

Wild Rice (Manoomin) in the Tamarack Region: Value, Abundance, and Need for Protection



Manoomin, or wild rice, grows in the shallows of Minnesota's lakes and streams. It has a unique value.

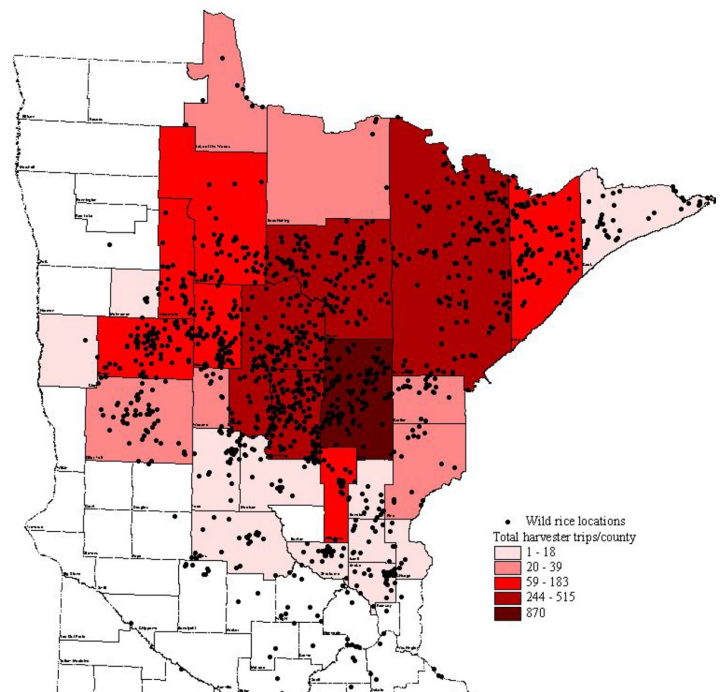
Kelly Applegate, Commissioner of Natural Resources for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, explains, "Manoomin is a way of life for our people here at Mille Lacs. It's our identity."

Tania Aubid, raised in the East Lake community, shares, "My first memory of wild rice is going down to the boat landing and seeing the grandmas and grandpas come off the lake."

Wild rice is abundant in the Tamarack Region. Minnesota surveys showed that Aitkin County had the most wild rice harvesting trips of any Minnesota county.

Rights of the Ojibwe/Chippewa to harvest wild rice are protected by treaties. For many Bands, access to wild rice off-reservation is critical for economic and food sovereignty.

Non-Native harvesters also rely on the Tamarack region for wild rice. In some years, 35% of wild rice processed in Finland, MN can come from the Sandy Lake area.



Harvester Trips by County

Wild Rice (Manoomin) Importance for Nutrition, Fish, Habitat, and Future Generations

Dr. Emily Onello says that wild rice has a nutritional profile that promotes health. “Generally speaking, the more we study wild rice, the more we recognize the wisdom that Native groups have had all along, calling it a great superfood.”



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Don Wedll, former Natural Resources Commissioner for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, explains, “There are fish because wild rice holds these vertebrates, invertebrates and all these little organisms; it’s an excellent place to grow fish.”

Jean Skinaway-Lawrence, Chairwoman of the Sandy Lake Band of Mississippi Chippewa, emphasizes, “To protect our resources—it’s a covenant. We were always told to protect. It’s something that’s ingrained in us . . . The rice for us, is everything.”

