



Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force

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Date: December 16, 2025
To: Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force
From: Nick Nero, Research Analyst
RE: Submitted Written Testimony

Written Testimony

Gregory Oja

I forage for mushrooms and berries on public lands. Fyi, in Finland, a person can forage on any land regardless of ownership. I could see where commercial scale harvesting on public lands should be looked at for regulation, but I would advise against requiring permits and/or licenses for foraging for personal use. Also, please remember that the indigenous peoples have treaty gathering rights that cannot be infringed upon.

Jennie Stackhouse

I believe that foraging should be allowed on public land AND remain unpermitted for recreation and personal use. Foraging is something that is done by many cultures, people from all backgrounds and encourages people to get outside. I believe that permitting could ultimately create a road block for people and limit their use of public lands.

Foraging is also a fun hobby for all ages. I remember looking for plants and mushrooms as a child. I would go every year to my special spot and see if the morels popped up yet. It was exciting to find one but also exciting to find something new as I was looking around. This hobby is one of the reasons I grew up playing in the outdoors and eventually made my career in the field of natural resources. Now I enjoy harvesting in all seasons and learning different types of plants, mushrooms and their uses. Although, I don't always go out with the intention of foraging, but may find something on my hike that I want to identify and/or take for personal use. If I needed a permit and didn't have one, would I get fined when I get back to my vehicle? I think the concern of getting in trouble would start to discourage people from foraging at all, which would limit the fun of learning plants and mushrooms.

Teaching sustainable harvesting techniques would be a better practice than permitting. Permitting doesn't teach anything and seems like putting natural resources behind a pay wall. My suggestion would be to teach sustainable harvesting in an online class leading to certification (similar to DNR Hunter-Safety course). Organizations that already teach sustainable harvest, like Minnesota Mycology Society, could be collaborated with for creating a training. This sustainable harvest training would be required for people that harvest large quantities for commercial or business use. It would be optional (but still encouraged) for those taking items for personal use. Most people naturally know this practice, especially indigenous people and those that forage for personal use near their home. Plants and mushrooms are gifts from nature that can grow plentiful, but usually only when sustainably harvested.

Please take this letter into consideration for providing input to the DNR.

Tim Charles

Hi, I'm a resident of St Paul MN and I want to voice my support for maintaining foraging access to the public on State lands. Foraging on state lands is important to me as I don't own property to forage on, as well as state parks and managed areas are much closer and more convenient for access. I fully support a permitting system that would include a best practices training program to teach people how to not overharvest, as well as to raise awareness about controlling invasive species. MN has done these things for anglers and hunters, it's time for foraging to be added to the list of ways Minnesotans can get out and enjoy our beautiful state.

Mary Jo Peterson

Good afternoon. I am writing to say that we pick blueberries wherever we can find them in Minnesota. We live in Mille Lacs County on Lake Mille Lacs. While we are willing to drive all over to pick berries, it would be nice to be able to pick inside of our state parks. Michigan provides burn maps and years they were burned to help blueberry picking, mushroom and other berry pickers as well as hunters. If MN did that it would make it so much easier for foragers and hunters to be successful.

Thomas E. Casey, Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas, Inc.

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas is a Minnesota non-profit, tax exempt corporation whose mission is to advocate for the establishment, use, management, and perpetuation of Minnesota's scientific and natural areas in an undisturbed natural state.

Legislative Recommendations

Recognizing that the Legislature requested recommendations that are “... science-based, including traditional ecological knowledge, foraging guidelines for state lands that balance public access and foraging opportunities with conservation needs ...” (Chapter 1, Article 4 Section 24, First Special Session, 2025), we respectfully request the proposed “sustainable foraging” legislation include:

A. Reaffirm that foraging is prohibited on Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas.

As explained on page 2 of this document, foraging is prohibiting on scientific and natural areas.

B. Other State Land (state parks, wildlife management areas; state forests, etc.)

1. Prohibit all foraging in state parks.
2. Prohibit foraging for commercial use on other state lands, except under license.
3. Establish a moratorium on foraging on state land for any state-listed “special concern” species and other species where science is lacking on what constitutes an ecologically sustainable harvest.
4. Subject to #3, establish harvest limits for commercial and personal use for all foraging activities on state lands, consistent with ecological sustainability of the resource.

C. Licensing

1. Where foraging is not otherwise prohibited, a license shall be required for all commercial foraging and restricted to Minnesota residents.
2. All commercial licensees shall report the species and amount collected each season.
3. Establish a voluntary registration program for non-commercial foraging.

D. Funding – Establish adequate funding for DNR to:

1. Hire botanist/ecological position(s) to:
 - a. Define ecologically sustainable harvest limits;
 - b. Develop a public awareness program on sustainable foraging; and
 - c. Research foraging impacts, develop recommendations, and report to legislature for future legislation and/or rules for sustainable foraging harvesting.
2. Increase law enforcement capabilities to enforce foraging laws.

3. Submit an annual sustainable foraging report to the legislature prior to each session.

E. Non-Commercial Foraging Regulations

We reserve the right – and request the opportunity - to review and comment on whether or not current foraging regulations on state land adequately protect the natural resource.

F. Native American Treaty Rights.

We recognize the foraging on state lands may be subject to Native American treaty rights.

Legal Requirements of Scientific and Natural Areas

Our mission is consistent with the legal purpose – and administrative requirements - of the scientific and natural areas program:

“State scientific and natural areas; purpose; resource and site qualifications; administration; designation. (a) A state scientific and natural area shall be established to protect and perpetuate in an undisturbed natural state those natural features which possess exceptional scientific or educational value.” [Minn. Stat. 86A.05, Subd. 5(a). Emphasis added.]

"State scientific and natural areas shall be administered ... in a manner consistent with the purposes of this subdivision to preserve, perpetuate, and protect from unnatural influences the scientific and educational resources within them." [Minn. Stat. 86A.05, Subd. 5(c). Emphasis added.]

Therefore, state law does not allow foraging on scientific and natural areas, since any such activities will have an ecological impact by disrupting natural processes.

On behalf of Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas, I thank you for your kind consideration.

Betsy Nelson

I have been enjoying watching videos of past meetings and also sitting in on the meeting yesterday morning. There are so many facets to foraging! I have always enjoyed being in nature and exploring, and one of my first memories of being truly engaged is discovering the wintergreen plant on a camping trip with my family in northern Minnesota. I picked a leaf (OMG, did I break the law as a 6 year old?) and smelled it and was so amazed that there was a plant growing out in the world that smelled like chewing gum. Anyway, since I have always been ‘plant curious’ and love to go see, touch, smell and sometimes taste the trees and plants that grow in the world I live in. I

am an herbalist and forager and while I am fortunate enough to have a yard and garden of my own, there are still plants that are abundant in Theodore Wirth Park, my main woods walk, that I do gather to make food and medicine.

Most herbalist and foragers that I know deeply love and connect with nature, and are considerate and cautious with not disturbing the environment while gathering the edible and medicinal plants they want to work with. I like to say that a walk in the woods is so much richer when you know the names of the plants, trees, birds and bugs around you. It is like going to a big party where you know so many of the guests which so much more fun than going to an event where you know no one. Personally, the more I learn, the more I want to learn. It is so interesting to learn the names of the plants, their history of whether they are native plants or introduced, and invasive or endangered. I also think it is very important to know which plants to respect and give their space....such as poison ivy, stinging nettle, wild parsnip and water hemlock. I feel like there is such a great opportunity to educate Minnesotans about the value of all the wildlife that lives in this amazing and beautiful state with us.

I volunteer to pull garlic mustard and buckthorn through the Quaking Bog and also Eloise Butler Wildflower garden. One time I had arranged through the park board to get a group of folks together to pull garlic mustard. When emailing the contact for the park, I had asked if the garlic mustard was safe to eat...meaning not sprayed. The contact person had to call me and say that we could eat the garlic mustard, but she had to call and not email because then she would get in trouble for park board sanctioned foraging. We both agreed this is ridiculous, but here we are. The surest way to be miserable is to argue with reality.

As far as “personal use” and what constitutes a ‘large quantity’ I think it is important to know that most of the plants that are being sought after have a specific season and many folks to forage for food and medicine are often preserving, dehydrating, or freezing what they have gathered for future enjoyment. I was out walking through Theodore Wirth Park on day and found a gentleman gathering stinging nettles with a large clippers. He had three black trash bags filled with nettles. That was about 5 years ago, and trust me, the nettles are still incredibly abundant in that area still.

I would love to see more education, and always say my dream job would be to be a ‘Concierge of the Forest’ to help folks meet and appreciate all the nature we are so fortunate to have around us and break through that ‘green wall’. There is a book I loved called ‘The Nature Fix’ by Florence Williams, and it shares many studies around the world about the benefits of truly experiencing nature for physical and mental health. Some countries promote guided walks in the woods to help support public health. There are so many knowledgeable foragers and herbalist and plant people in this state, and I think there is so much opportunity for creating a community to foster a better relationship between humans and nature.

Thank you for all the efforts in mindfully creating more access and clarity about the foraging rules.

Luisa Cichowski

Hello! My name is Luisa Cichowski and I am a 23 year old resident of St Paul. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Sustainable Foraging Task Force, and thank you for your work.

I did not grow up in Minnesota nor do I have ancestral ties to this place, but I am beginning to make a home here, after moving to the Twin Cities a year ago. This time of transition in my life has been marked by many challenges, from personal to political to ecological. Shortly after moving to Minnesota, I connected with an herbalist to help me with some health challenges. Throughout this year, plant medicine has been an amazing ally for me, helping me heal my body in a gentle way. My healing experience with plants also sparked my interest to begin foraging on my own, and to learn more about the various plant medicine traditions of the world: including wisdom from my Austrian and Polish heritage, wisdom from Native peoples of Turtle Island, and others. I am still a beginner, but everything I learn brings me into closer connection with the land and even with my own cultural history. Plant medicine lights a path towards holistic alignment with the earth that is healing to everyone involved.

The story I have shared is just one reason why it is important for foraging to remain a right in Minnesota. Without foraging, we all begin to lose connection to the more than human world, and everything that world has to offer us. Finally, I want to end by saying that Treaty Rights should be at the heart of any new laws or discussion related to foraging in the state -- these are fundamental agreements which are too often broken. Broken treaties harm our Native brothers and sisters, and by extension everyone -- because we are all connected. Please keep treaties at the heart of all discussions related to foraging rights, and make sure to honor them.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Sustainable Foraging Task Force.

Robin Greenfield

My recommendations are that:

No permit is needed to forage in the state of Minnesota.

If a permit is created then:

- No permit is required for personal use (which includes trade, barter and gifting) and the permit is only applicable to commercial use of over \$15,000 per year.
- No permit is required for small-scale harvest of plants and mushrooms that fits into the cottage-industry for sales.
- No permit is required for Indigenous people.
- Permits only for protected, critical, or at-risk plant species (similar to how the DNR puts hunting or fishing limits only on specific species).
- Rather than specific quantity limits, adopt Traditional Ecological Knowledge and practices.
- One online permit for all plants foraged for personal use, rather than individual permits for each plant or fungi.
- The permit be free.
- If money is collected for foraging permits, dedicate it to investing in foraging resources. For example, the wild rice license fees go back to the account that helps support the management of wild rice.
- Those involved in the creation of the rules are educated on foraging, both in knowledge and practice.