



2020

Protecting the Harvest

A study of present-day Minnesota state-permitted wild rice harvesters

Manoomin (Ojibwe) or Psin (Dakota) (wild rice, *Zizania palustris*) holds great cultural, ecological, and economic importance. It is Minnesota's state grain and to the Ojibwe Tribes across the Great Lakes it is a sacred food, medicine, and gift from the Creator. Despite its importance, the species' range has declined dramatically because of climate change, competing vegetation, changes in land use, water levels, and water quality. Indigenous people have been harvesting Manoomin in this area for millennia. Hand-harvesting natural wild rice has also become an important tradition to non-tribal members in the state, who are required to purchase a state permit. However, state-permitted harvesting by non-tribal members has declined dramatically since the 1960s. In 2018, the University of Minnesota partnered with several tribes across present-day Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan to design a survey* of Minnesota state-permitted harvesters in order to better understand their values, beliefs, and behaviors associated with wild rice harvesting, processing, and protection. Surveys were mailed to 1,339 state permit holders; 672 people responded for a 53% response rate. Insights gained will inform future Manoomin stewardship.

Profile of survey respondents



- 76% male
- 23% female
- 1% other/prefer not to respond

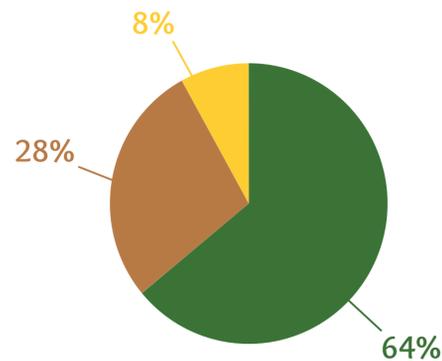
- The average 2018 harvester was 55 years old, had riced for 14 years, and harvested 139 lbs (unprocessed) in 2018. A majority (93%) of respondents identified as White.



- In total, respondents harvested more than 83,000 lbs of wild rice (unprocessed) in 2018. They rated the 2018 "crop" as *poor to fair* in amount and *fair* in quality.

What do state-permitted harvesters do with their wild rice?

- Keep for personal use
- Give away or share with others
- Sell/intend to sell



"Minnesota wild rice, harvested and processed right, is the best tasting form of rice in the world.

It must be protected!"

--survey respondent

What do harvesters value and believe about wild rice?

98% agree** it is a *healthful food source*

99% agree it *tastes good*

94% agree that *eating wild rice that they have harvested* is special to them

97% *enjoy harvesting* wild rice

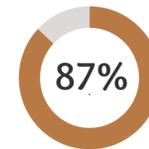
94% agree it is important to a *healthy ecosystem*

89% agree that *being able to harvest* wild rice means a lot to them

80% agree that *wild rice and wild rice waters need better protection*

**percentage of respondents who somewhat to strongly agreed

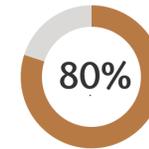
Which management strategies do state-permitted harvesters support?



support enforcing water quality regulations to protect wild rice



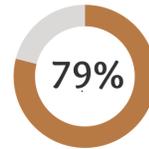
support expanding wild rice restoration programs (e.g., reseeded, managing water levels)



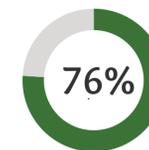
support using Minnesota state harvesting permit fees for wild rice stewardship activities only



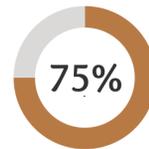
support increasing monitoring of wild rice plants and waters



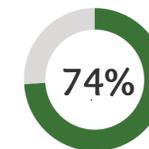
support increasing water quality regulations to protect wild rice



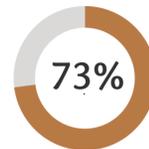
support expanding education and outreach programs to raise awareness about the ecological, nutritional, and cultural values of wild rice



support coordinating wild rice habitat conservation efforts between tribal, state, and local entities



support expanding public and private partnerships to protect wild rice



support conducting more research on wild rice



"Wild rice, because of its nutritional value and important

component of the natural order of things, is probably one of the most important plants to all Minnesotans.

From human consumption to the waterfowl and shorebirds that eat the kernels to the variety of insects, which feed red-winged blackbirds and others, it needs all the protection and research that we can afford, because once it's gone, it's hard to replace."

--survey respondent

This study was conducted as part of the Kawe Gidaa-Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin (First We Must Consider Manoomin/Psin) project. The partnerships created through this project are among its most important outcomes. We would like to acknowledge our project collaborators and partners: Mark Belcourt (White Earth Nation), retired UMN; Jeremy Bloomquist, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin Environmental Services; Perry Bunting, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe DNR; Trinaty Caldwell (Menominee), UW-Oshkosh student; Eric Chapman (Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe Nation); LeAnn Charwood (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe), Leech Lake Tribal College student; Jamie Colvin (Seminole Nation of Oklahoma), Haskell Indian Nations University student; Diana Dalbotten, UMN; Mae Davenport, UMN; Peter David, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission; Karen Diver (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), University of Arizona; Mike Dochry (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), UMN; Bree Duever, UMN; McKaylee Duquain (Menominee), UMN student; Joe Graveen (Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians), WI Lac du Flambeau wild rice cultural enhancement program; Emily Green, UMN; Katherine Hagsten (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe); Kari Hedin, Fond du Lac Resource Management Division; Susannah Howard (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), Smith College student; Riley Howes (Fond du Lac), Brown University student; Tom Howes (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa); John D. Johnson Sr. (Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe Nation); Anna Kadrie, UMN student; Shannon Kesner (Fond du Lac); Hannah Jo King, UMN student; Erik Kojola, UMN; Roger LaBine (Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa); Dan Larkin, UMN; Laura Matson, UMN; Gabby Menomin (Forest County Potawatomi), UMN student; Melonee Montano (Red Cliff Band), Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission; Seth Moore (Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa); Brena Mullen (Fond du Lac), Bemidji State University student; Amy Myrbo, St. Croix Watershed Research Station, Science Museum of MN; Gene-Hua Crystal Ng, UMN; Michael Northbird (Minnesota Chippewa Tribe); Maddy Nyblade, UMN student; Patrick O'Hara, UMN student; Jaren Peplinski, UMN student; Meghan Porter, Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.; Richard Robinson (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe); Cara Santelli, UMN; Riley Schmitter (Chickasaw Nation), UMN student; Nancy Schuldt, Fond du Lac Resource Management Division; Robert Shimek (White Earth Nation); Allison Smart (Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians), Little River Band of Ottawa Indians; Wally Storbakken (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe), Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; Donovan Strong (Bois Forte); Ed Swain, retired Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Josh Torgeson, UMN student; Darren Vogt, 1854 Treaty Authority; Alex Waheed, UMN student; Lilah White (Mille Lacs), UMN student. Funding: University of Minnesota Grand Challenges Research Program

*This survey questionnaire or any data analyzed or reported as part of the survey project do not constitute a claim concerning the location, boundaries, scope or use of wild rice waters as either designated or existing uses. The wild rice waters identified in this survey effort do not constitute a wild rice waters determination list and shall not be used as such in any Tribal, State or Federal legal proceedings.