

# Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes

Resolution No. 07-22

## Opposing the proposed Wild Rice Specialty Crop Act

- WHEREAS,** the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes (MAST) is an intertribal organization representing the thirty-three (33) federally recognized tribes and four (4) inter-tribal organizations in the States of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Iowa, each having sovereign authority to govern their own affairs; and
- WHEREAS,** MAST's mission is to "advance, protect, preserve, and enhance the mutual interests, treaty rights, sovereignty, and cultural way of life of the sovereign nations of the Midwest;" and
- WHEREAS,** the inherent sovereign rights of Tribal governments are advanced within their respective Treaties, Constitutions and Laws, and are supported within provisions of the Constitution of the United States, and within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and subsequent international actions; and
- WHEREAS,** wild rice (manoomin, the food that grows on water) has been a traditional food for Tribal Peoples for as long as we have lived in the Great Lakes region. The rice has also been a major food source for many in the animal world; and
- WHEREAS,** wild rice continues to be traditionally harvested annually by Tribal people, and is consumed by our families as a healthy traditional food. It is an integral part of traditional feasts and ceremonies, and it is an important part of tribal economies as a naturally occurring food product; and
- WHEREAS,** designation of wild rice as the state grain has been made by Minnesota and Michigan which has laid the ground work for expanded work to protect the wild rice habitat; and
- WHEREAS,** wild rice in its natural habitat is the subject of ongoing recovery and protection programs in the Midwest with participation of Tribal, State and Federal government agencies along with local authorities and organizations; and
- WHEREAS,** threats to wild rice and its habitats are viewed very seriously by Tribal peoples. One such threat is proposed federal legislation tentatively titled "Wild Rice Specialty Crop Act". This act would change the status of wild rice from a wild natural product to a commercial crop and further blur the distinction between paddy grown rice and naturally occurring wild rice; and
- WHEREAS,** the pressure on growers under this new designation would very likely lead to development of new strains of "wild rice" more suited to commercial paddy growing and harvesting. These strains mixing with the naturally occurring wild rice genes are a threat to the natural wild rice's ability to survive in its environment. This has immense cultural

and spiritual impacts on Tribal peoples as well as potential impacts on wildlife and natural habitats; and

**WHEREAS,** while commercial growers are backing the proposed legislation, Tribes are opposed, believing we have a duty to protect our lifeways, and the plants and animals on which we depend to support those lifeways.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes supports the protection of manoomin, the food that grows on water, as a sacred traditional food; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes is opposed to legislation such as the Wild Rice Specialty Crop Act that would allow further commercialization of domesticated and/or genetically modified “wild rice”; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that this will remain the policy of the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes until repealed or rescinded by subsequent resolution.

**CERTIFICATION**

I, the undersigned, as President of the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes, do hereby Certify that the foregoing Resolution No. 07-22 was passed on December 15, 2022, at a duly called meeting at which a quorum was present with \_\_\_\_ voting for, \_\_\_\_ voting against, and \_\_\_\_ abstaining.



Rebecca Richards, President