



There are more acres of natural wild rice in Minnesota than in any other state.

Wild rice is an important social and cultural component for Native American tribes and rural northern Minnesota communities.

The plant which is actually a native grass was the primary food for the many tribes in the Great Lakes region. It was especially valuable because it could be stored indefinitely once harvested and dried.

Wild rice is now commercially produced as a field crop on about 20,000 acres in Minnesota. For many years, basically all of the wild rice produced in the world came from Minnesota, and much of it still does!

Natural Wild Rice

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of natural wild rice than
any other state**

Wild rice is a unique resource to Minnesotans. It makes sense to do our best to protect it and our lakes. There are a variety of threats that pose issues for wild rice crops.



Harvesting Wild Rice

Wild rice often is harvested from lakes in a traditional way, from canoes, utilizing only a pole for power and two rice beater sticks as flails to knock the mature seeds into the bottom of the canoe. People interested in harvesting wild rice in Minnesota must first purchase a wild ricing license, similar to a fishing or hunting license. Various American Indian governments and the Minnesota DNR manage wild rice and regulate its harvest.

Threats to Wild Rice Beds

The plant typically grows in shallow to moderate water depths (1-3 feet) and is affected by water flow, turbidity, water quality and water level fluctuations. Wild rice is sensitive to varying water levels, and production in individual stands from year-to-year is highly variable depending on local water conditions.

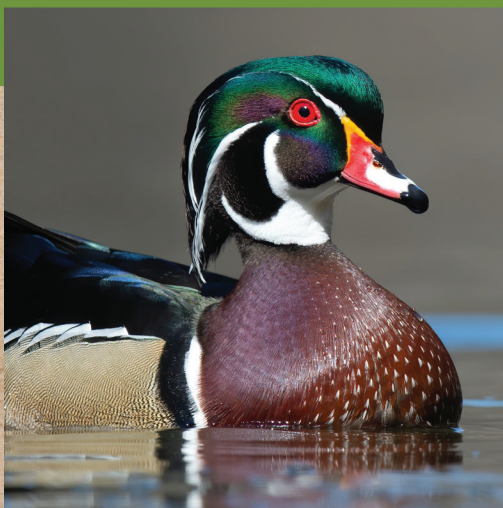
Wild Rice beds can be hurt by pollution, large boat wakes, exotic species and changes in water levels.

Although many of the larger wild rice beds are actively managed, there is a perception that rice abundance and distribution have declined over time, especially in many of the smaller beds along the margins of lakes and streams.

Over 1,200 Minnesota lakes and rivers currently contain or historically had wild rice. More than half of the acreage was found in Aitkin, Cass, Crow Wing, Itasca, and St. Louis counties.

Wild rice is native habitat

Wild rice has great ecological value, and the streams and lakes where it grows abundantly support unusually diverse biological communities. Both migrating and resident wildlife rely on the nutritious and abundant seed of wild rice. Wild rice beds are very attractive to migrating waterfowl, and many rice areas are traditional waterfowl staging and hunting areas.



Essential to Waterfowl

The dense stands of wild rice provide roosting areas and brood cover for many waterfowl and other birds. Mammals such as the muskrat use the stalks for food. Wild rice provides food and shelter for many fish and is one of the most important foods for waterfowl in North America. Minnesota DNR's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy lists 17 species of wildlife known as "species of greatest conservation need" that use wild rice lakes as habitat for reproduction or foraging.

In addition wild rice plants in our rivers and lakes prevent the bottoms from eroding. Annual reseeding ensures a stable ecosystem, protecting the other life forms found in these water bodies.



Forming a plan . . .

While on the water, everyone can do their part to protect Minnesota's wild rice beds, especially in the summer and early fall months when wild rice is most vulnerable.

From June through September, boaters should not drive through wild rice beds. If traveling through a bed can't be avoided, boaters should minimize propulsion, use the same path going in and out of the bed and avoid turning the boat around inside the bed. If possible boaters and canoers should use push poles that minimize damage to wild rice plants.

Your local SWCD promotes cooperation between boaters, lake associations, waterfowl hunters, tribal groups, and wild rice harvesters to protect and ensure healthy wild rice beds for future generations.

Contact us today

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HUBBARD COUNTY
Soil & Water Conservation District

