



Policy Position - MPCA Sulfate Wild Rice Standard

Background

- The Minnesota water sulfate standard is intended to protect wild rice.
- The current standard, adopted 38 years ago by administrative rule, requires review in light of today's science.
- The current Minnesota standard is based on relatively limited observational information gathered in 1940's and has never been reviewed for its basis in modern science.
- Until last year the standard has never been applied in a permit. It was addressed in a 1975 power plant permit, but the permit did not impose the standard.
- The water bodies to which the standard would apply have never been defined or designated.

Issue

- The current standard and its late and inconsistent application has become an issue for municipal wastewater facilities, industrial plants, and mining companies seeking to expand and develop new mines.
- There are 230 industrial and 385 municipal plants with wastewater treatment facilities that may be impacted by enforcement of the outdated rule.
- Keetac's new permit is the first in recent times to include the standard.
- The standard has also been discussed in PolyMet's EIS.

Position

MiningMinnesota and all its member companies recognize the importance of wild rice to Minnesota's culture and economy. We further recognize:

- that manoomin (wild rice) is protected by treaty and its protection is of primary concern to sovereign American Indian Nations.
- that manoomin has historical, cultural and spiritual importance to sovereign American Indian Nations.

MiningMinnesota supports protecting wild rice through the application of modern water quality standards based on current science.

MiningMinnesota supports Governor Dayton's proposal for a state-funded \$1.5 million scientific research study to determine the appropriate standard to protect wild rice. The mining industry and member companies are committed to working with tribal members, regulators, researchers, and all other interested parties to develop a thorough, scientifically-based plan for research.

MiningMinnesota supports the position that treatment technologies, if needed, should be required after a new sulfate standard is developed through modern scientific research and appropriate public consultation. Capital costs for treatment facilities, while not insignificant, should be applied where the most positive effect on water quality of appropriately designated waters can be realized.

MiningMinnesota strongly encourages the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to move forward quickly on both the proposed scientific study and any future rulemaking – without requiring costly and possibly unnecessary treatment technologies before a new standard and rules are adopted.

May 2011