

**Wild Rice Standards Study Advisory Group  
4/10/12**

**Purpose (from legislation):**

"...provide input to the commissioner on a protocol for scientific research to assess the impacts of sulfates and other substances on the growth of wild rice, review research results, and provide other advice on the development of future rule amendments to protect wild rice."

**Members (from legislation):**

"The group must include representatives of tribal governments, municipal wastewater treatment facilities, industrial dischargers, wild rice harvesters, wild rice research experts, and citizen organizations."

**Principles/goals:**

- Transparency of the process
- Inclusive approach
- Common understanding of the study purpose and progress
- Input from varied interests and expertise
- Learn from related research efforts

**Approach**

There are three "phases" of the project for which advisory group input is needed, and directed by the legislation:

1. Scientific protocol development,
2. Research review, and
3. Future rule amendments.

The following paragraphs outline the advisory group plan/approach for the three phases of this project.

Scientific Protocol Development

This phase began last December with initial conversations between the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and U.S. EPA Region 5 staff. As the protocol was being developed, significant input was solicited and received from the groups identified by the legislation, including:

- **March 7, 2011, MPCA Tribal Consultation on Sulfate and Wild Rice.** Discussion of definition of "water used for production of wild rice" and wild rice and sulfate study protocol.
- **March 10 and 30, 2011, MPCA meetings with Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.** Discussion of wild rice and sulfate study protocol.
- **March 17, 2011, MPCA meeting with Minnesota Environmental Partnership.** Discussion of wild rice and sulfate study protocol; also some discussion of definition of "water used for production of wild rice."
- **April 7, 2011, MPCA meeting with Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council.** Discussion of wild rice and sulfate study protocol.
- **May 9, 2011, Wild Rice and Sulfate Technical Meeting.** Discussion of detail of the protocol, including study objectives and research designs.
- Multiple e-mails and phone calls with interested parties to provide updates on protocol development progress, solicit feedback on specific questions, and explore research design options.

The final draft protocol was shared with scientific experts and interested parties in early June, 2011. Comments were due by June 24, 2011; that deadline was extended to June 30, 2011. A total of 21 comments were received. The final draft protocol was also shared with the Wild Rice Standards Study Advisory Committee in October 2011. After reviewing comments by the advisory committee, the MPCA finalized the protocol in November 2011.

#### Research Review

To establish the advisory group to review research results and meet the objectives principles/goals identified above, MPCA anticipates the following process:

1. MPCA will invite interested parties to express interest in participating on the advisory group.
2. If interest is not received from representatives of any of the groups specifically identified in the legislation, MPCA will solicit participation from individuals representing those groups.
3. The intent is to include anyone who is interested on the advisory group and also to establish an e-mail list of everyone who wishes to be informed of the progress of this effort (note: such a list has already been started via GovDelivery).
  - a. If overwhelming interest is received in the advisory group, MPCA may need to limit the size of the group. If this becomes necessary, MPCA will select group members based on their familiarity with and expertise in wild rice and sulfate scientific, cultural and policy issues, and with an eye towards balancing the interest groups and viewpoints represented.
  - b. In any event, everyone who expresses interest will be included in all updates and information exchanges with the advisory group, in an effort to be as inclusive as possible.
4. MPCA will hold off on naming "wild rice research experts" to the advisory group until after the RFP process is completed and contracts awarded.

Throughout the standards study, MPCA will continue to consult with Minnesota Tribes, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. EPA on the progress of the study, the results of the research, and the development and proposal of any rule amendments.

#### Future Rule Amendments

The advisory group and interested parties list established for research review will also be asked for advice and feedback on the future development and proposal of any amendments to Minnesota's water quality standards to protect wild rice. Any rule amendments would be proposed in accordance with the provisions and requirements of Minnesota's Administrative Procedure Act.