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**Statement by Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Hearing on the EPA's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request
Witness: Hon. Gina McCarthy, Administrator of the EPA
February 26, 2015**

Washington, DC – U.S. Representative Betty McCollum (DFL-MN), ranking Democrat on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, delivered the following statement in today's hearing with the Environmental Protection Agency's administrator, Gina McCarthy, regarding consultation with tribal nations on the issue of water quality standards for wild rice in Minnesota and across the Lake Superior basin:

Administrator McCarthy, an issue I feel very strongly about as do many Members on this sub-committee is the government-to-government relationship between federal agencies and sovereign tribal nations.

As you know, in Minnesota and across the Lake Superior basin mining companies are seeking the opportunity to mine copper and nickel which has a very high potential to contaminate our waters.

For tribal nations in Minnesota, wild rice is a traditional crop with important economic, sacred and cultural significance.

Let me be clear, without full consultation and consent with impacted tribal nations, the EPA should not even consider lowering water quality standards for wild rice. EPA should be promulgating a wild rice water quality rule across the Great Lakes basin.

This is not an issue of following the science, but it is an issue of fully honoring and respecting treaty rights with sovereign tribal nations.

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