

Information Sources Used to Develop the Draft List of MPCA Wild Rice Waters

During the 2011 Legislative Special Session, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring the MPCA to designate which surface waters of the state are considered wild rice waters “to which the wild rice water quality standards apply”. To comply with this Session law requirement, MPCA staff has compiled a draft list of wild rice waters where the numeric and narrative water quality standards will apply. These wild rice waters will either be specifically listed in classifications section of Minnesota Rules Chapter 7050 (Minn. R. 7050.0470) or the list of wild rice waters will be incorporated by reference directly into the rule. The waters specifically listed in the classifications section will be identified as wild rice waters by the symbol [WR] preceding the name of the water body.

The MPCA draft list of wild rice waters was developed from various wild rice water inventories, biological monitoring and survey databases, and a formal call-for-data solicitation asking other state and federal agencies as well as the general public to identify additional wild rice waters to supplement previously identified listings. Generally, the wild rice information from these resources was originally gathered to serve a specific program interest and was not necessarily intended for regulatory use. As such, MPCA placed certain restrictions on, and made certain assumptions regarding, these data when it developed its draft list of MPCA wild rice waters.

In 2008 the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) submitted a report to the Minnesota Legislature which required the Commissioner of the MDNR to prepare a study for natural wild rice that included an effort to consolidate and update existing natural wild rice information and produce an inventory of those waters (*Natural Wild Rice in Minnesota – A Wild Rice Study document submitted to the Minnesota Legislature by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, February 15, 2008*). Appendix B of the 2008 MDNR report is the list of wild rice waters developed through input received from a Technical Team comprised of state, federal, and tribal representatives. Even though this wild rice inventory is considered the most comprehensive list available, it does under-represent rivers, streams, and ditches with wild rice and a large number of listed waters do not contain wild rice acreage estimates.

Short descriptions of the wild rice information resources used by MPCA in formulating its list of water where the wild rice water quality standards will be applicable are listed below:

1. **(MDNR 2008)** This is a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) wild rice report titled *Natural Wild Rice in Minnesota – A Wild Rice Study document submitted to the Minnesota Legislature by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, February 15, 2008*. Appendix B of this report contains an inventory of 1286 wild rice water body locations, approximately 60% of which have estimated wild rice cover acreages. Waters listed in this report with wild rice acreage estimates greater than 2 acres are included on the MPCA wild rice water list. In addition, waters with either no reported acreage estimates or those with a one-acre entry were included on the list if additional wild rice information was available from one of the other resource references that follow.
2. **(MDNR 2007)** This is a MDNR report tabulating the results of a wild rice harvester survey conducted in 2006 that includes wild rice waters that were harvested.
3. **(MDNR 2010)** This is a list, compiled by the Minnesota Interagency Wild Rice Management Workgroup, which was convened as a result of a recommendation contained in the 2008 wild rice report to the Legislature. This list contains 350 significant wild rice resources throughout the state, most of which were listed in the MDNR 2008 report.
4. **(MCBS 2011)** The MDNR’s Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) program maintains a database of surveyed sites with references to plant species observed during the surveys. The narrative descriptions contained in the database for wild rice waters was reviewed for information relating to references to the amount of wild rice observed at a particular water body. Waterbodies with descriptors such as “thick wild rice present” or “emergent aquatic plant community dominated by wild rice” were added to the MPCA draft list of wild rice waters.

5. **(MDNR 2013)** During the spring of 2013 the MPCA put out a “Call for Data” for locational information on wild rice stands and sulfate analytical results. Waters from this list that have estimated wild rice acreage of greater than one acre are included in the MPCA draft wild rice list.
6. **(MDNR APM)** MDNR has an Aquatic Plant Management (APM) permitting program that permits the limited removal of wild rice from waters of the state (primarily to allow for boat access from shore to open water). This program also issues permits for individuals and organizations who are attempting to restore or introduce wild rice in a given water body. The APM database contains multi-year wild rice permit information regarding permits for the removal of wild rice or restoration permits for seeding wild rice.
7. **(MPCA 2014)** The MPCA Biomonitoring field sample site database was queried for wild rice records covering the period from 1999 to 2014.
8. **(1854 List)** The 1854 Treaty Authority is an Inter-Tribal Natural Resource Management Organization that manages the off-reservation hunting, fishing and gathering rights of the Grand Portage and Bois Forte Bands of the Lake Superior Chippewa in the territory ceded under the Treaty of 1854 (<http://www.1854treatyauthority.org/>). This organization conducts surveys on lakes and rivers within the ceded territory and maintains a list of wild rice waters. Water bodies from the 1854 list of wild rice waters are included in the draft MPCA wild rice list.
9. **(7050.0470)** This source reference refers to the part of Minnesota Rules Chapter 7050 which contains the list of wild rice waters specifically listed in the rule in the Lake Superior watershed. These wild rice waters were first included in the rule in 1998.
10. **(UofM/MPCA 2013)** In the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013 the MPCA had contracted with the University of Minnesota, LacCore / Limnological Research Center to conduct field surveys of water bodies across the state measuring a suite of water column and sediment pore water, and sediment samples in connection with wild rice /sulfate studies. Part of the surveys included estimated plant coverage at the sampling sites.
11. **(Permittee Monitoring)** Certain permittees, (to date, primarily mining companies), have conducted multi-year field surveys of selected waters in northeast Minnesota collecting water quality and wild rice data. The results of these studies are contained in a number of reports and summarized in an ArcMap GIS layer, both of which were used in the development of the MPCA draft wild rice listing.