

## **Appendix N: Letter from the Steering Committee for the collaborative Health Impact Assessment: *Effects of Wild Rice Water Quality Rule Changes on Tribal Health***

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*The text of a letter submitted by the members of the Steering Committee for the collaborative Health Impact Assessment: “Effects of Wild Rice Water Quality Rule Changes on Tribal Health” is included below. This letter was submitted via email to LCCMR Director, Becca Nash, on October 19, 2019.*

October 19, 2019

Becca Nash  
Director  
Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources  
65 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155  
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Dear Director Nash,

As members of the Steering Committee for the collaborative Health Impact Assessment: *Effects of Wild Rice Water Quality Rule Changes on Tribal Health published in October of 2018<sup>i</sup>*, we are writing to provide input to the LCCMR’s important current strategic planning effort and to encourage a more robust focus on manoomin/wild rice therein. We note that the current draft LCCMR Strategic Plan is not sufficient in its scope or detail regarding the pressing need for state funding in support of wild rice related projects and programming.

Our Steering Committee membership included stakeholders and subject matter experts relating to water quality, ecosystem health, treaty-protected natural resources and tribal community health. As the LCCMR sets its funding priorities for the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund for the next six years, we strongly endorse an explicit and intensified focus on manoomin (wild rice) preservation, promotion and research. Manoomin is a treasured state resource for humans and wildlife. It is threatened and because of this, it demands our immediate prioritization and dedicated funding support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF).

Over the past few years, several Task Forces have met and reached the same conclusions. The 2018 Tribal Wild Rice Task Force Report<sup>ii</sup> included the following recommendations:

- Adopt a more comprehensive wild rice monitoring, assessment, and mapping strategy
- Establish long-term funding... to prioritize wild rice protection, management, and restoration
- Preserve and protect manoomin/wild rice for future generations

Governor Dayton’s 2019 Task Force on Wild Rice Final Report<sup>iii</sup> included a major recommendation to “invest in wild rice” and a recognition that the following are necessary:

- Comprehensive, state-wide wild rice management plan
- Additional research on wild rice
- A statewide education and promotion outreach campaign to raise awareness about the ecological, nutritional, and cultural value of wild rice

The Governor’s Task Force Report explicitly references the role that the LCCMR may play in achieving these objectives, stating, “Encourage the use of funding sources such the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)...for wild rice protection, management, research, and restoration activities through priority setting in the grant making process, and guidance to entities seeking funding for wild rice protection and restoration efforts” (page 24).

In our own document, *Expanding the Narrative of Tribal Health: The Effects of Wild Rice Water Quality Rule Changes on Tribal Health: Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Health Impact Assessment* (2018), the Executive Summary includes the following key recommendations:

- increase food security and food sovereignty in tribal communities through treaty harvest of manoomin and supporting the healthy ecosystems it depends upon
- elevate public awareness about the ecological, nutritional and cultural values of manoomin
- promote a comprehensive and protective regulatory framework for wild rice waters that involves both the MPCA and MNDNR
- implement a concerted effort to inventory all wild rice waters in Minnesota; implementing a coordinated and standardized monitoring and assessment program for wild rice waters across the state and engaging citizen scientists/volunteer monitors to help accomplish that
- continue research into climate change impacts and manoomin ecology, as well as additional health and nutrition studies

We strongly support the elevation of manoomin as a statewide priority in the LCCMR's Strategic Plan. The July 11, 2019 draft of the LCCMR Strategic Plan provides minimal guidance or emphasis on manoomin conservation, preservation, promotion or research. It merely mentions the need to "increase awareness and protection of lakes containing measurable stands of wild rice" (p. 8) with a similar statement on page 29. It is *time to act* on the recommendations of these expert committees and task forces and help make the recommendations a reality in Minnesota.

The current draft plan lacks specific emphasis on funding wild rice education, promotion, research and conservation--activities that are urgently needed for our state grain. We encourage you and your colleagues to enhance significantly the language of the current LCCMR Strategic Plan for 2019-2025 to direct the LCCMR to explicitly emphasize and fund programs, projects and proposals that involve manoomin/wild rice in Minnesota. Furthermore, we would be pleased to provide sample language to assist in the planning process at your request.

Respectfully submitted,

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<sup>i</sup> *Expanding the Narrative of Tribal Health: The Effects of Wild Rice Water Quality Rule Changes on Tribal Health. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Health Impact Assessment*, 2018.

Available at <http://www.fdlrez.com/RM/downloads/WQSHIA.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> *2018 Tribal Wild Rice Tribal Task Force Report*, available at <http://mnchippewatribe.org/pdf/TWRTF.Report.2018.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> *Governor's Task Force on Wild Rice*, January 3, 2019, available at

<https://www.egb.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL%20Governor%27s%20Task%20Force%20on%20Wild%20Rice%20Report%20January%203%202019%20v2.pdf>