

From: [Jan Eckert](#)
To: [Shelly L Armstrong](#); [Archive](#)
Subject: Attn: Newsroom Community Meetings Address Wild Rice
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Community meetings are being scheduled in communities throughout Michigan that contain wild rice populations. Wild rice populations have declined throughout much of the plant's native range due in large part to human impacts. In an effort to share information and ultimately restore rice populations, Dr. Scott Herron, an assistant Biology professor at Ferris State University, has been planning a series of community meetings and a conference in coalition with the Native American communities and others throughout Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon.

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Collaborative project to build regional network to sustain wild rice

BIG RAPIDS, Mich. – Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin have significant populations of wild rice, or *manoomin*, as the Ojibwe Indians call it. Wild rice populations, however, have declined throughout much of the plant's native range due in large part to human impacts. In an effort to share information and ultimately restore rice populations, Dr. Scott Herron, an assistant Biology professor at Ferris State University, has been planning a series of community meetings and a conference in coalition with the Native American communities and others throughout Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. This coalition includes universities, community colleges, non-profits, tribal and local governments, and federal and state agencies.

Community meetings are being scheduled in communities that contain wild rice populations around Michigan. They will begin as early as this spring in Houghton Lake, Manistee, Mount Pleasant, Muskegon, Sault Sainte Marie and Watersmeet. The series of meetings will identify local issues related to wild rice ecosystems and population, and gather information for use in coordinating management, use and restoration of wild rice. While the community meetings are currently focused in Michigan, it is hoped that they can provide a template for similar meetings in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The Wild Rice Restoration and Preservation Conference will be held August 8 through 11. The planning efforts for this regional conference are being co-chaired by Herron and Patrick Robinson, Environmental Restoration Outreach coordinator for the University of Wisconsin Extension and the Great Lakes Regional Water Program, a partnership between Land Grant universities and the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service. The conference is being hosted by the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians of Watersmeet and will be held at the Lac Vieux Desert Resort and Casino.

The conference steering committee hopes that representation from all three states attend the conference and help in reflecting the conference theme of "Sharing Perspectives and

Building Community.” This joining together brings hopes that each person will share knowledge and take away new knowledge about wild rice. At the conference, training will be given in the areas of wild rice identification, harvesting, management of abundant and threatened species of wild rice, restoration, processing, recipes, culture and the role wild rice plays in Ojibwe spirituality. There will also be opportunities to learn about the latest issues related to commercial production of wild rice.

“All people that have interacted with wild rice or its ecosystems have an important story that we are interested in hearing,” said Herron. “You will be able to hear other people’s stories about rice ecosystems, good and bad, and share your stories, in an effort to help our wild rice coalition compile local issues related to rice for future management and restoration plans.”

Robinson added, “We truly hope that this conference further stimulates ongoing collaborative efforts and generates future cooperation. It will take a community effort built upon shared understanding to ensure that wild rice is not only part of our present, but also a thriving part of our future.”

For more information on the wild rice conference call Herron at (231) 591-2087, herrons@ferris.edu, or Robinson at (920) 465-2175, Patrick.robinson@ces.uwex.edu.



Wild Rice Conference 1.JPG

CAPTION – Gale Nobes, USDA soil scientist and Muskegon River Watershed Assembly chair, and Greg Mund, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Muskegon River Watershed Assembly Data Repository chair, are pictured harvesting wild rice from upper Hamlin Lake near Ludington and Manistee.

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