



# Sustainable Foraging Task Force

Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
11:00 AM  
Remote via Zoom  
<https://www.lcc.mn.gov/foraging/>

## Members Present:

Senator Susan Pha, Chair  
Kelli Bruns  
Senator Steve Green  
Angela Gupta  
Bradley Harrington  
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe  
Greg Kvale

Peter Martignacco  
Rebecca Montgomery  
Ingrid Schneider  
David Schultz  
Luke Skinner  
Matt Wappler  
Gary Wyatt

## Members Excused:

Representative Alex Falconer  
Dale Gentry  
Representative Roger Skraba  
Kristen Poppleton

## Meeting Minutes

Sen. Pha called the meeting of the Sustainable Foraging Task Force to order at 11:01 AM remotely on Zoom. A quorum was present.

## Discussion

Members discussed staff's revised recommendations (summarized below):

1. The Task Force recommends the following definitions for non-commercial use, commercial use, honorable harvest, and non-timber forest products related to foraging/harvesting guidelines.
  - a. **Non-Commercial Personal Use** - Foraging/harvesting for "non-commercial personal use" means collecting the following as part of a non-business activity, without profit motive.
    - i. This includes harvesting/foraging for:
      1. Personal or household consumption, ceremonial, cultural, or medicinal purposes

2. Gifting or sharing with family, friends, or community members for consumption or ceremonial, cultural, or medicinal purposes.
  - b. **Commercial Use** - Harvesting/foraging by individual or any entity that is required to register as doing business in Minnesota and/or foraging/harvesting with a profit motive.
  - c. **Honorable Harvest** - Foraging/harvesting guidelines for “non-commercial personal use” on state lands and public waters should be informed by Traditional Ecological Knowledge, including regenerative harvesting methods, and honorable harvest practices.
    - i. The ethic of the Honorable Harvest is a way of being in relationship with the living world. As Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer explains the honorable harvest is grounded in respect, reciprocity, and reverence and is guided by protocols that many Indigenous cultures have known and practiced for generations:
      1. *“Ask permission of the ones whose lives you seek. Abide by the answer.  
Never take the first. Never take the last.  
Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.  
Take only what you need and leave some for others.  
Use everything that you take.  
Take only that which is given to you.  
Share it, as the Earth has shared with you.  
Be grateful. “*
  - d. **Harvestable items include:**
    - i. Seeds,
    - ii. Berries,
    - iii. Nuts,
    - iv. Flowers, leaves, shoots and roots of herbaceous and woody plants, and *[note: roots not removed from this bullet]*
    - v. Fungi.
2. The Task Force recommends the creation of a new statute that codifies harvesting/foraging activity as allowable activities on all DNR managed state lands and public waters making up the outdoor recreation system outlined within Chapter 86A.05, including School Trust lands and excluding state scientific and natural areas (SNAs) (subdivision 5).
    - a. No permit shall be required to harvest/forage for non-timber forest products for personal use including:

- i. Seeds,
    - ii. Berries,
    - iii. Nuts,
    - iv. Flowers, leaves, and shoots of herbaceous and woody plants, and
    - v. Fungi.
  - b. The new statute would also include language that:
    - i. Does not allow uprooting of whole plants (no harvesting roots for example), except by permit.
    - ii. Allows DNR to create a list of species that are limited, prohibited from harvest or would require a permit to harvest, based on documented evidence such as known conservation risks.
    - iii. Does not touch on existing wild rice laws, wild ginseng laws, or wildflower laws ([18H.18](#))
    - iv. Recognizes Minnesota Statutes 10.65 outlining the State of Minnesota's relationship and responsibility with Tribal governments.
    - v. Retains compliance with federal nexus in regard to PRDJ (Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson) funding
  - c. The task force acknowledges the sensitivity of state parks and recognizes the importance of protecting these lands for current and future generations. The task force believes that, through education, regenerative harvesting methods, and honorable harvest practices—harvesting can occur without negatively impacting state park resources. The task force recognizes and supports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' authority to identify and designate specific areas within state parks where foraging or harvesting is restricted or prohibited due to land restoration activities, plant surveys, maintenance needs, or management practices such as controlled burns.
  - d. The statutory language should acknowledge harvesting/foraging for personal non-commercial use as a legitimate recreational and cultural activity in all state parks and forests and a right that has been included in the Minnesota Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.
3. The task force recommends *a direct appropriation to the DNR to support the development of foraging/harvesting training and education for the public* through a collaborative approach with partners that leverages varied expertise and strengths.
- a. For example, the University of Minnesota Extensions brings an extensive research base and expertise in adult learning and Tribal Nations bring a depth of understanding of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, including Honorable Harvest practices and expertise in Minnesota Statutes

10.65. Additional partners who may provide input into the development of education and training include: the Minnesota Mycological Society, Herbalist Society, Minnesota Foraging Alliance, Back Country Hunters and Anglers, and Minnesota Conservation Federation.

- b. The task force recommends the DNR develop a request for proposals that requires harvesting/foraging education and training to include the following topics:
    - i. Review of existing state statutes and administrative rules, including when permits are required.
    - ii. Cultural and community considerations: Tribal sovereignty and distinct treaty rights, including plants species as sacred medicines.
    - iii. Honorable Harvest practices and regenerative harvesting methods in alignment with Traditional Ecological Knowledge: how harvesting affects biodiversity and soil health, seasonal considerations,
    - iv. Identification of public land types and what rules apply.
    - v. Personal physical safety: tick exposure, contamination exposure, gear, safe use of knives and digging tools, first aid, and emergency protocols.
    - vi. Plant identification basics: How to positively identify edible and medicinal plants and fungi (and avoid look-alikes)
    - vii. Reduce spread of invasive or overabundant species, including compliance with Noxious Weed Law.
  - c. The task force also recommends the DNR develop and execute an internal communication plan to provide consistent information and messages across DNR's many divisions regarding the new and revised statutes and rules. Intentional and robust dissemination will ensure consistent implementation across public lands managed by DNR and reduce misunderstandings of foraging/harvesting as trespassing, theft, or suspicious behavior.
4. The Task Force recommends the use of plain language to provide clear and accessible information that makes it easier for the public to understand existing statutes and rules related to harvesting/foraging on lands managed by Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources.
- a. A persistent theme that emerged during task force meetings and public listening sessions was the lack of clear and accessible information on foraging/harvesting available on State of Minnesota websites. Public resources on foraging/harvesting should be available in multiple languages and when possible, should be visual by using icons, photos, and/or color-

coded symbols or QR codes to communicate key information. The task force recognizes the DNR is committed to this effort and has already made concerted efforts to improve its public websites and additional funding from the Minnesota legislature is needed to continue this effort.

- b. The task force recommends the DNR continue to make it easier for the public to understand what is and is not allowed on different public land types and that the language used be consistent. The task force recommends a single page on harvesting/foraging instead of multiple pages by different land type as it is confusing for the public to decipher the differences that matter. For example, deciphering these two DNR websites presents its challenges:
    - i. [Harvesting plants](#) (State parks and recreation areas, DNR)
    - ii. [Harvesting on state forest lands](#) (Forestry, DNR)
  - c. The task force also recommends the DNR partner with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to ensure alignment and consistency of language and necessary cross linking of webpages on this topic, especially related to: [Certified Wild Mushroom Harvester](#), [Harvesting and Selling Wild Mushrooms in Minnesota](#), and [Minnesota Noxious Weed List](#).
5. The Task Force recommends the proactive study of foraging/harvesting and its impacts in Minnesota, including outcomes of changes to statutes and rules.
- a. The Sustainable Foraging Task Force recommends that the Minnesota Legislature provide a direct appropriation to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to support data collection, monitoring, and research on the ecological, cultural, and economic impacts of foraging and harvesting in Minnesota. This research should include an evaluation of statutory and rule changes resulting from the task force's work and related legislation, including ripple effects on conservation outcomes, public access, stewardship practices, and community engagement. The task force further recommends that the DNR seek additional funding for this purpose, including through the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources.
  - b. The task force recommends the DNR also explore adding specific harvest/foraging questions to existing licensure systems and surveys to learn more about who forages/harvests, what they gather, where, and for what purpose.
  - c. The task force encourages the DNR to partner with foragers/harvesters and organized groups that support these activities as a critical source of data and information that supports research, conservation, and sustainable land and water management., for example by creating an optional online form for people to share observations and experiences related to foraging and harvesting activities. Harvesters can share species present, habitat conditions, concerns or challenges.

- d. The task force emphasizes a focus on education and research, and not used for enforcement or regulatory compliance. Data collected through these partnerships should be aggregated and used to inform policy development, conservation strategies, public guidance, and scientific study.
  - e. The task force recommends that the DNR catalog and track the use and cost of herbicides and pesticides on all DNR-managed state lands and public waters to support evidence-based evaluation of land management practices over time. This information should be used for research, observation, and policy analysis.
  - f. The task force supports strong protections against pesticide and toxic chemical use where such use threatens ecological health, Indigenous food systems, or public safety, while also recognizing that targeted herbicide use remains an important tool in invasive species management. The task force encourages a balanced, science-based approach that avoids blanket bans, allows chemical-specific restrictions where appropriate, and prioritizes integrated management practices that include stewardship, prevention, and least-toxic alternatives.
6. The task force recommends the DNR improve its existing permit processes, including the forestry special product permit and the aquatic plant management permit. The DNR recognizes the current systems must be improved and streamlined and that additional financial resources will be required to execute this work.
- a. The task force recommends that for harvestable items, permits would only be required for collection of:
    - i. Whole plants, tubers, roots
    - ii. Plants on DNR's species list (defined in recommendation 2) for which harvesting is limited based on documented evidence such as known conservation risks.
  - b. The task force recommends a single permit, not separate permits for individual species harvested/foraged.
  - c. In development of a protected/limited species list, the DNR should not make restrictions that are broad or preemptive without research and evidence. The task force supports *local DNR land managers* having the authority to set additional limits on harvesting/foraging based on evidence and known conservation risks when applicable to specific geographies. The DNR may use a similar approach in developing this protected species list as it does now hunting or fishing limits on specific species.
  - d. The task force recommends the following improvements to the existing permit processes:
    - i. Make the permits available online.
    - ii. Accept electronic payments, in addition to check or money order.

- iii. If beneficial to state DNR land managers, include a pathway for large special events and organized public activities to register for harvesting/foraging education on state lands or public waters.
  - iv. Explore permit differences for state residents versus non-residents as is done for hunting and fishing permits.
  - v. If money is collected for foraging/harvesting 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.
- e. The task force recognizes that focused effort and additional internal DNR consultation will be required to improve the existing aquatic plant management permit. For example, careful planning will be required to ensure harvest of aquatic plants from invested waters are not allowed due to the potential transport of invasive species.
- 7. The task force recommends the DNR engage with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Noxious Weed Advisory Committee, and select members of this taskforce, to begin discussions about the potential modification of existing statutes and rules to allow for *harvesting/foraging* of certain noxious weeds / invasive species.
  - a. The task force recognizes that when done responsibly with best management practices focused on safe harvest, handling, transport, and disposal, public harvesting of certain noxious weeds and invasive plant species for food, medicine, or cultural use can contribute directly to plant management and control efforts. We can use community stewardship as one of many complementary tools in Minnesota's invasive species strategy.
- 8. The task force recommends the DNR establish mechanism for regular engagement with harvesting/foraging stakeholders to maintain open lines of communication. The DNR may do this through, for example, an annual town hall or the creation of an outdoor recreation advisory council that meets at regular intervals during the year. The task force recommends this action as it recognizes that ecosystems, species populations, and environmental conditions are continually changing due to climate shifts, land use, and other pressures. Regular engagement with harvesting/foraging stakeholders helps ensure that foraging statutes and rules stay relevant, evidence-based, and responsive to current conditions—supporting both conservation and access goals.
  - a. In addition, this regular engagement provides an opportunity for the DNR to report back specifically on findings from recommendation 6 focused on studying the ecological, cultural, and economic impacts of foraging/harvesting in Minnesota, including the ripple effects of changes to statutes and rules made because of the task force's work.

9. The taskforce recognizes that statutory changes expanding foraging and harvesting access require time for monitoring, data collection, and research to evaluate ecological, cultural, and economic impacts. This section establishes a defined evaluation period to support collaborative review by the legislature, the Sustainable Foraging Task Force, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources before additional regulatory changes are considered.
  - a. For five years from the effective date of this section, the commissioner shall prioritize implementation, research, monitoring, and reporting related to foraging activities authorized under statute. During this period, the commissioner may not adopt rulemaking that materially reduces, narrows, or alter the scope of harvesting access established by statute, except as provided in paragraph (a).
  - b. (a) Limited rulemaking during evaluation period. The commissioner may adopt narrowly tailored, evidence-supported rulemaking during the evaluation period only when necessary to:
    - i. Implement statutory requirements enacted by the legislature;
    - ii. Make administrative or technical improvements that do not materially reduce access;
    - iii. Comply with federal law or binding federal funding requirements
    - iv. Respond to an urgent or emergency situation, including an immediate threat to public health or safety, and substantiated risk to public health, safety, or ecological integrity.

### **Next Steps and Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:05 PM.