


DEPARTMENT: POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office Memorandum

DATE: November 16, 2012

TO: MPCA Citizens' Board

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SUBJECT: Update on Wild Rice and Sulfate Water Quality Standard Research

The current 10 mg/L sulfate standard was adopted into Minnesota's water quality standards in 1973 to protect "water used for production of wild rice during periods when the rice may be susceptible to damage by high sulfate levels" (Minn. R. 7050.0224, subp. 2). In recent years, the standard has come under increased questioning and contention. The MPCA is striving to clarify current and future implementation of the wild rice sulfate standard.

In late 2010, based on a review of available studies and information, MPCA staff found that additional wild rice plant toxicity studies were needed to further evaluate the effects of sulfate and other variables on wild rice, across the full life cycle of the plant, before a revision to the numeric standard could be considered. The Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$1.5 million to the MPCA in the 2011 Special Session for a wild rice standards study to gather additional information about the effects of sulfate and other substances on the growth of wild rice.

The MPCA was also directed to create an advisory group to provide input to the commissioner on a protocol for scientific research, to review research results, and to advise the agency on rulemaking. The legislation further directed the MPCA to initiate rulemaking upon completion of the study, to amend Minnesota Rules to address water quality standards for natural beds of wild rice, designate waters to which the wild rice standard(s) applies, and designate the specific times of year during which the standard(s) applies.

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the Board on 1) progress of the standard study/research, and 2) ongoing activities to clarify the current standard. MPCA staff will present a brief update of the study approach and timeline (attached), and of related efforts to clarify the definition of "water used for production of wild rice."

Wild Rice Standards Study Plan (2012-2013)

Revised 9/20/12

