

ORGANIZATIONAL SIGN-ON LETTER SUPPORTING WILD RICE ACT
UPDATED AS OF MARCH 28TH, 2025

Minnesota State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

To the Honorable Members of the Minnesota Legislature,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our strong support for S.F. 1247 and H.F. 2134, the Wild Rice Act, *Psiŋ Kin Yanka* (Dakota), *Ganawendan Manoomin* (Ojibwe). Wild rice is central to Minnesota's economy, cultural traditions, and biodiversity. Tribal nations within the state of Minnesota agree that now is the time to stand together to protect wild rice and fresh water.

Uncultivated Wild Rice Is a Crucial Minnesota Economic Driver. According to Earth Economics report *The Food That Grows on Water*, “the annual wild rice harvest results in \$12.5 million in expenditures, and the sale of hand-harvested *manoomin* supports more than \$19.2 million in annual income for tribal harvesters. The annual spending associated with *manoomin* harvesting (gas, equipment, supplies) supports about 153 local jobs, and the annual income generated by the sale of *manoomin* supports an additional 125 jobs.” This year, the impacts of mass precipitation events on wild rice across our state were devastating; many ricing areas were washed out due to intense rainfall in the spring. We must work together to ensure this sacred plant remains as an economic staple within our state.

Uncultivated wild rice is a keystone species. What happens to this plant reverberates through the web of life. According to the MNDNR's report on Natural Wild Rice, “No other native Minnesota plant approaches the level of cultural, ecological, and economic values embodied by this species. More than 17 species of wildlife listed in the MNDNR's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as ‘species of greatest conservation need’ use wild rice lakes as habitat for reproduction or foraging.” Wild rice produces oxygen that fish need to survive, filters out the nutrients that fuel midsummer algae blooms and fish kills, and provides food, shelter, and nesting areas for fish, invertebrates, and wildlife. Protecting wild rice protects biodiversity within our state.

Wild rice is protected by treaties. To acquire part of the land that is now Minnesota, the United States in 1837 made a treaty promise that Ojibwe tribes could to exercise “the privilege of hunting, fishing, and gathering the wild rice” within the ceded territory. Under the U.S. Constitution, this 1837 Treaty is the “supreme law of the land” and must be respected by states. This legislation would ensure that Minnesota protects wild rice and freshwater for all to enjoy for generations to come.

Wild rice (*manoomin* in Ojibwe and *psiy* in Dakota) is sacred. It is central to Ojibwe and Dakota culture, traditions, and ceremonies. Over a thousand years ago, the third of seven prophets instructed the Anishinaabeg to journey west from near the Atlantic coast, where they would find "the food that grows on the water," and on faith, they walked to the land of 10,000 lakes and surrounding regions. *Manoomin* symbolizes their ancestors' journey, their relationship to the land, and their philosophy of caring for both water and wild rice. *Psiy* was once central to Dakota culture and traditions as well. Wild rice was once abundant throughout Minnesota, but due to human activities it is no longer found in abundance in the southern part of the state. This decline in wild rice has led to a loss of cultural traditions for our Dakota relatives. If humans are the cause of this problem, then we also have the power to be the solution. This plant thrives in Minnesota's pristine freshwater systems, which are home to the largest wild rice population in the United States. But wild rice is facing mounting threats from invasive species, climate change, water pollution, and development that endangers its survival. Together, we can address the damage we've caused to our waters and restore wild rice to the regions where it has traditionally flourished.

The cultural, economic, and ecological importance of wild rice is irreplaceable. It must be safeguarded, ensuring that both current and future generations can continue to benefit from this sacred plant and the clean waters it thrives in. We, the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to support this crucial legislation and work towards its passage with bipartisan unity. By doing so, we protect a legacy that nourishes both people and the land.

Miigwech / Pilámaya / Thank you

The undersigned organizations and their authorized representatives hereby express their full support for this movement:

Julia Nerbonne | Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light

Jessica Intermill | Intermill Consulting

Kate Winsor | Northeast Metro Climate Action

Dawn Goodwin | R.I.S.E Coalition

Maggie Schupert | CURE

Matt Norton | Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness

Paula Macabee | Water Legacy

Wallace Wadd | East Metro EcoFaith Collaborative

Sherri Knuth | Act For the Earth Team at Unity Unitarian Church

Andy Pearson | Three Waters Pipeline Resistance Team

Avonna Stark | Clean Water Action

Pouya Najmaie | Cooperative Energy Futures

Jean Ross | Vote Climate

Mary Keepers | Creekside United Church of Christ

Tom Grotewohl | Protect the Porkies

John Stoez | Repair Communities for Makoce Ikikcupi

Theresa Keaven | Climate Land Leaders

Tracy Molm and Whitney Wildman | Climate Justice Committee

Tish O'Dell | Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund

Robert Blake | Native Sun Committee Power Development

Rhonda Conn | Synergy Development Solutions

Ernest Oppegaard-Peltier III | Mukwa

Sarah LittleRedfeather | Giiwedining Treaty Rights and Museum

Terri Burner | Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance

Dr. Ry O Siggelkow | Leadership Center for Social Justice at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

Tom Uecker | NE MN ELCA Eco Faith

Emily Levang and Gwiiwizens: Ricky Defoe | Wankam: People for the Estuary

Peggy White | NEMN Synod of the ELCA EcoFaith Leadership Team

Tammy Walhof & Jacob Summerville | Lutheran Advocacy-MN

Bruce Garbisch | NE MN SNOD ELCA ECOFAITH NETWORK

Dr. Diane Jacobson | St. Paul Area Synod Care of Creation Team

Laura Scholl | Metro Blooms

Megan Bond | MN DFL Environmental Caucus

Melissa Baker Roach | Iron Ranger Partnership for Sustainability

Sue Lyback | North East Minnesota Synod Eco Faith Team

DeeDee Edlund | Edina Community Lutheran Church Eco Faith Team

Marylinn Torkelson | Wild Ones Prairie Edge Chapter

Michael Chameides | Rural Democracy Initiative

Tee McClenty | MN350 Action

Jessica Engelking | Great Plains Action Society

Nancy Carpenter | Beyond Land Acknowledgement/First UCC Northfield MN

Helen M. Pohlig | Indigenous Justice Community Outreach Ministry Team of Unity Church Unitarian

Rachel Holmes | Mills Church

Reverend David Carlson | Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Beth Tamminen | Climate Action Team, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth

Kelley Skumautz | Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate