of hours in the day during which it is permissible to rice and limiting the length of the canoe used for ricing. In the 1990s, wild rice was identified as an endangered food.

The plant is sensitive to water levels altered by dams as well as road construction, pollution, poor harvesting practices, invasive species, genetic engineering (genetic contamination of the wild rice from the paddies), and climate change. I am asking for the passage for the safety of our wild rice for all peoples.

Miigwech!

Audrey M. Thayer
Enrolled member of the White Earth Nation located in northern Minnesota/
Presenting for myself but I am faculty/Department Chair Arts and Humanities/Bemidji City
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Written Testimony in Support of Wild Rice ACT (Rights of Manoomin Recognized). My Ojibwe Name is Gwiiwizens aka Ricky W. DeFoe , I'm from the Bizhiw Clan aka Lynx and I'm a Band Member of Nagaajiwanaang aka Fond du Lac Reservation. 704 Ishpeming Road Cloquet Mn 55720. This testimony is directed to all members of the Minnesota Legislature. I would like to share my connections with Minnesota waters. Intergenerational knowledge includes the Creation Story, Prophecies, and Migration Stories. Anishinaabe culture and language connected to sacred water and the good berry, also known as Manoomin or Wild Rice. We cherish those Oral Traditions! Our families have harvested Manoomin for as long as I can remember and I'm 65 years of age. We listened to the beautiful stories of gathering and harvesting Manoomin amongst other families. It is a joyous moment, filled with hard work and abundance. In balance and harmony with the Natural World. We look forward to those days to continue for our great -grandchildren! We need your help. I want to clearly express my support for SF 1247 and HF 2134. I strongly urge you all to pass these bills this session to ensure strong protections for our waters. Federal efforts to roll back environmental progress contributes to the "Ethos" of death and violence to the natural world. Therefore it's incumbent on the State of Minnesota to lead and promote an "Ethos" of life. Let's do our collective part and take action now! Thank you sincerely, Gwiiwizens aka Ricky W. DeFoe

Hello my name is Charlotte Loonsfoot and I am from L'Anse Michigan. I am a tribal member of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and I'm asking the Minnesota legislation to support the S.F. 1247 and HF 2134.

The reason I am asking is because in our long history here in Michigan the first place our ancestors found the food that grows on water was found on Manitou Island Mi., on our ancestors migration from the east coast which was told to them in a dream/vision. Head west till you find the food that grows on the water.

All the pollution from heavy industries and a growing population has depleted our wild rice and our tribal Natural Resources department has transported Minnesota wild rice to our lakes and rivers to establish rice beds to enrich our culture and native foods for the health of our people. Replanting has been happening for many years here. We have some but the efforts are still ongoing.

All around Lake Superior our people live and we as a nation ask and pray for your support in making sure our wild rice is healthy and strong with clean waters so we can show our children how to gather and they can pass it on to their children and so on.

Chimiigwech, big thank you
