



My name is Courtney Iverson, and I am the President of Morels & Memories, a local non-profit dedicated to supporting research for a cure for Alzheimer's Disease, advancing nature-based education, and scientific research regarding nature and health. I am a member of the MMS and MN Foraging Alliance. I am writing today in support of H.F. 819/SF 1464.

Foraging is a practice as old as humans that has proven nutritional, physical, and mental health benefits. With 78% of the 5.7 million people of the population in MN living in urban areas, 1 in 5 households dealing with food scarcity issues, 2/3rds of our population being overweight or obese, and over 37% of our population living with anxiety or depression, it becomes more and more critical for state lands in MN to be accessed for foraging purposes. Foraging is truly a public health solution, as it is a physical activity that gives access to healthy, organic foods at little to no cost, while simultaneously immersing in a natural environment, which research has proven to benefit mental health.

With access comes responsibility and the need for education, but also the need for rules that are realistic to follow, manage, and are beneficial and reciprocal to the environment. We are asking for a seat at the table when the DNR establishes rules so they be established with consideration to traditions and science.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

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