

# **A Summary of Wild Rice Harvester Meetings in Northern Minnesota and Wisconsin**

*by*

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**Funding provided by a U.S. Community Forestry Research Fellowship  
from the University of California, Berkeley**

**Submitted on March 2, 2007**

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This report summarizes information gathered from six meetings held across Minnesota and Wisconsin in late January and early February of 2007. The meetings, held with the support of a U.S. Community Forestry Research Fellowship, brought together people who participate in the annual fall harvest of natural wild rice (*Zizania palustris* L.) on the lakes and streams of Minnesota and Wisconsin. Each meeting followed the same format, with presentations to set the context, followed by small group discussions and sharing on issues identified by participants. Participants were invited through direct mailings (from rice landing contacts) and through ads on local radio and in newspapers. More than 100 people participated and their concerns and input are presented within this report. It is my hope that these discussions set the stage for a more coordinated and active role for harvesters in the protection and management of natural wild rice, a resource native to the Upper Great Lakes Region.

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## **Introduction**

Sustaining a ricing culture is dependent on having wild rice available, and accessible, for harvesting. Prior to European settlement wild rice (*Zizania palustris* L.) covered vast regions of the Upper Great Lakes but has since declined significantly across the landscape. Today wild rice occurs primarily in the northern half of Minnesota and Wisconsin, an area seeing rapid growth in lake homes and an increase in recreational use. Wild rice, susceptible to disturbance in its early growth stages, is also an annual plant with variable growth from year to year. Monitoring can be difficult and that which occurs is fragmented across the region and incomplete, particularly for smaller, less utilized beds. Whether wild rice is continuing to decline or expanding across the region is unknown and unclear.

Recognized as ‘*manoomin*’ by the Ojibwe, wild rice has been used in ceremonies and for sustenance by the indigenous peoples of the region for centuries. Today this unique resource, found in the shallow lakes and slow moving streams of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada, is harvested by hand by both Native and non-Native Americans. Harvesting pressure, documented by license sales, has dropped dramatically since the 1980’s and continues on a downward trend today. Rice harvesters, few in number, are culturally diverse and disbursed across a large area. In Minnesota, license sales for wild rice harvest typically average around 1200 while in Wisconsin sales fall closer to 650. However, neither of these numbers takes into account tribal harvesters gathering wild rice on tribal or treaty ceded lakes. Those numbers are difficult to come by since each reservation in Minnesota handles their own and in Wisconsin off-reservation permits to harvest cover multiple activities (hunting, fishing and rice gathering).

Management activities for wild rice, which include water level management through beaver dam removal or structural manipulation (dams), monitoring and reseeding of lakes, are handled by multiple agencies. In Minnesota a partnership effort between Ducks Unlimited and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources monitors and manages 100-150 wild rice lakes on an annual basis. The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), an agency representing eleven member Ojibwe nations in Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota, manages and monitors wild rice as part of the off reservation treaty rights granted to the Ojibwe in treaty-ceded lands. For Wisconsin the treaty ceded region includes nearly all of the harvestable wild rice beds and therefore GLIFWC is the primary management agency. In addition, individual tribal governments maintain and manage wild rice located within their reservation borders, thus creating a checkerboard of management across the rice growing region. Although cooperative work between these groups sometimes occurs, there is no formal means of evaluating, monitoring or sharing information across the region.

Research being conducted through the University of Wisconsin – Madison explores the connections between those who harvest wild rice, the lakes they harvest and the management that influences both. During the process of investigating harvesting patterns and traditions, documented using interviews and site visits to wild rice lakes, research found consistent concerns across the region. These included: identifying strategies for long term protection of wild rice; limited communication among harvesters; and few means for harvesters and resource managers to discuss and respond to regional issues or policy decisions affecting wild rice management and harvest. To begin to address these concerns local meetings to discuss shared regional issues, including support for the formation of a Wild Rice Advisory Council, were set up and held across northern Minnesota and Wisconsin. This report summarizes and presents the results of

these meetings. Funding for this aspect of research was secured through a U.S. Community Forestry Research Fellowship.

**Meeting Structure and Participation**

All meetings were designed using the same format and were held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on weeknights, with refreshments provided. Locations were determined by the earlier research study site locations, where a source of active harvester contacts was available. The format for each meeting was to describe the regional context of wild rice harvest and management, present information on genetic engineering issues and provide background on regional management (state or tribal affiliations). This was followed by small group discussions on issues identified by harvesters at the beginning of the meeting. People self-selected their small groups by topic. Each small group was responsible for recording the issues and participant discussion on the sheets provided and turning them in at the end of the meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, each group presented a short summary to the other participants regarding their issue discussions. In addition, a questionnaire regarding the formation of a Wild Rice Advisory Council was handed out and collected at the meetings (all forms and responses are included in the appendixes.)

Attendance at the meetings varied from 9 to 33 participants (during weather that occasionally saw temperatures dip well below 0 degrees F). One hundred and nine people attended the six meetings. Below is a summary of meeting attendance (Table 1), followed by a brief description of each meeting, in chronological order.

| Location and date             | Harvester/interested persons attending | DNR or Natural Resource Staff | Meeting space           |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ball Club, MN<br>Jan 23, 2007 | 21                                     | 2                             | Community Center        |
| Bagley, MN<br>Jan 25, 2007    | 6                                      | 3                             | Fireside Grill          |
| Aitkin, MN<br>Jan 29, 2007    | 27                                     | 6                             | Mille Lacs Energy Coop. |
| Webster, WI<br>Jan 30, 2007   | 12                                     | 3                             | Fire Hall               |
| Tower, MN<br>Feb 5, 2007      | 16                                     | 4                             | DNR Hdqtrs              |
| Mole Lake, WI<br>Feb 6, 2007  | 6                                      | 3                             | Tribal Center           |

**Table 1** – Meeting attendance and location

**Ball Club, MN –**

The first meeting of the series was held in the small community of Ball Club. The meeting opened with a welcome by Annette Drewes, meeting facilitator, followed by her presentation on UW research; genetic engineering of wild rice from the White Earth Land Recovery Project; and a presentation from Rod Ustipak from Ducks Unlimited and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) who discussed wild rice management in Minnesota. In the second half, small groups often crossed into other topics while discussing an issue. Attendees included tribal and state harvesters, wild rice processors and Deer River Publishing. In this region several large lakes

occur (Winnibigoshish, Cass and Leech), most with some rice, and recreational boating issues came up in various ways.

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**Bagley, MN –**

Meeting held at the Fireside Grill in Bagley. Format same as previous. Andrea Hanks was available to join us from the White Earth Land Recovery Project to discuss the issue of GMO wild rice and what is happening legislatively. Rod Ustipak also presented for DU and DNR. For such a small group, we had a lively discussion. Members of the Minnesota DNR and White Earth Natural Resources Division attended, along with local ricers. Much discussion of the proposed changes the Minnesota DNR had surveyed harvesters about. This was true for most of the Minnesota meetings.

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**Aitkin, MN –**

Meeting held at the Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative in Aitkin. Format was the same as previous: UW presentation; genetic modification DVD; and a presentation by natural resource staff, in this case Rod Ustipak who holds a joint position with Ducks Unlimited and Minnesota DNR. Rod presented the states cooperative wild rice management venture with DU and other entities. Many issues came up at this meeting and are represented in the summary. Very good turnout and lots of input received. Mille Lacs Band representatives also present along with Minnesota DNR staff.

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**Webster, WI –**

Meeting held at the Webster Fire Hall in Webster, WI. Format the same as previous. Natural Resource presenter was Peter David, wildlife biologist from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. Many participants came for the presentations but left prior to small group discussion – for various reasons. “Issues” were more around posting of regulated lakes and water levels/development. Wisconsin is not proposing any changes in regulation for wild rice harvest (as Minnesota is) and therefore many of the ‘Minnesota’ issues regarding opening hours, dates and equipment did not come up. Representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the St. Croix Tribe were in attendance.

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**Tower, MN -**

Meeting was held at the DNR Headquarters in Tower. Format was the same as previous: UW presentation; genetic modification DVD; and a presentation by natural resource staff, in this case Darren Vogt, biologist with the 1854 Treaty Authority. Before breaking into issue groups, this group asked for an update on the issues with Big Rice Lake and a short update was given by DNR staff present. Interest in Big Rice held for most of the meeting, with many of the issues having applications across other ricing waters.

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**Mole Lake, WI –**

Meeting opened with words from Fred Ackley Jr., recognizing the history and spiritual gifts of wild rice to the Ojibwe people. Presentation on research (UW), followed by genetic modification DVD from White Earth Land Recovery Project (same format as earlier meetings). Peter David, wildlife biologist with Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, finished up the presentations by discussing wild rice management within the ceded territories. Presentations followed by open discussion on issues – this group did not break into smaller groups.

## ***Discussion of Issues***

The opening of rice beds and the hours for harvesting were the topics drawing the most discussion at the regional meetings. In Minnesota, state lakes are not posted and individuals may harvest wild rice when it is ripe, any time after July 15. Minnesota has proposed changing that date to August 15<sup>th</sup>. Wisconsin operates a bit differently in that only a small set of regulated lakes are posted for harvesting, everything else may be harvested once it is ripe. The two Wisconsin meetings did not generate much discussion on opening dates other than a few comments on coordinating the posting information better (it's currently posted on the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission's website). Protecting the rice crop and getting young people involved in ricing were also discussed at most meetings.

It's important to note that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources had recently sent surveys to all state wild rice license buyers in late December. In addition to questions regarding their own participation, harvesters were asked if they would support changing several regulations. These included the hours of harvest (currently 9-3) to 10 a.m. to sunset, changing the start date from July 15 to August 15, increasing the allowed width of watercraft used for harvesting from 36 to 38 inches and extending the nonresident license from one day to 7 days. These questions are reflected in the issues that arose in the Minnesota meetings.

### **Opening dates and management**

Moving the opening date from July to August had mixed responses. There were many who liked the idea, "definitely change," "state opens too soon" and others who felt that the current date was fine "we don't need a starting gun in August." There was concern for areas that ripened earlier than August 15<sup>th</sup>, most notably streams in the far northern reaches of Minnesota. Wisconsin does not have an opening 'date', regulated lakes are posted for opening while unregulated lakes are open whenever ripe.

The idea of 'ripeness' was discussed at several meetings and always in conjunction with opening of lakes and early harvest. Wild rice seeds on the same stalk ripen at different times, allowing harvesters to revisit beds over a series of days. This means that some rice may be falling while other rice is still forming. Harvesters felt that it did not hurt the plant to harvest when the seed was still somewhat in the milky stage as it ripens up after being picked, others held the view that it needs to fully ripen on the stalk. Those wanting to pick it earlier felt that if left to ripen completely, an entire crop could be lost to a storm or wind. Others regarded this as just re-seeding and not a bad thing.

Along these lines, much discussion took place on the benefits of posting lakes open individually, to avoid people harvesting too early. It is clear from the discussions however that without an agreed 'ripeness' definition, any posting will be considered too early or too late, depending on who you ask (this was the case in Wisconsin on posted lakes). Although the state of Minnesota no longer posts lakes, many remembered when they had posted them and commented that they would like to see posting return. At the same time, others liked the current system and would like to see a more hands off approach in regulating harvest.

Suggestions were offered regarding how posting and the checking of rice beds could take place. Included in these were using a local, knowledgeable committee to 'govern' lake postings, using a council to serve as a central location for people to call information into (state and tribal collaboration), and use of local committees to monitor the season start on major wild rice stands, or utilize volunteers that are knowledgeable, older and local. With posting harvesters would like

to see a phone number, website or press releases where this information would be readily available. Currently both the state of Wisconsin and most tribal governments in Minnesota give 48 hours notice on posted lakes using lake landing postings and/or the web.

**Ricing hours**, in Minnesota from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. and in Wisconsin, 10 a.m. to dark, generated discussion primarily in the Minnesota workshops. Limited hours and even alternate days were acceptable to some groups. Many agreed that six hours of being on the beds was plenty of time but this was countered by those looking for more flexibility in schedules, with hours going later in the day. Reasons for extending hours included giving access to kids with school and those with jobs. Reasons for limiting hours included resting the beds and allowing ducks to return to the rice without being disturbed.

Access to **management information**, such as status reports, aerial photos of rice beds and even regular meetings were suggested in the meetings. There were also a few that would like to see **regulations** relaxed in general.

## Enforcement and license fees

Although often lumped under management, enforcement and fees came up quite often in discussions. Harvesters wanted to see more enforcement of hours and postings (where those occur) with consequences being loss of license and or rice. Several comments regarding enforcement of the ‘green rice’ law, including the lack of a definition, which keeps the law unenforceable. I did confirm with the Minnesota DNR that no violations are recorded for harvesting green rice in Minnesota, back to 1984. Comments regarding enforcement also included education of Conservation Officers on watercraft definition and associated life vest requirements. Primarily people wanted to see the harvesting of ‘green rice’ and the breaking of stalks curtailed, either through enforcement or perhaps peer pressure.

Boat width, a question on the Minnesota survey, got a few responses – mostly leave as is, “36 inches is wide enough” but also a request to lengthen the legal length to “fit current canoe lengths.” Most people opposed to extending lengths and widths were concerned with the damage done to the rice plants by bigger boats.

**License fees**, which vary between the two states (\$26 in Minnesota and \$8.25 in Wisconsin) drew limited discussion. In Minnesota once people found out that the entire license amount is used for wild rice management, individuals were okay with that amount. They did note however that for a family with older children trying to rice (17 and 18 year olds) it added up quite quickly. In a Wisconsin meeting, fee increases were suggested if the money could be dedicated to rice management.

**Non-resident licenses**, not available in Wisconsin, currently sell in Minnesota for a one day use. Some felt that changing the license to a seven day license was fine; others spoke to keeping it at one day. In Minnesota the topic generated enough interest to note that a nonresident paid 9 cents a minute to harvest wild rice in Minnesota, a fee considered extremely high.

## Water levels

Throughout the meetings water levels came up time and again. Either there were concerns with natural fluctuations in water “90’s high water levels – poor rice beds for a decade” or discussion on manipulating water levels through dam controls or outlet management. A comment was made that the Corp is rewriting reservoir plans to accommodate more natural flows. Suggestions for dam removal were made on several lakes in Cass and Crow Wing counties. The idea of a wild rice council representative attending meetings for water level discussions was also mentioned. Other concerns dealt with correlation of water levels between

DU/DNR and wild rice harvesters and one comment was raised concerning pumping water to paddies (not wanted).

## Genetic Engineering

Genetic modification of wild rice, although it has not occurred as of yet, was a large concern at many of the meetings. Harvesters feared the “contamination of native rice,” the loss of a cultural heritage if GMO wild rice was allowed in Minnesota or Wisconsin, and competition in the market place. Banning genetically engineered wild rice, through legislation, should be a top priority of any wild rice council. Using a county by county action to prohibit GMO experimentation was one suggestion. Mention of patent protections for wild rice also came up. It was clear this was one issue that all harvesters shared one voice on – do not allow genetically engineered wild rice to come into either Minnesota or Wisconsin.

Along these same lines, **market issues** came into play. Minnesota has labeling laws for wild rice sold in markets, but Wisconsin does not. Even with these laws in place there was a lot of discussion regarding “the stranglehold of the paddy ricers on the hand harvesters money for their real product.” One possible approach to address this issue is the possibility of certifying lake wild rice as organic. It was felt that a Council could press for this certification and that it would increase market value. However individuals also stated that they have no problem selling their hand harvested wild rice on the market.

## Ecological issues

Ecological issues primarily came out of discussions for protecting wild rice. One of the most often heard issues was shoreline development and educating lakeshore owners and/or realtors to recognize wild rice beds and perhaps develop easements or education. Involving lake associations, identifying shorelines as ‘wild rice habitat’ to prevent future development and developing a county by county listing of “sensitive” areas were all offered as suggestions. Use of a “Heritage” label was also mentioned as a possible first step in identifying wild rice beds. There is some protection under current state regulations in both Minnesota and Wisconsin for wild rice, however more needs to be done.

Wisconsin also had some issues regarding discharge from a particular lake into other ricing areas. Mercury pollution is an issue for many lakes in both states, mostly pertaining to fish consumption.

**Boat traffic** came up in several areas, especially with those having rice beds on larger recreational lakes. Ideas for preventing damage to the wild rice from boats included “no wake zones,” use of marker buoys and restrictions on boat sizes allowed in the rice.

## Education

Two main ideas came out of this issue – educating the public regarding the difference between natural wild rice and paddy rice and educating those landowners who live adjacent to wild rice beds. Target audiences for education were the norm, little input was received on how or what should be developed to do the education. People basically want others to know more about wild rice and how it’s different from paddy rice. Education for lake shore owners, watershed organizations, resort owners and realtors were the targets for shoreline issues. Increased communication to harvesters, through websites or newspaper reports was also mentioned.

## Recruitment

Fewer and fewer youth are choosing to participate in harvesting wild rice. Harvesters recognize this and see a need to encourage people to try ricing, while learning proper techniques. White Earth, Bois Forte, Leech Lake and Mole Lake band members all mentioned programs or activities within the reservations which encourage and introduce youth to wild rice harvesting and processing. The comment was made that young people “need to see you do it” in order to get involved, that economics is no longer an incentive.

Other strategies for encouraging more participation included offering community education classes, lengthening hours so kids can harvest after school and connecting novices with experienced people and help them find equipment. Setting up a mentoring network was also mentioned, which would provide a way to encourage proper technique.

## Council: Educating, Informing, Preserving

The idea of a Wild Rice Advisory Council generated many ideas on roles for such an organization. Loss of the cultural aspects of ricing, social implications for incoming ricers on state lakes, especially when culturally diverse (tribal and non-tribal), and recruiting new people were among the more social aspects. Organizing a Wild Rice Harvesting Day – using state and tribal pickers to mentor others was mentioned as a possible activity to promote harvesting. Other activities suggested include holding a Wild Rice Seminar (1 day), supporting a Scientific wild rice conference every 2-3 years, providing buyer and processor lists as well as supporting local annual meetings. More direct comments on this are posted under the Wild Rice Advisory Council input sheets

## Conclusion

Wild rice issues vary by location, determined by an area’s history, management authority and ecological landscape. The purpose of these meetings was not to highlight differences, but to identify commonalities – common issues that are present whether management is state or tribal, whether or not there is an abundance of ricing lakes or only a few, and independent of local history. It is important to be aware of localized differences and recognize common themes across the wild rice landscape. Table 2 provides a snapshot look at the issues by location. Full details of issues identified at each meeting are located in the appendixes.

| <b>Issues of concern</b>                            | <b>Aitkin MN</b> | <b>Bagley MN</b> | <b>Ball Club MN</b> | <b>Tower MN</b> | <b>Webster WI</b> | <b>Mole Lake WI</b> |
|---|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Opening dates, hours, posting and management</i> | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>           | <b>XX</b>       | <b>XX</b>         |                     |
| <i>Enforcement</i>                                  |                  |                  | <b>XX</b>           | <b>XX</b>       | <b>XX</b>         |                     |
| <i>License fees</i>                                 | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>           |                 | <b>XX</b>         |                     |
| <i>Water levels</i>                                 | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>           | <b>XX</b>       |                   |                     |
| <i>Genetic engineering</i>                          | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>           | <b>XX</b>       |                   | <b>XX</b>           |
| <i>Ecological issues</i>                            | <b>XX</b>        |                  | <b>XX</b>           |                 | <b>XX</b>         | <b>XX</b>           |
| <i>Education</i>                                    | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>           | <b>XX</b>       | <b>XX</b>         | <b>XX</b>           |
| <i>Recruitment</i>                                  | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>        |                     | <b>XX</b>       |                   | <b>XX</b>           |
| <i>Wild Rice Advisory Council</i>                   | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>        | <b>XX</b>           |                 |                   | <b>XX</b>           |

**Table 2** -This summary table is intended to present a quick view of what was discussed in the different small groups, based on the information from the issues discussion sheets. Keep in mind that issues may have been discussed, but not recorded.

## **Wild Rice Advisory Council**

Overwhelmingly people responded favorably to the **idea** of a Wild Rice Advisory Council (48 out of 54 responding said “Yes”). Knowing that the idea would mean different things to different people, participants were asked to identify **possible roles** for such a council. Roles identified ranged from ‘protecting’ wild rice to ‘advising legislature’ and were grouped into the following categories: **Advisory, Communication, Education and Information, Genetic Modification Issues, Marketing and Research, Monitoring, Processor Information, Water Level Control, Harvester Recruitment** and the largest category, **Protection**. Each category is described in more detail below (full summaries are in Appendix B)..

**Advisory** (15 comments) - Overall people felt that it would be good to have a council that could advise on issues of management, regulation and policy at the state level. Several felt strongly that any organized group should be “Advisory only,” and “only be a council for recommendation.”

**Communication** (14 comments) - Communication between harvesters and resource managers, between harvesters from different areas and between state and tribal entities was identified in this category. Respondents felt that a council might act as a forum for different stakeholders to come together to share information and discuss issues. Additionally, comments on creating a ‘voice’ for wild rice were included in this category and spoke to organizing support for wild rice beds.

**Education and Information** (11 comments) - This category really addressed having an opportunity to educate the general public in regards to wild rice issues, “public awareness about true ‘wild’ rice.” Providing a resource to keep people informed, educate legislators and hold meetings was the main response.

**Genetic Modification Issues** (9 comments) - Bottom line responses from participants were “ban genetic engineering of wild rice” and use the council to push at the county and state levels for appropriate legislation. This was true in both Wisconsin and Minnesota.

**Marketing and Research** (8 comments) - Promoting ‘organic certification’ and addressing issues with marketing and labeling regarding paddy rice and wild rice were the concerns listed for a council to address.

**Monitoring** (8 comments) - A surprising number of responses addressed the need for monitoring of current rice lakes and rice beds, addressing issues of change in size or viability, collection of harvest amounts, grading lake production (good, fair, poor) and identifying new or old beds.

**Processor Information** (6 comments) - These comments could have been added to Information or Recruitment, but were substantial enough that I put them in a separate category. Basically people would like to have access to information on processors and buyers, preferably on the web.

**Water Level Control** (8 comments) - Water level is such a major issue that it basically got its own category. Advocating for water levels favorable to wild rice were the comments here.

**Harvester Recruitment** (7 comments) - Using the council to provide training and education, even “pairing ricers with mentors” was identified as a potential role. Coordinating community education courses to providing resources for those wanting to learn to rice are also mentioned.

**Protection** (27 comments)- “Fighting to protect the rice” or simply “Protection” was identified as a role for the council to take on. How to protect the rice fell into three main areas:

promote proper practices, regulate opening, and focus on shoreline development issues. It was clear from the meetings that there is a difference of opinion on when it's best to harvest wild rice. Those advocating for full ripening on the stalk were pitted against those wanting to harvest while the rice grains still had some milk to them. Both viewpoints want the rice protected. Of course, this discussion goes right into the 'regulate opening' debate. Local authority and setting opening dates on individual beds was more the norm than just an early date (July 15). There were ten comments for a council to assist in some way with regulating openings. Finally, shoreline development was recognized as an issue threatening rice beds in various areas. Educating shoreline residents, promoting 'no wake zones' and other protection matters were mentioned as possible roles for a council.

## Structure and representation

Participants were also asked for their ideas on the structure and representation of a wild rice advisory council. Comments on this question fell into either structure or representation (people), with one comment regarding funding and stating that the council should be "...subsidized as the special interest groups." People and structure influence each other, how the council is structured will determine who participates and who participates will determine the structure.

**Representation** (19 comments) - Experienced harvesters (one mentions 10 years or more) are mentioned often as are tribal harvesters and elders. Representatives from DNR, tribes, government organizations, buyers and processors, DU and duck hunters are also mentioned multiple times. Additional groups receiving mention are interested people, non-residents, sales organizations, accredited agricultural advisors, shoreline owners, and Canadian representation.

**Structure** (14 comments) - The most common structure suggested is some form of local ricers, from particular lakes or areas, representing their region on a larger council. 'Chairperson for gathering info' is another way it's presented. One mention is made of organizing through a membership fee, like the Minnesota Trappers association. Informal, simple, circular, "loose to the point of ineffectiveness" are other descriptions. One comment suggests monthly or bi-monthly meetings.

## Alternatives

When asked for "other ways we might organize?" respondents suggested local committees, electronic organization, ricing organizations – both state or DU model, and various other strategies. Under local committees respondents brought up local management by committees on state controlled lakes as a way of working with the DNR or taking over control from DNR. Electronic organization simply refers to using email or a newsgroup/website to share information. Creating a 'wild ricers association of Minnesota' was offered as an alternative to the council, following the model of trappers. Creating a non-profit was also identified as a potential, or a broader organization like DU, organized with different chapters. Asking for tribal input on surrounding state lake areas, rice conventions, support from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, and written surveys were also contributed.

## Next steps

When asked what they would like to see as next steps, formation of a council, or a future gathering was identified by 17 respondents. Some suggested another meeting to draw up advisory points, define objectives, develop training, develop a mission statement, establish a regular schedule of communications with managers, and develop ideas. Another suggested

writing by-laws to get 501-C3 non-profit status. Information sharing (7 comments) through more meetings, setting up a website, and keeping counties informed were also suggested as next steps. One suggestion, which I did hear in more than one location, was ‘take a kid ricing day for free’ with no charge or license needed and finally, trying a set of lakes managed by individuals on that lake.

## Summary

Each meeting had it’s own ‘tone’ yet overwhelmingly there was support and a sense of urgency in moving forward with some sort of organization/council to support the practice of harvesting wild rice and protect the resource for future generations. How we move forward will be determined by those who have the time and energy to take the next steps. Forty six participants identified themselves as interested in participating in the development of a council. As mentioned in the meetings, funding exists through the Community Forestry Research Fellowship for an initial organizing meeting. Where and when this will take place is still undetermined, but it is hoped that it will take place within the year. Opportunities for collaboration and partnering are being sought, while considering how best to accommodate such a disbursed but interested harvesting community. Your assistance in sharing this information with other harvesters is requested. As always, I can be reached at [aldrewes@wisc.edu](mailto:aldrewes@wisc.edu) or by phone at 218-368-5050. Thank you to all who took the time to attend the meetings and provide comment and direction in the interest of wild rice. Miigwech!

## **Appendix A - Wild Rice Issues Discussion Sheets**

At each meeting (except Mole Lake) harvesters were asked to identify 3-4 issues that they would like to see discussed at the meeting, by filling out a small slip of paper. These individual issues were then grouped to create discussion groups for the second half of the meeting. Discussion groups were responsible for recording the small group input and turning it in at the end of the meeting.

Below each meeting location the issues for each discussion group are identified from the blue sheets. The details from these small group blue sheets are listed last. For example, Ball Club had 4 sheets turned in, and they are listed just below Ball Club. Below the issue headings the details from each page are listed. Information listed is verbatim from the sheets and represented as presented – these are the views of participants in each discussion group. To see the individual issues identified –see Appendix C.

### **BALL CLUB, MN**

#### **Opening Dates and Management – Protection of Beds and their quality**

#### **GMO's, Hybrid, Organic**

#### **Opening Dates and Management**

#### **Water levels**

#### **Opening Dates and Management – Protection of Beds and their quality**

- Opening dates should be posted – the readiness of the rice needs to be checked by someone knowledgeable, like they do on the Reservation [Leech Lake]. Should be done on state regulated lakes. Maybe volunteers – a council.
- Need to have a phone # or web site where people could get information about which lakes are open to harvest. Reservation lakes have 48 hour notice. This is good.
- Hours of ricing, 9-3 is good to allow the rice to recover from harvesters – every other day works. Later hours would allow school kids and those with jobs that they can't get time off to be able to rice. Enforce the hours and postings.
- Enforce the green rice law – do not start the season in July – stop the people who decide to harvest green rice.
- Make a “no wake zone” for boats.
- Enforcing could be taking rice – taking license –but do enforce it.
- Size of boats – 36” is wide enough.
- Breaking of stalks should be stopped – Leech lake gives verbal warning. Peer pressure?
- Raise non-resident license cost, drop ours – mentioned. However \$26 is worth it if the rice beds are being checked and posted, so people don't get on there too early.
- Education needed... Training by DNR? Pamphlets on how to and what not to do? Videos – instructional – run on public TV?
- Reports on status of lakes, how much rice, is it ripe? Aerial shots helpful.
- Definitely change the July 15<sup>th</sup> opening date to at least August. Some people just don't have sense about when a lake is ready.
- Regulate at least the biggest state lakes.

**GMO's, Hybrid, Organic**

- Don't want the contamination of native rice. Cultural heritage, leave well enough alone. Biologically it could contaminate a rice plant that's been in existence for thousands of years. Action: Legislation at state and national levels. Sponsors – Reservations, Tribal Councils, GLIFWC
- Idea – certify “organic” for Minnesota natural rice. Council could press for certification.
- If council develops – this should be #1 priority – legislation. Stop research by U of M.

**Opening Dates and Management**

- Harvester perspectives: high price of license, how many out of state people are here ricing, rice harvest course (info on how to do – video)
- Open dates: local entity deciding when to open lake. (state and Tribal)
- Hours: time of day, weather regulates ripeness
- State opens too soon – open everyday: State needs to enforce.
- Have a council – central location- for people to call into for info on each lake (collaboration between members state/tribal)
- Press release to radio/newspaper about council's decision on open/close of lake. Have a knowledgeable local person to give info to council members.
- More enforcement (mostly state, tribal seems up to par)
- Keep boats out of rice beds, weight limits: regulation of the size of boats used while ricing. 36 inches and only canoes.
- 5% for reseeding.

**Water levels**

- 90's high water levels – poor rice beds for a decade
- No permits for pumping water to paddies, no paddies
- Control – natural – creator, Fed. Dept. of Trans.
- Leave the water level within a fluctuation of 5-6” (NO MORE) during the critical aerial stage of the stalks
- No wake zone buoy.
- Big Boats/Big wakes (not in the beds at all); Big motors/ trolling motors; Mud motors – duck hunters (Go Devil).
- Educate the public – resort owners
- Corp dams USACE – rewriting reservoir plan. Aware – trying to revamp so the water-flow is more natural.
- Validate/influence choices.
- Council – representative goes to DU meetings, state/tribal members both.
- Shoreline development conflicts with recreation.

**BAGLEY, MN**

**Management/Dates/Hours/fees**

**Protection of rice beds and their quality**

**Paddy rice, GMO, organic**

**Management/Dates/Hours/fees**

- Not sunset hours, because of ducks (not disturb)
- Hours: day hours/dawn to dark – rice falls better early. People who work and kids to go afterwards. Conflict between ricers and hunters.
- Low water levels, nothing to support plants
- Posting of lakes: inconsistent pattern of states posting, but lakes are not posted by the state anymore.
- Novice ricer's hitting too hard and wrecking plants
- People monitor lakes to open and close lake (experienced) and more older people.
- White Earth teaches them at a younger age, as low as head start.
- Late hours for kids to rice after school
- State lakes: social implications towards incoming ricers, more so when native v. white and visa versa.

**Protection of rice beds and their quality**

- Correlation of water levels between Ducks Unlimited or DNR and wild rice harvesters
- Communication between harvesters and management
- Web site or data sheet or newspaper report
- Genetic modification
- Organic certification
- Encourage website not only for info for ricers but for general public to learn about manoomin (such as ground wild rice as breakfast cereal – recipes, ways to cook and utilize it for consumers)

**Paddy rice, GMO, organic**

- Looking for funding on a different film
- Just started the draft for the 2007 bill, long term protection for wild rice against GMO or genetically engineered products to enter the lakes of Minnesota
- Recent contamination to long grain white rice in the south and contamination towards other native plants/crops
- University of Minnesota, the “bad guys”
- Each lake has its own distinct flavor, originality
- Increase market value if organically certified, issue going on.
- Need advisory committee of harvesters to help decide about ricing.

**AITKIN, MN**

**Season Openers/Hour harvest**

**Council: Educating, Informing, Preserving**

**GMO's/Paddy/Organic**

**Assorted**

[ open ]

**Season Openers/Hour harvest**

- Discussion of harvesting green rice, season opening. Some want to leave the hours the same, most agree to leave the same. No one had a date to change it to.
- Some discussion of keeping the hours the same (7)
- Some would like change for 10-4 hours (2)
- Person would like longer hours like 9 – 4:30 (1)

**Council: Educating, Informing, Preserving**

- Education, looking to enhance Wild Rice Days in McGregor.
- 25 years harvesting, Ricing is a dying tradition, what can we do to reinvigorate interest.
- Eco-structure has changed, people don't understand the wild rice culture.
- We are losing the cultural side of ricing. Council should support the banning of genetic engineered rice
- A lot of misunderstanding about natural wild rice, paddy rice and GMO
- Talk with Lake Associations, Shore land development, Watershed Organizations for education.
- Any discussion or getting new people involved.
- Community Education class possibilities.
- Connect novices with experienced people and help find equipment.
- How does the advisory Council get political or wild rice community recognition. Council could hold Wild Rice Seminar (1 day).

**GMO's/Paddy/Organic**

- One person lived next to "paddy" operations and stated that it is not healthy whatsoever.
- We need legislation in place that would protect our state and Wisconsin from not only introducing GMO to the indigenous crop but also have patent protections so that the rights would also be protected. Also this GMO free zone would encompass all agriculture i.e. all crops not just wild rice. And also WI as well. IF GMO introduction has ruined the wild papayas of Hawaii and the maize of Mexico what are the other after effects would we experience? This could potentially be a health hazard in our water in other aspects of the quality of our life. Also it would keep the integrity of this great grain and the other grains of our state. We can't let the big corporations and big money dictate what happens to wild rice. If we "play God" we'll all lose.
- Try to minimize the stranglehold of the paddy ricers on the hand harvesters \$ for their real product.

**Assorted**

- Educate C.O.'s as to regulations concerning what is a "watercraft" and when life vests aka floatation devices are/aren't required.
- Consider dismantling old DNR dams/ Reinforce Ducks Unlimited/DNR. eg. Laura Lake – Cass County, Birchdale – Crow Wing Cty, Duck Lake – Crow Wing Cty.
- Consider county by county action in prohibiting genetic modification experimentation or experimental plots
- Leave season opener at July 15<sup>th</sup>. Easiest to control. We don't need a starting gun in August.
- Leave hours at 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Keep non-resident license at 1 day.
- A comprehensive buyer list/processor list would be helpful.

**[ open ]**

- Gathering rice later in the evening till 4:30.
- Early morning harvesting sometimes good – mist.
- Lakes governed by knowledgeable committee for harvesting because lakes ripen at different times. People who are familiar with the lake should be the committee members – local residents. Set dates when to pick – July 15<sup>th</sup> way to early.
- Identify on license if it is tribal or non-tribal
- Open all areas Tribal/Treaty/State to All harvesters – some disagree with this
- Identify a shoreline as a rice bed because in off year a shoreline could be developed and ruin a rice bed
- Voice for management issues – council
- Take a Youth ricing day (Mille Lacs)

**WEBSTER, WI**

**Communication /mgmt, water level**

**Ecological issues**

**Communication /mgmt, water level**

- There is a need to find a better way to communicate to public when regulated lakes will be opening. It would be great to have a web site that has current events, results of surveys. Maybe consider increasing license fee and dedicating some of the money to rice management. Thank you!

**Ecological issues**

- Shoreline protection and lake associations (education)
- Protection for wild rice shoreline/easement?
- "Heritage" label, first step inventory?
- Water quality: discharge from Shell into Yellow River – goes into Rice lake. Water quantity vs. quality. Pollution sources – Shell doesn't have natural outlet. Mercury is an issue.
- Wisconsin counties – lake classification, not regulatory on statewide basis.

- Non-regulated waters – DNR doesn't have authority
- Inventory of rice beds, develop (DNR/GLIFWC) and then approach county by county basis. Inform and educate realtors through counties.
- "Sensitive" – wild rice beds listing [chemical treatment applies to waters of state].
- Lake associations – get active as protecting/sensitive. Use of marker buoys to protect rice.

## **TOWER, MN**

### **Management – mainly Big Rice lake and the pickerel weed problem**

#### **Annette's notes**

### **Management – mainly Big Rice lake and the pickerel weed problem**

- Stone Lake – Skibo, general discussion
- Hay Lake – Whiskey road – dam control discussion
- Opening dates on many lakes should be posted
- Green rice law should be enforced
- Maybe local wild rice committees should be established on select stands to monitor season start (major wild rice stands), (contact Tom Bakk or other local legislator to change opening date from current July 15 opener)
- Hand-harvested lake and river rice should be distinctly labeled as separate from paddy grown rice – this should be enforced.
- Ricing hours – limited hours, alternate days are acceptable to most rice harvesters in this group
- Younger people should be encouraged to harvest rice properly
- Stop genetically engineered rice from being added to wild rice market
- Maybe regular meetings regarding rice management could be scheduled – DNR, ricers, etc.

#### **Annette's notes**

[these notes were taken as it became apparent that in Tower the small groups were not going to work, Big Rice Lake was a focal point for almost every discussion...so I took general notes of issues as they came up]

- Interest in relaxing regulations – move width from 36-38, let people pick when want to (comments from an individual)
- "Ripeness" issue – can't enforce, different definitions of ripeness – some felt that it did not hurt the plant to harvest when the seed was still some what in the milky stage as it ripens up after being picked, others held the view that it needs to fully ripen on the stalk. Those wanting to pick it earlier felt that if left to ripen completely, an entire crop could be lost to a storm or wind. Others regarded this as just re-seeding and not a bad thing.
- Ricing hours discussed, many felt 9-3 was adequate, 6 hours plenty of time.
- Nett Lake sets harvest 10 to noon; rests the bed a day; harvests 9-noon; rests another day and never start before Labor Day
- Little Indian Sioux mentioned, early ripening – done by Labor Day this year.
- Wild Rice Harvesting Day mentioned – pull together a group of state and tribal pickers to mentor others.

- Young people – Nett Lake promoting wild rice as part of heritage, have to know how to process. Learn whole process, not just picking.
- Cut in hours – comment that this would really limit harvest for those taking off time from work to harvest
- Canoe length – lengthen out to fit current canoe lengths (both pro and con)
- 7 day license to non-residents okay
- Interest in having a local annual meeting on wild rice issues in the northeast.

**MOLE LAKE, WI**

**Annette's notes**

**Annette's notes - again, no small groups, just general discussion among participants**

- Need to take care of local rice and support anything that helps keeps our beds.
- Helps keep homes heated this winter (by harvesting and selling rice)
- Would like to see legislation to support GMO restriction in Wisconsin
- Education – how to educate both new harvesters and to educate people about difference between paddy and natural wild rice.
- Scientific wild rice conference – get established every 2-3 years.
- Working with Crandon to bring Tribal kids out ricing/view the process (Sokaogon Tribe)
- Too many 'organizations' already, don't need another layer.
- Ways to get youth involved – economics no longer an incentive. Young need to see you do it.
- Want people to know difference between paddy and natural rice; put harvesters out of business (or a decline).

## **Appendix B - Advisory Council Input**

At each meeting, yellow sheets with a series of questions regarding the development of some sort of advisory council for wild rice were handed out. Participants were asked to consider the questions, respond and turn them in before leaving the meeting. Below the responses are organized by meeting and question, with individual responses between semicolons (;). Meetings are listed in the order they were held.

### **Q1. Would you support the creation of a regional wild rice council?**

- **Ball Club:** (blank-1); Yes (12/15) other responses: depends on objectives; if it would benefit wild rice; Not more bureaucracy! Authentic folks! – not more interference
- **Bagley:** Yes (5/5); the ricers need a voice
- **Aitkin:** (blank-1); Yes (19/20); additional comments: only in Minnesota, am concerned with Wisconsin ricers flooding MN lakes if license fee is altered for out of staters; as long as it includes tribal involvement; how would this be funded after its started?; depending what the mission was; depends but probably yes.
- **Webster (WI):** (blank-1); Yes (4/6); I think so.
- **Tower:** Yes (8/8)
- **Mole Lake (WI):** none submitted, open discussion

### **Q2. What role do you see a Regional Wild Rice Council/Circle serving? (purpose?)**

- **Ball Club:** (blank-2); water control!; protecting beds from being harvested too soon – enforcement of regulations & proper practices; protection; keep state and tribal opening dates and hours the same. State opens to soon. Regulate water levels; Grants for marketing and study of under harvest or over harvest; grading lakes (good, fair poor) wild rice crops, determining open up dates on different lakes from north to south; keeping people informed; how to rice, when to rice, protect the rice; when rice is ready, fighting to protect the rice; providing a means of communicating between harvesters and resource managers; education of the general public regarding issues, serving on committees such as Army Corp of Engineers ‘ROPE’ program, teaching how to properly harvest rice, teach people/ricers where do you go to learn now if you don’t know any ricers?’ Advisory only regarding days to pick, boat width, educational (teach children) and research! Keep GMO and hybrid rice out of Minnesota!; make all Minnesota lakes be ceretified to sell natural wild rice organic.
- **Bagley:** issues – in regards to regulations and other concerns as becoming a voice for issues such as management and GMO; prohibiting GMO’s for introduction, regulating dates and times for area lakes; gaining support against genetic engineering of wild rice, monitoring increase or decrease in size and areas of wild rice beds, communication between management and harvesters; protect wild rice, monitor wild rice lakes and field reports on harvested amounts, test lakes for organic process, hold marketing workshops, open communication with other ricers; management input, enhancement, and recruitment.

- **Aitkin:** Identify wild rice beds (old and new), restore and protect from shore line impact; resource for legislators and public education for the general public; to get input from the harvesters instead of having people who have no experience making important decisions for us; better to have more people involved so rice is not lost to the lake because of poor management; hold informational/planning meetings like this one, give a louder voice to public and legislature from folks interested in wild rice, GMO, labeling, etc., Education – public, A mentoring network “Need a Partner” program, a “database” of processors to go to and contacts related to wild rice; educating people about the genuine wild rice, possible mentoring people, teaching people how to rice. Info, much more public, about when a lake is ready for ricing. Having a list of processors available on a website for some advertisement; organizing support for wild rice beds, manage harvest of rice and limit harvest of green rice; clearing house for wild rice information, structure for getting different stake holders together to communicate, resource for legislators seeking information; acting as a forum for wild rice parties (tribes, DNR, DU, etc.) to get together and discuss issues, use the group to advocated to the state for policy issues, acting as a resource for education for new ricers and pairing ricers with mentors; lake management, when rice is ripe, water levels, genome purity; keep tabs on wild rice beds, seasons, etc.; get some points across that are of interest; advisory, coordinating (as in buyers/processors lists), considering a county by county strategy in seeking a prohibition on experimentation with GMO crops or experimental plots; protecting the crop, tending to the lakes to ensure their viability, protecting the current laws, possibly advising to allow each county to have a board, buying info, processor lists and partner connecting; ripeness of rice, landings; coordinate across geographical and cultural boundaries, propose law and rule changes to state legislatures related to wild rice management, harvest and culture, keep wild rice “wild”, no genetic engineering – legislation, provide info on wild rice buyers and processors, coordinate community ed courses on “how to harvest”; education of proper harvesting techniques, setting of ricing schedules and hours, advising state depts. and legislature on wild rice issues and policy; lake depth and lake posting; connect harvesters with processors, advocate for water level controls favorable to rice, public awareness about true “wild” rice; advisement on production, harvesting issues, organic certification and protection.
- **Webster (WI):** consistent education/policy/posting to protect/restore rice beds; regulation enforcement input to tribal and state DNR; include people interested in wild rice from outside GLIFWC/DNR/Tribes. Gather input from more user groups/interest group. Work to ban genetic engineering of wild rice; political – influence regulations at state level, management – identify needs/concerns; preservation of beds, training harvesters; educate public, especially shoreline residents, about protecting rice, form coalition for restoring beds, advocate for no wake zones, buying habitat.
- **Tower:** advising legislature, organizing monitoring of opening or regulation on lakes; monitor rice for ripeness; setting opening date, get this authority back to the local DNR & 1854 Treaty Authority, get information from wide areas and interest to make sound decisions for long range planning; be a regional voice for wild rice management/regulations; speaking with a larger voice; addressing hours, water levels,

etc. Encouraging planting of conifers around outlets to discourage beavers; improve lake crops more consistent; it would provide harvesters an avenue for input on wild rice issues.

- **Mole Lake (WI):** none submitted, however discussion included the concern regarding paddy rice being sold as “wild rice” and the need to educate the public regarding the difference.

**Q3. What ideas do you have about the structure and representation of a regional council?**

- **Ball Club:** (blank -7); to be subsidized as the special interest groups; local wild ricers on state regulated lakes form a committee. Communicate between Reservation controlled lakes and DNR; Training in high school about our rice – we have to encourage our young people to carry on; state and tribal together for control and protection of rice beds; have harvesters sit on this council; circular rather than pyramidal; Tribal, DNR, harvesters, processors, historians, climatologist (climate change), geneticist (GMO and hybrid); support keeping rice as it is – bar GMO rice.
- **Bagley:** no ideas yet;?; experienced ricing people need to be on the committee, regional chairperson for gathering info; 2 people from – wild rice lake areas/ and or past rice lakes, 1 key contact, 2<sup>nd</sup> alternate, Representation should include local, state, tribal, ricers, finishers; keep it simple, for structure, representation should include everyone who harvests rice or has a concern for rice. It should include non-residents and Indians too.
- **Aitkin:** (blank – 6); would only be a council for recommendation and all parties involved should be invited to participate; monthly or bi-monthly meetings of representatives and a website for info for everyone; problems can be cross checked from area to area; don’t know enough; within regions, equal membership of tribal and non-tribal harvest excluding reservation; initial formation could follow a trade or interest group (founded by membership fee), could tie into DU or umbrella under other organization; representation from DU, DNR, tribes, 1854 Treaty Authority, ceded territories, harvesters, processors; stop rice coming in from California. Have a voice!; that can be worked out; none at this time; need tribal and non-tribal harvesters – Regional, Regional Tribal/State Natural Resource Departments; Ricers with more than 10 ears experience some that sell their pick and some that have it processed, DNR official, Ducks Unlimited; some members from all stake holder groups including native, DNR, harvesters, processors; Made up of DNR representation, harvesters, sales organizations, accredited agricultural advisors.
- **Webster (WI):** (blank-1); need more info but obviously significant tribal/elder rep is vital; work with tribal and state inform.; none at the this time; broad cross section including various representatives from state, tribe, local; all interested/affected parties should be represented (harvesters, managers, duck hunters, shoreline owners), structure – informal with emphasis on open communication and problem solving

- **Tower:** (blank-1): lots of tribal involvement; promote responsible harvesting, local DNR, 1854 Treaty Authority, experienced area ricers; agencies and interested citizens; loose to the point of ineffectiveness composed by those who show up; cross section of people interested. Ricers, buyers, processors, etc.; open to discuss, computers, send more surveys; I'm not sure about structure but it should have broad representation – maybe one processor as well as harvesters, should have DNR reps also.

**Q4. Are there other ways we might organize?**

- **Ball Club:** (blank-10); email – with Annette and join White Earth Land Recovery and have MCT [Minnesota Chippewa Tribe] support all; maybe form a natural wild ricers club (with a membership) with different chapters, organize like a sportsmans club – have fundraisers to hire a lobbyist at the capital, magazine/newsletter sort of like Ducks Unlimited, caps/shirts, etc.; use of GIS to facilitate data-sharing; mailing list; state DNR to work with rice committees or form committees on state controlled lakes.
- **Bagley:** ?; rice convention; ask for tribal input for surrounding areas that are usual and accustomed areas; all avenues need to be considered on all levels of opportunity – some people won't be included at first due to communication etc. But effective communication will widen the circle; Perhaps we could use the model that trappers use. A state trapper's organization, a state wild ricer organization? It could happen.
- **Aitkin:** (blank-9); email newsgroup; non-profit organization, 501-C3, state organized with tribal representation – like state Indian Affairs Council; the more the merrier. Marrying with the tribes and the branches of the DNR that pertain to wild rice would be great; web based newsletter; website / discussion board; setting lakes regulation separately and having individuals interested in that lake managing it; better or even ratio of people who are on wild rice committees between tribal and non-tribal; Good question! Let me think about that for awhile; all ricers and duck hunters can opt to give membership for “association”; reps from tribes, government orgs, processors, marketers, pickers, etc.; wild ricers association of Minnesota.
- **Webster (WI):** (blank-5); share data – we've been mapping rice beds for 3 years, need meetings to be local – so maybe have sub-groups?
- **Tower:** (blank-7); computers, written surveys.

**Q5. How do you see yourself participating in a regional wild rice council?**

- **Ball Club:** 14 names
- **Bagley:** 5 names
- **Aitking:** 15 names
- **Webster(WI):** 5 names
- **Tower:** 7 names

- **Mole Lake (WI):** none submitted

**Q6. What would you like to see as next steps?**

- **Ball Club:** (blank-10); Formation of above organizations; airplane observation information given out before season (air photos); actually get the council going; must include Canada (Manitoba and Ontario); formation of council/circle and establishment of regular schedule of communications with managers.
- **Bagley:** more participation from agencies; future gathering; communication and meetings to discuss formation of wild rice council; would like to see a regional council support the ‘Keep it Wild’ campaign (WELRP), get legislation statewide passed – then stricter USDA guidelines for future; Well for starters we need a mission statement...we need to recruit more ricers...we need to update laws.
- **Aitkin:** (blank-9); setting up a website, having an initial meeting; trying a set of lakes managed by individuals in that lake; more of a break down on tribal and non-tribal lakes; more meetings, updates, info that you have gathered available; create membership, write by-laws get 501-C3 non-profit status; another meeting perhaps to draw up a wild rice council list of advisory points for the DNR to consider and/or for the council to work on as a mission statement (if you will); getting closer to a council; summary of meeting results – findings on DNR harvesting surveys, identification of funds to support efforts, “take a kid ricing day for free” no charge or license; access to Ms. Drewes published work; definition of objectives; keep counties informed.
- **Webster (WI):** (blank-4); Notice of progress, next meeting; develop training, ideas and council.
- **Tower:** (blank-5); come up with a group of interested people/groups; organizations meeting and eventually a possible good plan for enhancing our wild rice resources; follow up meetings.
- **Mole Lake (WI):** nothing submitted

## **Appendix C - Individual Issue Responses**

At each meeting (except Mole Lake) harvesters were asked as they came in to identify 3-4 issues that they would like to see discussed at the meeting, by filling out a small slip of paper. These individual issues were then grouped to create discussion groups for the second half of the meeting. I felt it was important, since issues were ‘grouped’ at the meetings, to somewhere list the issues each participant in the meeting identified. Below, again listed by meeting, are the responses received from individuals. Individual responses are separated by bullets.

### **Ball Club**

- When is paddy rice going to be not advertised as good rice? Why do the stores sell cream wild rice soup – plain is better (healthier)? What is the rice council for?
- Dam operation by USACE on Winni and Leech Lake
- Worms, opening season too early
- Keep the carp out
- Keep GMO wild rice out of entire rice range, Pass Legislation! Stop research on hybrid paddy rice. Do not lengthen hours or permit wider boats. Open rice season no earlier than Aug. 15.
- Has the issue regarding paddy rice sold as wild rice ever been resolved? Why doesn't the price go up for green rice? Same as 20-30 years ago.
- Talk about organic certification of MN lakes.
- To stop changing the genetics of wild rice. When to open the season. More enforcement on the lakes not just on the landings. Reseeding lake with own seed.
- Need to stop the genetic wild rice. Need to control picking before it's ready. Need to control the water levels. Need to have the state reseed and keep these big boats and their wake out of the rice bed areas.
- Everything scheduled
- Keep worms from rice. Water on lakes and rivers should controlled, regulate level. State and tribal harvesting opening dates same. No genetic wild rice/ keep it natural.
- Genetic change/wild rice. Marketing Wild rice. Pricing.
- State and tribal harvesting opening and hours same. No genetic wild rice/ keep it natural. Regulating water levels. Need to keep portions of rice for re-seeding.
- Opening of lakes – more regulation by the knowledgeable. Changing hours to go later so working people can get out there. On line reports on lakes – ripeness, readiness and crop size.
- The prices. The hours.
- Protecting the rice. Why the rice seems to be disappearing.
- The price of rice. Who and when they decide to open beds.
- Annual survey reports. Non-resident harvesting. Processing methods. Opening dates on rice beds.
- Protecting rice bed. Know when to harvest. Enforcement on regulations.

**Bagley**

- Regulations concerning selling rice. Appreciate not having them. As a non-native how can I know what lakes I can rice
- GMO's, marketing wild rice. Advisory Council: oversee protection
- GMO's, management issues, forming rice committees
- How's gene modified rice being held off. How to inform public of how to process and cook rice properly. DU and WMA lakes – a list of maintained ones.
- Genetically modified wild rice. Keeping license fees low. Sustainable harvest. Decrease or increase in wild rice beds.
- Hours. Fees. Reliable. Posting lakes.

**Aitkin**

- I think things are pretty good and we don't need to make many (if any) changes.
- Lack of processors. Basic lack of info when to start harvesting local lakes. Observation from shore is tough. Marketing labels. Hours of ricing.
- Starting time/ending time 10:00 to 4:00 p.m. Starting date: by county – when is the rice ready? Processing locations. Web site information.
- Proposed new hours. Proposed width of canoes. Nonresident license. Posting of Onamia lake so that it doesn't get harvested.
- The posting of wild rice opening on Lake Onamia. The 1939 law requiring one to be from 4 townships only in order to harvest Onamia Lake. Who is in charge of MN waters not in Reservation areas. Why is MN DNR giving right to Mille Lac's American Indians to post for opening of harvest for wild rice.
- Decline in number of harvesters. Need to teach/mentor people who want to learn. Threats to wild rice habitat/lake development (ie. people move to wild rice lakes and perceive it as a nuisance, not a valuable resource)
- Promoting wild rice products. Development along rice lakes.
- More room to polling(?) at end of day. End at 4:00 p.m.
- Season. Water depth control. Lake posting
- Genetic modification of wild rice. Processor list. Buyer list. DNR intentions (real intentions/motives)
- Genetic modification of wild rice. Processor list. Buyer list. DNR intentions (real intentions/motives)
- C.O. know the bylaws. Access'. GMO's. DNR intentions (real intentions/motives)
- GMO's. "Proper" management and NOT mismanagement; accountability of wild rice. Fixing and maintaining our landings/accesses. The future for harvesting by hand for the generations to come. (Protecting the lakes for MN and WI)
- Season – posting. Water control. Access.
- Season, dates! Water control. Access to beds. License cost (too high now)
- List of processors for small quantities. Clearer posting of ripe vs. green areas. Class/training on how to do processing.
- Harvesting of green rice. Lake water level. Genetic modification. Processing wild/vs paddy
- Setting of harvesting open dates. Monitoring of harvesting. Management of rice beds and quality of species.
- Start of season from state's position! Water levels. Prohibit genetic rice.

## Wild Rice Harvester Meetings – Jan/Feb 2007

- Lack of batch processors. Water quality for rice lakes. Shore and development effect on rice. Need for maps showing rice locations.
- No non-residents. Hour leave alone. Keep boat size the same.

### Webster

- Regulation of watershed effect on rice beds.
- Minnesota non-resident ricing. How cabin septic systems affect rice bed. Mandating training for new harvesters. Establish training for all harvesters.
- Difference between paddy rice and wild. How low water level is going to affect Rice. Why some lakes posted and others not.
- Mud Lake, Oakland water level. Lake opening postings.
- Shoreline development. Education public. Protecting wild rice from paddy rice.
- Explain threats to rice in our region? What is being done to address threats. Poor info on opening. Communication between reg. agencies.

### Tower

- Lake posting. Lake mgmt – water levels, competing vegetation. Development pressure
- Certification of ripe
- Why has wild rice crop been getting poorer? Lowering elevation of Big Rice Lake
- Big Rice Lake. Green rice law enforcement. Water level management.
- Dates. Hours. Rice plants – processing. License?
- Ricing hours. Price of license. Access to rice lakes. Web site. Improve existing crops.
- Regulations. – picking hours. Define “green” rice. Setting opening days, etc. Big Rice Lake – problems.
- How is ricing license money spent on rice management?

**Mole Lake** – not handed out due to small size of group, issues were invited from all participants

## **Appendix D - Write in comments**

### **Letters received via email or regular mail, not incorporated into summaries.**

- Received from a long time tribal harvester (50 yrs), Ball Club Region: First [concern] is do not let non-Minnesota residents on rice beds, the beds get beat up enough with the pressure they get and I mean even off the reservation on state waters. Very bad idea. Canoe width just fine, they make a wide enough trail in rice beds and let rice have a chance to stand up. Do not change hours to rice, just fine from 9 to 3. At least you know if anyone is having trouble in bed, maybe tipped over if they do not return to landing by like 4 or so. When ricing off reservation is being able to call a conservation officer or some one who will be able to answer questions about hours or when beds would be opened. Most wardens are not very smart about wild rice. State has made license costs so high that people have trouble paying for it if there is like the parents and a couple of kids. It could be over \$100 if kids are 17 years old and it's usually low income people trying to get a little extra money. Thank you for letting me voice my concerns.

- I received the wild rice harvester survey you sent. I am pleased that there is concern for this dying activity which is, to many, a tradition and yearly source of income and food. I have been harvesting wild rice for about 18 years. I wish I would have discovered it before I did, then maybe I would have more knowledge about it. When I did begin, I really enjoyed it and have gotten to love it. I look forward to ricing season every year. I think that if others knew what it was like, they might feel the same way.

I do have many concerns about what is now happening with the harvest. There is no longer posting of lakes. I know that it is impossible to monitor and post all lakes, but why aren't the bigger beds like Big Sandy Flowage, Dean Lake, Mallard Lake, Big Rice Lake and Vermillion River posted anymore?

The cost of a permit almost doubled but a person has to check the rice himself. This becomes a problem when ricing beds are over 100 miles away and cost prohibits necessary monitoring. Also, there are people who begin harvesting the beds when they are still green. There is a certain pair I know of that brag about opening up Dean and Mallard. They begin harvesting too early and others, who think this pair are knowledgeable, will follow suit. Some of the prime ricing beds are wrecked before the rice has a chance to be ready.

I always go and check all of the big state beds before the season so I know which ones have a good crop. It would be nice to be informed when they are ripe and ready to harvest. I also think that more people would buy permits if they knew where to go, when to go and of course, if they knew there was a good crop.

I think that selling a 7-day permit for non-residents would be a good thing. I have heard that other states like Michigan and Wisconsin don't have rice crops that are as good as Minnesota. There are people, a lot of them Native Americans, that would like to experience the high-quality crops that we have here in Minnesota.

I think also that if hours were changed, for example 8 AM- 12 Noon and then 4 PM to sunset, more people would come out. Many people that like to rice can't get away from work, so they don't even bother to go. If they had the option to go out after work for a few hours, they would buy a permit and get out into the rice beds.

There are a lot of ricers that don't harvest from any lakes that are off the reservations

because they don't have the information about openings and crop information. They only pay \$2.00 for a permit on Leech Lake Reservation and usually do well ricing there. Many Native people would like to rice off the reservation. If they had the proper information, they would buy a state permit.

Another thing that should be brought to the public's attention is the difference between paddy rice and lake/river Wild Rice. In my opinion, they should make it illegal for the cultivated or paddy rice to bear the name "Wild Rice." It is grown in a paddy and harvested by machines. Do we call corn grown and cultivated in a field wild corn?

I think if the public, especially tourists, were taught the difference, they, of course, would prefer hand-harvested true wild rice. The demand for real wild rice would increase and boost the economy. This would give people living in poverty who count on the ricing income a chance to make more money and support their families.

This season comes right around the opening of school each year, just when people need extra money to pay for school clothes and school supplies. Many people rely on this income. No child should have to go without new clothes, etc. when the source of income could possibly be made available.

The 2006 season was decent. It was also the longest season I recall having. There was, however, a problem with low water in many places. Still, we managed to do all right. I would say Big Sandy flowage was the biggest producer for us and many others. There was a huge crop and enough water so poling the canoe was easy.

For me and others I know, the harvesting of wild rice is not so much about making money and stocking the pantry as it is an adventure and an experience that takes me all over the Beautiful Northern Minnesota Wild Country. I have introduced a lot of people to ricing and they have enjoyed it. I know that ricing isn't for everyone, (which is a good thing) but it should be taken care of and kept alive. (Minnesota ricer)

- I have been ricing for many years now and was surprised and disappointed when the license fee doubled. Most of the people I know that harvest wild rice are low income people who harvest to supplement their food supply. Wild ricing is no longer something people do for "sport" or the "experience" as was once the case. The only people I know ricing now do it for the food value and the higher license fee hurts and discourages them. Is there any way the fee could be dropped back to a nominal amount (or no fee at all) if you are not harvesting for resale. I can see a fee for commercial harvesting but wild rice is a food that should be available to the poor who need it just like any other foraged wild food like berries, etc. I am currently involved in organizing some educational workshops on wild ricing, which, I believe, is the best way to teach ricers and would-be ricers the value, both real and historical, of this resource, and to help prevent inadvertent harm to the crop.
- I have harvested Wild Rice for 24 years, mainly in the Aitkin County area of Minnesota. I was introduced to Wild Rice through a friend of mine who I still pick rice with. One of the blessings I have enjoyed is that my friend has always educated me on all facets of picking Wild Rice. My apprenticeship is still in progress. Early on I was taught the nuances of what constituted "green" rice, the proper way to pick rice without damaging the plant and knowing when a stand of rice should be left alone because it was not ripe yet. There are many other things I have learned but my comments will be limited to the above mentioned area's for this discussion. The largest abuses I see every year are picking Green rice and destroying a lot of plants in the process that would bear rice if allowed to ripen. One could argue that some of this abuse is driven by wholesale purchasers of rice who buy rice as it comes off the patty.

The pickers in this case are interested in the income gained selling their rice to the wholesaler at the expense of the rice crop. One possible solution to this abuse is to delay the opening of the season until the rice is ripe. In the past, the DNR has delayed opening some patty's for ricing by posting them as closed to regulate when the people were allowed to harvest. When the rice got ripe enough, they would re-post it as open and people were allowed to rice. I have not seen patty's posted for a few years now and assumed that the practice had stopped. I think posting the major patty's as open or closed is a great way to protect the rice. The problem for the DNR is that this takes a lot of time and energy checking on when a patty is ready for picking. Budgets, time and man power are usually major factors. My rice partner does a lot of scouting and actually PUTS in a canoe to check on the status of the rice. There is no other way to positively know if rice is ripe other than to get in a canoe and check it. Seeing rice on a patty does not mean it is ripe. After so many years of picking in a certain area, my partner and I know which patty's generally ripen before others.

The Native Americans relied on their elders to tell them when to pick and this worked well for them. I believe the DNR could institute a similar "system" to help regulate the opening of major patty's. Volunteers from certain key area's could have a meeting with DNR personnel prior to the rice season and choose a couple major patty's to monitor. These same "volunteers" are out there scouting the rice anyway and know the status as well as anyone would because they are interested in knowing when the rice is ready to pick.

By tapping this knowledge source(people who have picked for years, know when the rice is ripe and are out scouting anyway) the DNR would have a better handle when to post MAJOR RICE PATTY's as open. A phone call by a volunteer to the DNR representative in the area would give the DNR their best source of information.

The DNR could open the rice season on a general date and accurately post the major patty's openings on a patty by patty basis. Major rice crops would not be subjected to pickers trying to pick a week or two weeks before the rice is ripe( as is happening now)More plants would survive to produce rice throughout the season. Harvesters picking Wild Rice for profit would be better regulated. ( I have never seen anyone ticketed for picking green rice-Wardens cannot be everywhere at once).

No system is going to be perfect, but the above suggestions would be a step in the right direction to the abuses befalling wild rice now. There is room for fine tuning of these idea's. Take it and run with it and thank you for letting me comment.

- I intended to make the wild rice harvester meeting on Feb 5 in Tower, but the weather and temperature were just too extreme for me to travel from Duluth, especially at night. If I had attended, my comments would have been about promoting an activity which I think is very enjoyable and satisfying. I think many more people would try it if they knew more about the how, where, when, etc, Personally, I would like some instructions on how to finish the raw rice the old way from start to finish, and a list of commercial finishers, their fees, etc.

I am not an old hand at gathering wild rice, but I have done it for a few years on my own just for the enjoyment of being out at that time of the year. I've studied the history of ricing by Native Americans, a subject which I think many others would find interesting and encouragement to try it. Please keep me informed of your progress.