



Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force

Final Report

to the Minnesota Legislature

February 2026

Staff Contributions

This report would not have been made possible without the contributions of staff members from the Senate, House, Legislative Coordinating Commission, and Minnesota Management and Budget's Management and Analysis and Development (MAD). A special thank you to Nick Nero, Meena Xiong, and the MAD team.

Executive Summary

The Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force (Task Force) was created through legislation in 2025, arising from discussions with members of Minnesota's foraging community. Concerned about restrictions, the foraging community wanted to engage with the state's conservation agency, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The 18-member Task Force was directed to review existing laws and regulations as well as available information including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, to make recommendations.

The Task Force aimed to find a consensus on how to improve laws, regulations, and DNR systems around foraging. The Task Force met 11 times over seven months and heard testimony from the DNR, foragers, policy makers, and the public. After lengthy discussions and with a strong desire for consensus, the Task Force ultimately developed and voted on seven recommendations.

Five of the seven recommendations passed the Task Force's self-imposed threshold of 80% support identified in its charter. The DNR should:

- Further study the impact human foraging has on public lands.
- Work with the University of Minnesota Extension to provide education, training, and guidance to members of the public interested in foraging.
- Improve materials in state parks and forests and online around foraging, so information is clearer and more accessible.
- Simplify their permitting system.
- Establish a mechanism to improve regular communication with the foraging community.

Two of the seven recommendations received majority support but did not meet the Task Force's 80% threshold for consensus. The Minnesota Legislature should...

- Codify the rights of Minnesotans to forage (with some exceptions) in DNR-managed state lands and waters.
- Institute a five-year moratorium in DNR-rulemaking on foraging after this new regime is in place to give time to properly study the issue.

Letter from the Chair

It was my honor to serve as Chair of the Sustainable Foraging Task Force. I am deeply grateful to the task force members, guest speakers, community members, and our partners at the Department of Natural Resources, Management Analysis and Development, and the Legislative Coordinating Commission for their contributions to this work.

This task force was created because a group of Minnesotans came together to push for protecting foraging and harvesting traditions. I had the honor of serving as the chief author of this legislation in the Senate, alongside Representative Isaac Schultz in the House. Together, we worked with community advocates and partners to pass the bill establishing the Sustainable Foraging Task Force. For generations, people have gathered food, medicine, and materials from the land as a way of life rooted in responsibility, relationship, and care for the natural world. Yet while foraging has long existed alongside hunting and fishing, it has not been clearly recognized within our public land policies.

The Legislature established this task force to address that gap. Our charge was to review science-based research and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to better understand the impacts of foraging on species resilience, ecosystem health, and Minnesota's diverse biomes. We also reviewed existing regulations and developed clear, actionable recommendations for sustainable foraging guidelines on state lands that balance conservation with public access and honor Indigenous and other cultural traditions.

At its core, this work was about removing unnecessary barriers so people can responsibly gather food, medicine, and other natural materials while strengthening stewardship of our shared lands. Public education, safety, and equity were central to this effort, including recommendations to increase understanding of sustainable foraging practices and to establish reduced-price foraging permits so cost is not a barrier to participation.

Through this work, the task force laid the foundation to recognize foraging as a legitimate recreational and cultural activity on state lands and to support healthy ecosystems and thriving communities for generations to come.

Senator Susan Pha

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Introduction

Foraging, defined as the taking, harvesting, or collecting of berries, nuts, mushrooms, and wild plants, has a long history in Minnesota. Foraging served as a source for food and medicine for Minnesota's indigenous inhabitants. As successive waves of settlers and immigrants moved to Minnesota, each brought their own foraging traditions. Most recently, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in foraging among Minnesotans. Foraging is deeply rooted in the many cultures that make up Minnesota, both historically and today, yet it does not have the same recognition in the state constitution as similar practices like hunting and fishing do.

For many, foraging goes beyond an activity and becomes an experience or even a facet of life.

Task Force Themes

Throughout the Task Force's work several themes emerged as the foundation for the recommendations. These include:

- Conservation: protect Minnesota's natural resources, now and for future generations
- Connection: importance of people's connection with their natural environment
- Access: create more opportunities for Minnesotans to experience state lands and waters
- Decriminalization: legalize behaviors that Minnesotans engage in, or want to engage in
- Balance: collaborating to find the right balance among conservation, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and access

Enabling legislation

In 2023, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) considered changes to rules related to foraging in state parks. The DNR removed this proposal from the draft rule package after concern from foragers before the public comment period. With some members of the foraging community worried about the struggle to engage with the DNR, individuals approached Senator Susan Pha, who, alongside Representative Isaac Schultz in the House, introduced a bill to create the Task Force. S.F. 1464/H.F. 819, 94th Leg. (Minn. 2025). After working closely with interested communities, the DNR, and legislators, the bill was ultimately passed into law.

[Laws of Minnesota, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24](#), Subdivision 2 charged the Task Force with 1) gathering and reviewing available data, including traditional ecological knowledge, 2) reviewing existing laws and regulations, 3) making recommendations for changes to laws and regulations, 4) making recommendations to increase public understanding around foraging laws and regulations, 5) soliciting public input, and 6) making recommendations to reduce foraging permit prices. The full legislation is included in Appendix A.

Scope of Task Force

The Task Force's initial meetings clarified the scope of the Task Force. The Task Force determined their scope would be kept to the foraging of terrestrial plants, fungi, and aquatic plants for personal use on DNR-managed state lands and waters.

Out of scope areas were private lands (including tribal lands), other public lands (county, federal, non-DNR), wild rice, wild ginseng, maple syrup, other special forest products, or any animals (including insects) and foraging for commercial purposes would be out of scope.

Membership

The Task Force included members from urban and rural areas and from a variety of organizations including state agencies, academia, advocacy groups, and the legislature. Members provided a range of perspectives and expertise including land, plant and wildlife conservation and ecology; traditional ecological knowledge; tribal identity in spiritual and cultural connection to the land; foraging and foraging education; land, park, and recreation management; and sustainable harvesting practices. A full list of Task Force members and appointing authorities can be found in Appendix B.

Task Force meetings and methodology

The Task Force convened 11 times (approximately every three weeks) from August 2025 through mid-February 2026 in accordance with MN Open Meeting Law ([MN Statute Ch.13D](#)). An optional field trip to Fort Snelling State Park was also available. A summary of the schedule and general overview of work cadence is outlined in Appendix C.

Task Force meetings were facilitated by senior management consultants from Minnesota Management and Budget's Management Analysis and Development (MAD) with staffing provided by the Legislative Coordinating Commission (LCC). All meetings were offered in a hybrid format or fully online and live streamed for members of the public. The work of the Task Force followed a broad arc of three main phases. Phase one focused on creating a shared foundation. This included reviewing the Task Force enabling legislation, creating a charter (see Appendix D), and hearing from foraging experts during Task Force meetings and members of the public during five listening sessions. Phase two focused on developing options where the group discussed a series of possible recommendations and refined them. In developing and refining recommendations, the group used a fist-to-five process to test consensus. If there was not consensus, the group discussed concerns and suggested revisions. There were three rounds of revisions. In Phase three, the Task Force refined and voted on recommendations. The group used a fist-to-five method to identify recommendations where additional discussion was needed before a final vote would be taken. The group used a roll-call vote to determine the level of support for each of the final seven recommendations.

Key data informing the recommendations

As noted above and detailed in Appendix C, the first several Task Force meetings were focused on creating a shared foundation on topics including current foraging practices, relevant state and federal statutes, DNR rules, and historical context. During this time, DNR liaisons partnered with the Task Force to provide answers to questions and respond to research requests that arose during the meetings.

Summary of task force interviews

As the task force began its work, each task force member was invited to participate in a 60-minute video-based interview led by a senior management consultant with MAD. In total, 13 task force members participated. The purpose of the interviews was to create a shared foundation around the hopes, challenges, and key considerations for the task force to address. The ideas that emerged from interviews were used to guide the completion of the six duties outlined for the task force

within [Laws of Minnesota, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24](#). Meeting topics and guest presenters were prioritized based on key learnings from and interests expressed during task force interviews. The data from task force interviews is organized into three overarching themes: known context, shared hopes, and shared challenges.

Known context

Task force members acknowledged Minnesotans forage for various reasons including food, medicine, recreation, art, and cultural purposes. There was a perception by some that the task force was created in part due to what they perceived as DNR's insufficient stakeholder engagement in the development of proposed foraging rules. Task force members expressed concerns that foraging was not recognized as a legitimate recreational activity in Minnesota's constitution on state lands and waters, like hunting and fishing are. Task force members noted that more people foraging on public lands and waters would require dedicated resources, including careful planning, funding, and staff.

From the start, task force members expressed confusion related to identifying state land types and in understanding the differing rules and statutes that govern them. According to [DNR by the Numbers](#) (produced biennially), DNR has the responsibility to manage "...5.6 million acres of state lands across four biomes including 60 state forests, school trust acres, and other forested lands, more than 1,500 wildlife management areas, 64 state parks, nine state recreation areas, nine state waysides, 170 scientific and natural areas, and more than 700 aquatic management areas." These various public lands and waters are managed by different DNR divisions, each with its own defined purposes, statutes, and rules. Task force members described the complications of this reality as reflected in the following illustrative comments:

- *It can be difficult to know where they are and what the rules are on public lands.*
- *Sometimes people don't understand that on this side of the road is state forest, across the street is a wildlife management area. They have different rules. And in northern Minnesota there is state managed lands, county lands, private industrial forest lands. Users may know it's public land and public access, but don't know they're different.*
- *We must look at the current rules of foraging and gathering on public lands and how they juxtapose one another. The type of public land has different rules and regulations, different restrictions. This must be considered.*
- *Different rules apply for different types of land. This will be the biggest issue in creating recommendations. If we can gather on one piece of property and not on others, why not? What is the scientific basis? Minnesota has history where gathering on public and private lands got out of hand – ginseng was a big deal. It was poached back in the day. What can be learned from this?*

A common desire articulated during the interviews was the need to clearly define the scope of the Task Force's work. Members agreed the statute was clear in its focus on state lands and waters. Tribal, Federal, and privately owned lands were out of scope. In addition, members agreed it was important not to touch existing statutes and rules related to harvesting wild rice, wild ginseng, wildflowers, maple syrup, or other special forest products. Finally, task force members agreed foraging for commercial use was out of scope. One task force member commented, "State lands are for the public good – individuals of Minnesota."

Shared hopes

Task force members shared stories of foraging as a way of life. The relationship between humans and the natural world is seen as inextricably linked to many task force members. Indigenous wisdom and Traditional Ecological Knowledge were embedded within the duties of the task force. Task force members expressed commitment to develop recommendations grounded in cultural practices and ways of knowing that are inclusive of all Minnesota communities, including eleven federally recognized Tribal Nations.

In addition to being rooted in culture, task force members expressed a shared hope recommendations would be balanced and find middle ground. A commitment to compromise is reflected in the following selected comments by task force members:

- *Balance recommendations that all of us feel good about it. Don't have to love it but can't hate it. Nothing where someone would speak against a recommendation when it comes up in the legislature. "I may not love it, but I think it can work"*
- *Have recommendations that are acceptable to both pro-foraging open access and natural resource managers that want to conserve.*
- *Not everyone is super happy, but not everyone is unhappy because compromises have been made.*
- *If foragers don't feel heard, engaged and addressed. If conservation people don't feel heard, engaged and addressed, we won't be successful.*
- *There is a set of people who don't want any regulation whatsoever and others who do want regulation. How do we find middle ground where regulations are not overly burdensome. This is a challenge. Where is the middle ground?*

When asked about what success would look like, task force members also outlined a shared hope to develop clear and simple recommendations that result in accessible foraging on state lands and waters, while not ignoring conservation. Recommendations that can be implemented and easily understood were important areas of focus as reflected in these selected comments:

- *I think the task force exists in part because we're lacking clarity, what is and isn't off limits?*
- *If everything is aspirational that's not good, must be operational too. If recommendations can be put into practice, that is success.*
- *Providing information the public can use and easily understand.*
- *Hope we can provide suggestions for new rules or new guidance that is clear and understandable, meets the recreational needs/desires of multiple groups.*
- *Really clear policies that people understand, that take wildlife and nature into consideration.*

In addition, some task force members shared their hopes to unify foraging rules across the different state lands and waters making up the outdoor recreational system, again with the intent to develop clear and simple recommendations as reflected in the following comments:

- *Standardized rules that can be applied across the board.*
- *From a community perspective, we want to make this more accessible with less rules and regulations.*

- *More unified rules across different management units in an easy way for users to find.*

Finally, task force members said they would know if they were successful if the DNR and legislature accepted their task force recommendations. Task force members shared an unwavering resolve to do meaningful work that mattered as shown in these selected comments:

- *If DNR and legislature accepts foraging as an outdoor pursuit like fishing and hunting.*
- *We make clear recommendations, actionable by the legislature.*
- *The legislature can act upon recommendations. Be very thoughtful, recommendations are as specific as possible so that they're actionable.*
- *If the DNR accepts these recommendations that would be great.*
- *Ensure whatever we come up with, the legislature and/or DNR doesn't just say, "yeah, we hear you, but we're going to do our own thing." Don't want to waste task force member time or taxpayer money.*

Shared challenges

Task force members were asked to anticipate the challenges they may face in their work together. Task force members outlined two interrelated areas of tension:

- Balancing accessibility now, with long-term conservation, and
- Balancing individual rights today, with protection for tomorrow.

While the ideas of accessibility and conservation or individual rights and protection may appear to be in opposition, task force members spoke of the value of each idea. Given the shared hope of finding common ground, the task force aimed to hold these tensions in balance as reflected in the following select comments:

- *How do we make sure foraging will be here for me today, others tomorrow and down the line?*
- *One of my philosophies of conservation is that if we think conservation requires keeping people out of the land, it will fail, that is not a wise approach. Policies and recommendations that encourage people to be in nature and forage in nature.*
- *Not erring too far in either direction. Trying to protect nature by keeping us out of it, or foraging rules too wide and not being good stewards. Thoughtful, clear approach.*
- *I do think we can come up with something that allows humans to forage and also allows nature to thrive.*
- *Two sides of the coin – a) accessibility for everyone and b) species longevity and diversity. Need to understand the purpose of public lands. Need to balance. Both have value.*

Concluding thoughts shared by task force members during interviews included recognition the task force will not solve all the issues related to foraging but instead can make progress. In addition, with an ever-evolving environment, the task force acknowledged solutions designed in 2026 may not work in the future. These illustrative comments summarize closing remarks made by the task force:

- *Given all the other stressors including land use changes, new species, climate change, ecosystem degradation, what we come up with may be the best for now, but in five years it may not be appropriate.*
- *This may be an ongoing process at some level. If we decide what sustainability looks like today, maybe different in 2035.*
- *We are not going to solve all of the issues of foraging across the landscape in this task force.*
- *Task force members feel at the end that they've done meaningful work.*

Information presented to the Task Force

The Task Force heard presentations from the DNR, Washington County Parks, an employee of the Wisconsin DNR, and a panel of foragers and foraging educators. Task Force members also shared information such as relevant research reports.

DNR walked the Task Force through the current rules around foraging on DNR-managed lands. Specifically, foraging fruits, nuts, and mushrooms is allowed without a permit in state parks and forests for personal use which is undefined. Foraging in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs), and around state trails has typically been more restricted and site-specific. As the Task Force began developing recommendations, the DNR has remained concerned that an expansion of permit-less foraging could negatively impact state parks and forests due to trampling, over-harvesting, or other damage. The DNR values its conservation mission and was worried that extensive changes to foraging rules might compromise that mission and endanger critical funding needed to manage these lands.

Washington County Parks spoke to the Task Force about its expansion of foraging in its county parks. They introduced a free permit allowing foraging of any plants within designated areas. Although the program only had 55 individuals in its initial year, they believed it had been successful and planned to continue it along with increased advertising.

A Wisconsin DNR employee spoke to the Task Force about Wisconsin's rules surrounding foraging. Wisconsin has slightly more expansive rules allowing the foraging of wild asparagus and watercress, and the foraging of invasive species with a permit. While unstudied, they reported that they have not seen issues with foragers spreading invasive species nor have they had issues with trampling or over-harvesting under their current approach.

The foraging panel encouraged the Task Force to expand what can be foraged in Minnesota. The panelists expressed doubt that increased foraging would be damaging to public lands and praised the connection foraging provides to nature. The panelists of foragers firmly saw foragers as devoted conservationists akin to hunters and anglers due to their similar connection to the outdoors.

An overview of presentations is provided in Appendix E.

Input from members of the public

The Task Force received feedback from testifiers from diverse backgrounds across in meetings, dedicated listening sessions, and submitted written remarks. Members of the public consistently supported the expansion of what can be foraged on state lands and testified to their personal connection with foraging. Several members of the public also discouraged an expansion of foraging

in WMAs or SNAs out of concern that foraging in those lands would be contrary to their conservation purposes.

The following themes emerged from the five listening sessions:

- **Education before enforcement.** People seek guidance on ethical and sustainable foraging. A better understanding of what, how, when is it allowed.
- **Low barrier permitting, if permits are needed at all.** Streamline the process. Balance access with data informed policy making. Consider permits only for specific activities such as large groups or whole plant harvest.
- **Grounding in Indigenous rights and traditional ecological knowledge strongly supported.** Foraging is a way of life and a treaty reserved right.
- **Regenerative foraging.** Proactive interaction with public spaces. Leaving land and plants healthier and ensuring resources for future generations.
- **Expanded foraging access offers an opportunity to build a broader base of people connected to/caring for the land.** Equity and access are concerns for community members without access to private land.

Meeting with MIAC Executive Board

Sen. Susan Pha, Task Force Chair, met with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) Executive Board alongside Task Force members, Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe and Bradley Harrington. Chair Pha met with the board on December 3rd, 2025, in Morton, MN to discuss the origins of the Task Force, its progress up to that point, and to solicit any feedback from MIAC. Chair Pha pledged to continue working with MIAC and Minnesota's Tribes both with the Task Force and with any legislation that would come out of the Task Force.

Recommendations

Task force members ultimately developed seven recommendations intended to support DNR's mission, maintain DNR's authority, and support foraging. One additional recommendation was dropped before voting (Appendix F).

The task force recognizes implementation of the recommendations will require dedicated resources, including careful planning, funding, and staff. The chair and vice chair are committed to ongoing, meaningful consultation and engagement with all 11 Tribal Nations and Tribal members as they advance the Task Force recommendations into legislation - through bill drafting, committee hearings, and the legislative process.

Consensus was reached on five of the recommendations, with 93% of members present voting in favor. For the remaining two, a majority voted in favor but did not reach the 80% support requirement outlined in the Task Force's charter (Appendix D). All seven recommendations are listed here, as they are best considered as an interrelated set rather than individually.

Recommendation 1. Develop a new statute that codifies foraging for personal, non-commercial use as a legitimate recreational and cultural activity on DNR managed state lands and waters.

Result of vote: 57% in favor (not supported by Task Force charter's threshold for consensus)

The Sustainable Foraging Task Force recommends the Minnesota Legislature create a new statute that includes the following:

Codification of foraging

Codify foraging as an allowable activity on DNR managed state lands (many of which consist of School Trust fund lands) and public waters making up the outdoor recreation system (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 86A), with the exclusion of state scientific and natural areas (SNAs).

Definition of Non-Commercial Personal Use

“Non-commercial personal use” is defined as foraging allowed products as part of a non-business activity, without profit motive. This includes foraging for:

- Personal or household consumption, ceremonial, cultural, or medicinal purposes,
- Gifting or sharing with family, friends, or community members for consumption or ceremonial, cultural, or medicinal purposes.

Definition of Commercial Use

Commercial use is defined as foraging on DNR-managed state lands and waters with a profit motive. [Note, this definition is provided only as a counterpoint to defining non-commercial personal use. The task force is not making recommendations regarding commercial foraging.]

Honorable Harvest Practices

Foraging statutes and rules for non-commercial personal use on DNR-managed state lands and waters will be informed by Traditional Ecological Knowledge, including regenerative harvesting methods, and honorable harvest practices.

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:

*“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.”*

Products Allowed to be Harvested

Foraging products for non-commercial personal use according to honorable harvest practices would be allowable without permit for products including, but not limited to the following items, or included on the DNR protected species list:

- Seeds*,
- Berries,
- Nuts,

- Flowers, leaves, roots* and shoots of herbaceous and woody plants, and
- Fungi.

* Seeds and roots are two examples for which certain products would likely be included on the DNR protected species list. See section below for additional information.

In addition, the task force recommends the following key considerations for a new statute that codifies foraging as a legitimate recreational and cultural activity on DNR managed state lands and waters for personal, non-commercial use:

- Affirms the sensitivity of state parks, particularly in protecting endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as cultural resources. The task force recognizes and supports the DNR's authority to identify and designate specific areas within state parks where foraging is restricted or prohibited due to management practices, land restoration activities, plant surveys, or maintenance needs.
- Acknowledges foraging as a right that has been included in the Minnesota Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.
- Does not conflict with existing wild rice, wild ginseng, wildflower, maple syrup, or special forest products statutes and rules.
- Does not conflict with existing statutes and rules related to aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.
- Recognizes Minnesota Statutes 10.65 outlining the State of Minnesota's relationship with and responsibility with Tribal governments.
- Ensures compliance with federal nexus in regard to Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson (PRDJ) funding
- Accepts that expansion of allowable foraging of aquatic plants will require additional conversations between DNR and community stakeholders.

Protected Species List and other Limitations

The task force recommends the new statute allow DNR, in consultation with stakeholders, to create a list of protected species that require a permit to forage, are prohibited from foraging, or have limitations placed on foraging, based on evidence using a similar approach already used by the DNR with hunting and fishing. The new statute would grant local DNR land managers discretionary authority to impose geographically defined, site-specific limitations within individual land units or ecological sub-units when necessary to protect sustainability, culturally sensitive resources, or in response to observed resource damage, public safety concerns, or ecological degradation.

This authority would include the ability to implement immediate, temporary protective measures; enact seasonal restrictions; establish species protections; and issue emergency temporary closures. Enforcement would be carried out under existing land manager authority and applicable natural resource statutes.

The task force recommends permits be required only for products on this protected species list.

In development of a protected/limited species list, the DNR should not make restrictions that are broad or preemptive without evidence. The list might include, for example:

- Restrictions on uprooting of whole plants; some plants would require a permit, while certain abundant species might not be restricted.
- Restrictions on foraging of native seeds necessary for prairie restoration and other ecological and revegetation projects.

Recommendation 2. Proactive study of foraging and its impacts in Minnesota

Result of vote: 93% in favor

The Sustainable Foraging Task Force recommends that the Minnesota Legislature provide a direct appropriation to support the DNR in data collection, monitoring, and research on the ecological, cultural, and economic impacts of foraging in Minnesota. This research should include an evaluation of statutory and rule changes resulting from the task force's work and related legislation, including impacts on conservation outcomes, public access, stewardship practices, community engagement, and the sharing of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The task force further recommends that the DNR seek additional funding for this purpose, including through the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources.

The task force encourages the DNR partner with foragers and organized groups that support these activities as a critical source of data and information to support research, conservation, and sustainable land and water management, for example by creating an optional online form for foragers to share observations and experiences, or adding questions to existing licensure surveys. Foragers can share species present, habitat conditions, concerns or challenges. Data collected through these partnerships should be aggregated and used to inform policy development, conservation strategies (including future quantity limits), public guidance, and scientific study.

The task force supports strong protections against pesticide and herbicide use where such use threatens ecological health, Indigenous food systems, or public safety, while also recognizing that targeted use of these chemicals 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 pest management practices that include stewardship, prevention, and least-toxic alternatives. The task force recommends that DNR continue to track the use and cost of herbicides and pesticides on all DNR-managed state lands and waters to support evidence-based evaluation of land management practices over time.

Recommendation 3. Develop education and training to support best management practices for foraging.

Result of vote: 93% in favor

The task force commends the DNR's emphasis on education over citations related to foraging activities. To build on this approach, the task force recommends a direct appropriation to support the development of foraging education and training for the public that leverages varied expertise and strengths of the DNR and partners.

The task force recommends this development of education and training take place in partnership and collaboration with, for example, the University of Minnesota Extension (which brings extensive research base and expertise in adult learning), Tribal Nations (which brings a depth of

understanding of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, including honorable harvest practices and expertise in Minnesota Statutes 10.65), and/or others with relevant knowledge. Additional partners who might provide input into the development of education and training may include, but are not limited to the Minnesota Mycological Society, Herbalist Society, Minnesota Foraging Alliance, Back Country Hunters and Anglers, Minnesota Native Plant Society, Minnesota Master Naturalists and Gardeners, and Minnesota Wildlife Federation.

The task force recommends foraging education and training include the following topics:

- Review of existing state statutes and administrative rules, including when permits are required.
- Cultural and community considerations: Tribal sovereignty and distinct treaty rights, including plants species as sacred medicines.
- Honorable harvest practices and regenerative harvesting methods in alignment with Traditional Ecological Knowledge: how foraging affects biodiversity and soil health, seasonal considerations
- Minnesota's outdoor recreation system: breadth of recreational and cultural activities occurring on public lands and waters, including identification of public land types and what rules apply.
- Personal physical safety: tick exposure, possible pesticide contamination and exposure, gear, safe use of knives and digging tools, first aid, and emergency protocols.
- Plant identification basics: How to positively identify edible and medicinal plants and fungi (and their look-alikes).
- Reducing spread of invasive species, including compliance with Noxious Weed Law.

The task force recommends the DNR, and its partners ensure this education and training is easily accessed by the public with no or minimal cost. The task force also recommends DNR develop and execute an internal communication plan to provide consistent information and messages across DNR's many divisions regarding statutory and rule changes resulting from the task force's work. Intentional and robust dissemination internally within DNR will support consistent implementation across DNR-managed lands and waters and reduce potential misunderstandings of foraging as trespassing, theft, or suspicious behavior.

Recommendation 4. Use plain language to provide clear and accessible information that makes it easier for the public to understand statutes and rules on DNR-managed state lands and waters.

Result of vote: 93% in favor

The task force recommends the use of plain language to provide clear and accessible information that makes it easier for the public to understand statutes, rules, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge related to foraging on DNR-managed state lands and waters.

A persistent theme that emerged during task force meetings and public listening sessions was the lack of clear and accessible information on foraging available on State of Minnesota websites. Public resources on foraging 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 may be needed to continue this effort.

The task force recommends the DNR continue to make it easier for the public to understand what is and is not allowed on certain state land types and that the language used be consistent. The task force recommends a single page on 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:

- [Harvesting plants](#) (State parks and recreation areas)
- [Harvesting on state forest lands](#) (Forestry)

The task force also recommends the DNR work together 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](#).

Recommendation 5. Improve DNR's permit process for foraging on DNR-managed state lands and waters.

Result of vote: 93% in favor

The task force recommends the DNR improve its permitting systems and processes. For all foraging activities that require a permit, the permitting process should be clear and accessible. The task force recognizes that dedicated resources will be required to execute and streamline this work.

The task force recommends the following permit features:

- Make the permits available online.
- Reducing costs for foragers should be a factor in determining improvements, for example, a single permit where multiple permits are currently required.
- Accept electronic payments, in addition to check or money order.
- If beneficial to state DNR land managers, include a pathway for large special events and organized public activities to register for foraging education on state lands or waters.
- Explore permit differences for state residents versus non-residents as is done for hunting and fishing permits.

The task force recognizes that focused effort and additional internal DNR consultation will be required to modify permitting for the harvest of aquatic plants currently included in Minnesota Statutes 103G.615, Permits to harvest or destroy aquatic plants.

Recommendation 6. Establish a mechanism for DNR to engage regularly with foraging stakeholders

Result of vote: 93% in favor

The task force recommends the DNR establish a mechanism for regular engagement with 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 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 foraging stakeholders helps ensure that foraging statutes and rules stay relevant, evidence-based, include Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and are responsive to current conditions—supporting both conservation and access goals.

In addition, this regular engagement provides an opportunity for the DNR to report back specifically on findings from research and study activities focused on the ecological, cultural, and economic impacts of foraging in Minnesota, including the effects of changes to statutes and rules made because of the task force’s work.

Recommendation 7. Establish a five-year evaluation period during which limits on new foraging policy will apply.

Result of vote: 64% in favor (not supported by Task Force charter’s threshold for consensus)

The task force recognizes that the changes outlined in the recommendations above require time for data collection, monitoring, and research to evaluate ecological, cultural, and economic impacts. This recommendation establishes a defined evaluation period of five years to support collaborative review by the legislature, DNR, and foraging partners before additional policy and regulatory changes are considered.

While the data collection, monitoring, and research described in Recommendation 2 takes place, DNR should avoid rulemaking that substantially reduces, narrows, or alters the scope of foraging access except as necessary to:

- Respond to an urgent or emergency, including an immediate threat or substantiated risk to public health, safety, or ecological integrity.
- Comply with federal law or binding federal funding requirements.
- Make administrative or technical improvements.

Note, Recommendation 7 only limits rulemaking related to foraging. The task force is not making recommendations to limit rulemaking in other key areas already identified by DNR.

Conclusion/next steps

The Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force expires on March 15, 2026. The Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force was established to study, evaluate, and provide recommendations on a sustainable and equitable framework for personal and community foraging on state-managed lands. The Task Force fulfilled its charge through stakeholder engagement, consultation, research, and deliberation. With the submission of this report to the Legislature, the Task Force formally concludes its work.

LCC staff will collaborate with the Chair and legislators to put the Task Force’s recommendations into bill language for introduction in the 2026 Legislative Session. Once introduced, the legislation will move through the standard legislative process, including committee hearings, stakeholder engagement and testimony, amendments, fiscal review, and votes in both chambers of the Legislature. If passed, the bill will be presented to the Governor for signature into law.

Continued engagement with stakeholders, the Department of Natural Resources, Tribal Nations, and the public will remain a priority throughout the legislative process. This report serves as the foundation for that work, while the legislative process will shape the final statutory framework.

At its core, this work advances a sustainable, culturally informed foraging policy grounded in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and the values that guided the Task Force's recommendations: conserving Minnesota's natural resources for future generations; strengthening people's connection to the land; expanding equitable access to state lands and waters; decriminalizing responsible practices already occurring; and achieving a thoughtful balance between conservation and access.

Appendix A: Statutory Authority

Sec. 24. **MINNESOTA SUSTAINABLE FORAGING TASK FORCE.**

Subdivision 1. **Membership.** (a) The Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force consists of the following members:

(1) two members of the senate, one appointed by the majority leader of the senate and one appointed by the minority leader of the senate;

(2) two members of the house of representatives, one appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives and one appointed by the speaker emerita of the house of representatives;

(3) one member appointed by the Minnesota Mycological Society;

(4) one member appointed by the Minnesota Foraging Alliance;

(5) four members from conservation or outdoor recreation organizations, appointed by the commissioner of natural resources;

(6) two scientists with expertise in botany, ecology, and environmental science appointed by the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota;

(7) three representatives of the Department of Natural Resources involved with managing state parks, forestry, fish and wildlife, and public lands appointed by the commissioner of natural resources;

(8) one member of the Minnesota Ojibwe Tribe appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council;

(9) one member of the Minnesota Dakota Tribe appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council; and

(10) two representatives with expertise on local ecosystems, species recovery, or sustainable harvesting appointed by the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota Extension.

(b) A member appointed under paragraph (a) may not be a registered lobbyist.

(c) The appointing authorities must make the appointments by August 1, 2025.

Subd. 2. **Duties.** The task force must:

(1) gather and review data and information, including traditional ecological knowledge, on the impact of foraging on species resilience, ecosystem health, and other aspects of Minnesota's diverse biomes;

(2) review existing regulations governing foraging activities on state lands;

(3) develop recommendations for science-based, including traditional ecological knowledge, foraging guidelines for state lands that balance public access and foraging opportunities with conservation needs. The recommendations must be in the form of draft

statutory or rule language and must be consistent with Indigenous and other cultural practices and traditions;

(4) develop recommendations for increasing public understanding of sustainable foraging practices that include safety and ecological considerations;

(5) solicit public input, when appropriate; and

(6) develop recommendations for reduced-priced foraging permits.

Subd. 3. Administrative support; meetings. (a) The Legislative Coordinating Commission must provide administrative support and convene the first meeting by September 1, 2025.

(b) The commissioner of natural resources must provide subject matter resources and expertise, including information on the management of, and flora and fauna on, state lands, as requested by the task force.

(c) The task force must meet at regular intervals as often as necessary to accomplish the goals enumerated under subdivision 2. Meetings of the task force are subject to the Minnesota Open Meeting Law under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 13D.

Subd. 4. Chair. The task force must elect a chair at its first meeting from among the legislative members.

Subd. 5. Legislative recommendations; expiration. By February 28, 2026, the task force must submit a written report containing its findings and recommendations to the commissioner of natural resources and to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over natural resources policy. The recommendations in the report must be specific and actionable. The report must detail the proposals for changes or additions to statute or rules to effectuate the task force's recommendations. The task force expires March 15, 2026, or upon submission of the report required by this subdivision, whichever occurs later.

Subd. 6. Compensation; expense reimbursement. Members of the task force appointed under subdivision 1, paragraph (a), clauses (1) and (2), may receive per diem and reimbursement for expenses as provided in the rules of their respective bodies. Other members of the task force may be compensated and have expenses reimbursed as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 15.059, subdivision 3.

Appendix B: Membership

Senator Susan Pha, Chair

Senate District 38 - DFL

Appointed by: Senate Majority Leader

Representative Roger Skraba, Vice Chair

House District 3A - R

Appointed by: Speaker of the House

Kelli Bruns

Manager, Department of Natural Resources Parks and Trails Resource and Asset Management
Appointed by: Commissioner of Natural Resources

Representative Alex Falconer

House District 49A - DFL
Appointed by: Democratic-Farmer-Labor Caucus Leader in the House

Dale Gentry

Conservation Director, Minnesota Audubon Society
Commissioner of Natural Resources

Senator Steve Green

Senate District 2 - R
Appointed by: Senate Minority Leader

Angela Gupta

Adjunct Professor of Forestry, University of Minnesota Extension
Appointed by: Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota Extension

Bradley Harrington

Director of Tribal Relations, Department of Natural Resources
Appointed by: Commissioner of Natural Resources

Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe

Member of the Minnesota Ojibwe Tribe
Appointed by: Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Greg Kvale

Minnesota Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Appointed by: Commissioner of Natural Resources

Peter Martignacco

President, Minnesota Mycological Society
Appointed by: Minnesota Mycological Society

Rebecca Montgomery

Professor, University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources
Appointed by: Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota

Kristen Poppleton

Senior Planner for Water Equity, Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities
Appointed by: Commissioner of Natural Resources

Ingrid Schneider

Professor, University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources
Appointed by: Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota

David Schultz

Professor, Hamline University Department of Political Science, Environmental Studies, and Legal Studies
Appointed by: Minnesota Foraging Alliance

Luke Skinner

Associate Superintendent, Three Rivers Park District
Appointed by: Commissioner of Natural Resources

Matt Wappler

Assistant Regional Forestry Manager, Department of Natural Resources Forestry Division
Appointed by: Commissioner of Natural Resources

Gary Wyatt

Forestry Extension Educator, University of Minnesota Extension
Appointed by: Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota Extension

Vacant

Member of the Minnesota Dakota Tribe
Appointed by: Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Appendix C: Meeting schedule and path to Task Force Recommendations

Meeting	Purpose/focus
1. August 20, 2025 – noon-2:00pm	Learning: foraging basics
2. September 9, 2025 – 10:00am-noon	Learning: MN and other states’ statutes & rules
3. October 8, 2025 – noon-2:00pm	Learning: DNR information; MN foraging history and context
October 20, 2025 – 10:00am-noon	Foraging field trip, Ft. Snelling State Park
4. October 21, 2025 – 10:00am-noon	Learning: traditional foraging practices (including indigenous perspectives)

5. November 18, 2025 – 10:00am-noon	Learning: other locations (Wisconsin DNR, Washington County DNR); Recommendations: review ideas, including those noted in meetings
6. December 2, 2025 – 10:00am-noon	Recommendations: create and discuss
7. December 16, 2025 – 10:00am-noon	Recommendations: discuss and refine
8. January 6, 2026 – 11:00am-1:00pm	Recommendations: discuss and refine
9. January 14, 2026 – 11:00am-1:00pm	Working session to discuss and refine recommendations
10. January 27, 2027 – 10:00am-noon	Recommendations: finalize and vote
11. February 10, 2026 – 10:00am-noon	Report: discuss draft legislative report

Meeting 1 (August 20, 2025)

During the inaugural meeting the Task Force were introduced to each other and staff from the MAD and LCC teams and elected a chair and co-chair. They reviewed the purpose and enabling legislation and their responsibilities as members. The Minnesota DNR presented background information on foraging regulations for state lands.

Meeting 2 (September 9, 2025)

MAD staff provided an overview of the arc of the task force and plans to interview Task Force members. LCC staff provided an overview of foraging laws and regulations in Minnesota and other states. The Task Force discussed which topics in Minnesota law and regulations should be further studied and discussed at future meetings.

Meeting 3 (October 8, 2025)

MAD staff reviewed the highlights of the Task Force interviews. The Task Force reviewed a draft charter and operating agreements that outlined how the task force would operate (e.g. when and how they would meet, rules of engagement, dispute resolution, etc.) and established procedures to end discussion and reach closure. The charter included a consensus building approach, a fist-to-five method, to explore support and points for further discussion and an 80% approval threshold for final decisions. The members voted unanimously to approve the charter. The charter is provided in Appendix D.

LCC and DNR staff provided information about foraging regulation history in Minnesota.

The Task Force discussed their scope including what they expected to be included in scope for consideration and what would be out of scope. Using a fist-to-five method, the Task Force began to home in on an agreement related to scope. They determined that state lands, personal use, terrestrial plant species and mushrooms would be considered in scope. They determined that non-

state lands, commercial use, and foraging maple sap and wild rice would be out of scope due to already established rules and regulations.

Site visit to Fort Snelling State Park (October 20, 2025)

The Task Force toured Fort Snelling State Park with DNR staff to learn more about how conservation staff currently observe and manage foraging activities. The visit included guest speaker Matt Pendleton, DNR Dakota Relations Liaison, who provided a history of the Dakota people's relationship to Fort Snelling and remarks from Doreen Hagen, an elder from the Prairie Island Indian Community. No business was conducted at the meeting.

Meeting 4 (October 21, 2025)

A panel of foraging experts including Tim Clemens, Samuel Thayer, Luke Black Elk, and Maria Wesslerle spoke to the Task Force. One member of the public provided testimony during the public input portion of the meeting.

Meeting 5 (November 18, 2025)

The Task Force heard from guest speakers on foraging programs and policies in other jurisdictions. The meeting included presentations from JJ Williams, Washington County Parks Manager, who shared more about the County's foraging permit pilot program and Matt Zine, Conservation Biologist with the Wisconsin DNR who presented about the Wisconsin's Natural Areas Program and foraging policies. The Task Force reviewed information from DNR that was provided in response to questions and clarification requests from the members. Senator Pha presented high-level recommendation options that staff had compiled based on the meeting discussions. Two members of the public provided testimony during the public input portion of the meeting.

Public Listening Session 1 (November 18, 2025)

This listening session was held in-person at the State Capitol. Nine members of the public participated in the session. Insights from all the listening sessions are captured in the section of this report labeled "Input from members of the public."

Public Listening Session 2 (November 19, 2025)

This listening session was held online using Zoom. Eight members of the public participated in the session.

Public Listening Session 3 (November 20, 2025)

This listening session was held online using Zoom. Nine members of the public participated in the session.

Meeting 6 (December 2, 2025)

DNR and LCC staff provided information in response to information requests from the Task Force. The group reflected on the listening session insights and then discussed the recommendation options compiled by staff based on what had been discussed in meetings to date. The group discussed incorporating the principles of honorable harvest and traditional ecological knowledge,

how best to define personal use, expanding the scope of items allowed to be harvested, and if and how a permitting process might apply.

Public Listening Session 4 (December 3, 2025)

This listening session was held online using Zoom. Eight members of the public participated in the session.

Meeting with MIAC Executive Board (December 3, 2025)

Chair Pha, Bradley Harrington, and Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe met with the MIAC Executive Board to update them on the work of the Task Force and to solicit feedback.

Public Listening Session 5 (December 11, 2025)

This listening session was held online using Zoom. Five members of the public participated in the session.

Meeting 7 (December 16, 2025)

The Task Force convened online using Zoom. DNR provided answers to members' previous questions. The focus of the meeting was to review and discuss 13 draft recommendations. Using a digital collaboration tool, Mural, the group reviewed the 13 draft recommendations, noting their level of consensus using fist-to-five and documenting their concerns and considerations for further discussion. One member of the public provided testimony during the public input portion of the meeting.

Meeting 8 (January 6, 2026)

The Task Force convened on Zoom. DNR Assistant Commissioner Bob Meier provided insights into DNR concerns regarding the recommendations under consideration.

Again, using the online collaboration tool Mural to consider revisions made to the draft recommendations by staff following the December 16 meeting. They noted additional insights and refinements they would like to see in the next iteration. Consensus was emerging around education and research, but the group remained divided on recommendations related to crafting a new foraging statute, permitting, and limiting rule making. A recommendation related to foraging invasive species and collaboration with the Department of Agriculture was removed at this time. The group decided to add an additional meeting in January to allow for further discussion and refinement of recommendations.

Meeting 9 (January 14, 2026)

The Task Force met to continue to discuss and refine the draft recommendations. The input from the Task Force was incorporated into a final draft for review during the following meeting.

Meeting 10 (January 27, 2026)

During this meeting, the group reviewed the final draft of seven recommendations. The Task Force used a fist-to-five method to test for initial support and identify where further discussion was needed. The group had consensus (80% support or more) on four of the seven recommendations.

They moved into discussing the three recommendations that did not have full consensus to determine if any additional modifications could be made that would achieve consensus. The three recommendations that warranted further discussion were related to creating the new statute, permitting processes, and limiting foraging related rulemaking for five years. After robust discussion, the group moved into a formal vote on each of the recommendations. Five of the seven recommendations garnered the 80% support threshold for consensus.

Staff provided an overview of the report outline and encouraged Task Force members to reach out with questions and suggestions.

Meeting 11 (February 10, 2026)

Members discussed the final seven recommendations and made further edits.

Sen. Pha moved to adopt **Recommendation 1**.

Ayes

Angela Gupta
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe
Greg Kvale
Peter Martignacco

Rebecca Montgomery
David Schultz
Gary Wyatt
Senator Susan Pha

Nays

Kelli Bruns
Senator Steve Green
Bradley Harrington

Luke Skinner
Matt Wappler
Representative Roger Skraba

The vote was 8 ayes, 6 nays. The motion, not receiving the pre-determined 80% threshold, failed and the recommendation was not adopted.

Sen. Pha moved to adopt **Recommendation 2**.

Ayes

Kelli Bruns
Angela Gupta
Bradley Harrington
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe
Greg Kvale
Peter Martignacco
Rebecca Montgomery

David Schultz
Luke Skinner
Matt Wappler
Gary Wyatt
Representative Roger Skraba
Senator Susan Pha

Nays

Senator Steve Green

The vote was 13 ayes, 1 nay. The motion, receiving the pre-determined 80% threshold, prevailed and the recommendation was adopted.

Sen. Pha moved to adopt **Recommendation 3.**

Ayes

Kelli Bruns
Angela Gupta
Bradley Harrington
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe
Greg Kvale
Peter Martignacco
Rebecca Montgomery

David Schultz
Luke Skinner
Matt Wappler
Gary Wyatt
Representative Roger Skraba
Senator Susan Pha

Nays

Senator Steve Green

The vote was 13 ayes, 1 nay. The motion, receiving the pre-determined 80% threshold, prevailed and the recommendation was adopted.

Sen. Pha moved to adopt **Recommendation 4.**

Ayes

Kelli Bruns
Angela Gupta
Bradley Harrington
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe
Greg Kvale
Peter Martignacco
Rebecca Montgomery

David Schultz
Luke Skinner
Matt Wappler
Gary Wyatt
Representative Roger Skraba
Senator Susan Pha

Nays

Senator Steve Green

The vote was 13 ayes, 1 nay. The motion, receiving the pre-determined 80% threshold, prevailed and the recommendation was adopted.

Sen. Pha moved to adopt **Recommendation 5.**

Ayes

Kelli Bruns

Angela Gupta

Bradley Harrington
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe
Greg Kvale
Peter Martignacco
Rebecca Montgomery
David Schultz

Luke Skinner
Matt Wappler
Gary Wyatt
Representative Roger Skraba
Senator Susan Pha

Nays

Senator Steve Green

The vote was 13 ayes, 1 nay. The motion, receiving the pre-determined 80% threshold, prevailed and the recommendation was adopted.

Sen. Pha moved to adopt **Recommendation 6**.

Ayes

Kelli Bruns
Angela Gupta
Bradley Harrington
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe
Greg Kvale
Peter Martignacco
Rebecca Montgomery

David Schultz
Luke Skinner
Matt Wappler
Gary Wyatt
Representative Roger Skraba
Senator Susan P

Nays

Senator Steve Green

The vote was 13 ayes, 1 nay. The motion, receiving the pre-determined 80% threshold, prevailed and the recommendation was adopted.

Sen. Pha moved to adopt **Recommendation 7**.

Ayes

Angela Gupta
Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe
Greg Kvale
Peter Martignacco
Rebecca Montgomery

David Schultz
Gary Wyatt
Representative Roger Skraba
Senator Susan Pha

Nays

Kelli Bruns
Senator Steve Green

Bradley Harrington
Luke Skinner

Matt Wappler

The vote was 9 ayes, 5 nays. The motion, not receiving the pre-determined 80% threshold, failed and the recommendation was not adopted.

Appendix D: Task Force Charter and Operating Procedures

Adopted October 8, 2025

Purpose

The Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force ([Laws of Minnesota, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24](#)) is required to gather and review information on the impact of foraging on species resilience, ecosystem health, and other aspects of Minnesota's biomes, solicit public input when appropriate, and develop recommendations for foraging guidelines reduced-price foraging permits. Recommendations must be specific, actionable, and consistent with Indigenous and other cultural practices and traditions. The task force must submit a written report to the commissioner of natural resources and to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over natural resources policy. The recommendations must detail proposals for changes or additions to statute or rules.

Scope of work

The task force is tasked with the following six duties outlined within Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24, Subdivision 2:

- (1) gather and review data and information, including traditional ecological knowledge, on the impact of foraging on species resilience, ecosystem health, and other aspects of Minnesota's diverse biomes;
- (2) review existing regulations governing foraging activities on state lands;
- (3) develop recommendations for science-based, including traditional ecological knowledge, foraging guidelines for state lands that balance public access and foraging opportunities with conservation needs. The recommendations must be in the form of draft statutory or rule language and must be consistent with Indigenous and other cultural practices and traditions;
- (4) develop recommendations for increasing public understanding of sustainable foraging practices that include safety and ecological considerations;
- (5) solicit public input, when appropriate; and
- (6) develop recommendations for reduced-priced foraging permits.

Participants

The task force consists of 19 members, including:

- (1) two members of the senate, one appointed by the majority leader of the senate and one appointed by the minority leader of the senate;
- (2) two members of the house of representatives, one appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives and one appointed by the speaker emerita of the house of representatives;

- (3) one member appointed by the Minnesota Mycological Society;
- (4) one member appointed by the Minnesota Foraging Alliance;
- (5) four members from conservation or outdoor recreation organizations, appointed by the commissioner of natural resources;
- (6) two scientists with expertise in botany, ecology, and environmental science appointed by the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota;
- (7) three representatives of the Department of Natural Resources involved with managing state parks, forestry, fish and wildlife, and public lands appointed by the commissioner of natural resources;
- (8) one member of the Minnesota Ojibwe Tribe appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council;
- (9) one member of the Minnesota Dakota Tribe appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council; and
- (10) two representatives with expertise on local ecosystems, species recovery, or sustainable harvesting appointed by the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota Extension.

Individual members may not be a registered lobbyist.

Operating procedures

Section 1: Meetings

- The task force will meet on average every three weeks for two hours, with additional meetings scheduled as needed.
- Meetings may be conducted hybrid or online, with a preference for in-person participation.
- Agendas will be developed by Management Analysis and Development (MAD) and LCC in consultation with the co-chairs, and, when needed, in consultation with the members.
- Agendas will be distributed at least three business days in advance of all meetings.
- The task force is subject to Open Meetings Law under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13D.

Section 2: Task force operating agreements

The task force has drafted operating agreements to guide behavior and interaction. Operating agreements are a tool to create an inclusive, participatory space and to foster shared accountability. These may be refined as the task force continues its work.

- Say your name before speaking
- If online, cameras on whenever possible
- Come to meetings prepared. Review agenda and materials in advance.
- Take space, make space
- Refrain from side conversations
- Show respect to members and presenters
- Be open-minded and curious about others' opinions, viewpoints, and lived experiences
- Recognize that time or research may be needed before questions are answered
- Focus on the issue, not the people
- Assume good intent but acknowledge harm

Section 3: Procedures to end discussion and reach closure

Task force discussions will seek consensus using a gradients of agreement scale, such as the [fist-to-five](#) method to ensure the six duties of the task force are executed and for internal task force processes, such as approving this charter.

A formal process to finalize the complete list of recommendations developed by the task force will be followed:

- Voting will only take place if a simple majority of members is present.
 - As of the current draft of this document, 17 members have been appointed, and the presence of 9 members represents quorum.
 - When all 19 members have been appointed, the presence of 10 members will be a simple majority and represent quorum.
- Each member shall have one vote, regardless of their affiliation or role on the task force.
- There is no voting by proxy.
- Participants can choose to abstain from a vote.
- Decisions will be finalized when 80% of participants indicate agreement.
- Every effort will be made to address members' concerns before decisions are made.

While these recommendations are advisory, the task force's input will inform the decisions of DNR staff, the commissioner of natural resources, and legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over natural resources policy.

Section 4: Dispute and conflict resolution

Disputes often involve a specific disagreement over a particular issue that can be clearly defined and is usually quicker and easier to resolve. Conflicts are often more complex to resolve as they involve deeper, underlying issues and tensions.

Dispute resolution

In cases of dispute resolution within the task force, the following steps will be taken:

1. **Open communication:** Address dispute directly and respectfully within the task force.
2. **Facilitated discussions:** If dispute persists, MAD consultants will facilitate discussions to find a resolution.
3. **Mediation:** A neutral mediator may be appointed to resolve ongoing disputes.
4. **Removal:** Persistent disruptive behavior may result in removal from the task force after all efforts for resolution have been exhausted. A removal will result in an ineligibility to submit any future reimbursement claims.

Conflict resolution

Conflict between people is a situation where the needs, values, and interests of two or more people appear to be incompatible. The task force will experience conflict as it is found everywhere people interact. Conflict involves an emotional response as our brains perceive conflict as a threat.

Conflicts within the task force will tend to occur when members make assumptions about other members or get defensive. While there is no single way to address conflict, task force members may use the following techniques to navigate conflict:

- Use reflective listening by listening for facts, feelings, and values.

- Use non-reactive statements that seek understanding. In addition to using “I” statements, ask open-ended questions like, “Can you tell me more about...” or “Can you help me understand X?” Also, reflect back what you are hearing asking questions like, “I’m hearing XYZ, is that correct?” or “It sounds like you’re saying XYZ, can you elaborate on that?”
- Ensure others feel valued and respected by validating diverse thoughts and perspectives.
- Focus on behavior(s) and the impact of those behaviors. Avoid labelling or judging the person.
- Define the problem in a way that is mutually acceptable. Identify and discuss each person’s needs, values, and interests before determining next steps.
- Find common ground and solutions to move forward.

Task force members commit to navigating conflict internally with intention and will use a problem-solving mindset. Resolving conflict effectively will help the task force to strengthen relationships, solve problems more effectively, and realize the task force’s purpose.

A [problem-solving toolkit](#) created by the State of Minnesota’s Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution offers specific guides and resources.

Section 5: Subcommittees

- The task force may establish subcommittees to address specific issues or tasks. These subcommittees will operate under the guidance of the task force.
- Subcommittee members will be selected through an open and voluntary process. The task force will issue a call for volunteers. If interest exceeds quorum, participants shall be selected through consensus.
- Subcommittees shall report back to the full task force on their findings and recommendations.

Responsibilities

Section 1: Task force members

In accepting their appointment to the task force, members are expected to:

- Attend all task force meetings with positive intentions.
- Prepare for active participation in discussions by reviewing meeting materials in advance.
- Seek to understand opinions, perspectives, and lived experiences of others.
- Proactively engage and communicate with others who are invested in the work of the task force, including, community partners, and if applicable, the nominating association or council.
- Review and provide feedback on the agendas, meeting notes, and other documents when requested.
- Participate in drafting materials aligned with Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24 for LCC review and editing.
- Abstain from voting where a conflict of interest may exist. Conflicts of interest occur when a member’s individual personal interests or loyalties compete with or compromise their ability to faithfully fulfill the purpose of the task force and loyalty to the public interests. (Note: The State of Minnesota’s Code of Ethical Conduct (HR/LR Policy #1445 includes a non-exhaustive list of conflicts of interest.)
- Serve on subcommittees if expertise, interest, and time allows.

- Refrain from writing letters or engaging in other kinds of communication in the name of the task force unless the Chair specifically authorized such communication.
- Respect the Task Force Operating Agreements (to be refined by task force members).

Section 2: Co-Chairs

In accepting their role, co-chairs are expected to uphold all task force member responsibilities as well as the following additional responsibilities:

- Guide task force activities, including agenda development with MAD, to ensure the task force purpose and six duties are fulfilled.
- Attend all planning meetings and consult in agenda development.
- Ensure task force meetings engage all participants effectively.
- Support and advise on any potential dispute and conflict resolution.
- At the request of the appointing body, be the spokesperson and representative for the task force.

Section 3: Legislative Coordinating Committee (LCC)

- Ensure compliance with Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24
- Ensure compliance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 13D.
- Guide task force activities, including agenda development with MAD, to ensure the task force purpose and six duties are fulfilled.
- Coordinate appointments of task force members.
- Task force and meeting logistics, including scheduling and administration of per diems and coordinating guest speakers (e.g., subject matter experts).
- Arrange and administer remote meeting technology; ensuring compliance with open meeting requirements; coordinate requested accessibility and accommodations for task force members, other participants, and guests; post and distribute meeting materials; ensuring timely related communication with the task force and other meeting participants as needed.
- Produce official meeting minutes and track roll-call votes.
- Manage meeting recordings and online broadcasts.
- Coordinate and conduct research and data collection, in collaboration with MAD as needed.
- Facilitate tribal engagement and public engagement as necessary.
- Serve as author of the final task force report, managing final report content and logistics, including creating report outline, tracking drafts and edits of task force recommendations, preparing drafts of final report and making edits as directed by co-chairs, managing task force input and comments, and as needed, coordinating development of legislative language.
- Speak on behalf of the task force if needed.
- Submit a copy of the final report to legislative and executive branch leaders and the Legislative Reference Library at the close of the project.
- Keep relevant parties informed on task force progress.

Section 4: Management Analysis and Development

- Facilitate task force meetings.
- Facilitate planning meetings.
- Facilitate subcommittees.
- Ensure all meetings are productive, engaging, and reflect the Task Force Operating Agreements and ensure public members announce themselves and their affiliation in in-person meetings.
- Support and advise on any potential dispute and conflict resolution.

Charter revisions

While this charter can be revised or expanded at any time, there will be a planned review of the charter during the task force's November meeting which will serve as a mid-point pulse check. Approval requires the affirmative votes of 2/3 of task force participants, not 2/3 of those present on the day of the vote.

Proposed amendments or revisions shall be distributed to all participants at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Appendix E: Overview of Presentations

Invited Presentations

DNR presentations

- Outline current MN rules here
- Outline different DNR land here
- Outline of DNR concerns with proposed expansion of foraging

Foraging Panelists

- Foragers are concerned with conservation the same way hunters and anglers are.
- See foraging as a great chance for Minnesotans to connect with nature
- Believe more plants can be sustainably foraged than just the berries, nuts, and mushrooms currently allowed

Washington County Parks Manager

- Implemented free foraging in specific sites
- Had 55 applicants
- Doing survey work now but believes project was a success
- Hopes to expand publicity

Wisconsin DNR

- WI allows foraging of invasive species
- WI DNR can add species to list
- WI allows foraging of fruits, nuts, mushrooms, wild asparagus, and watercress without a permit
- WI allows collection of seeds with a permit

Appendix F: Other recommendations

One recommendation, for DNR and the Department of Agriculture (MDA) to explore modifications to statute and/or rules to safely transport plants on Minnesota’s Noxious Weed List, was dropped prior to the final vote. It has originally been proposed because of a suggestion that foragers might wish to forage some plants on this list and if allowed, it must be done with care to prevent further propagation. Upon further discussion, Task Force members determined that species on this list were not likely to be desired for foraging, and the recommendation was removed from consideration.

Appendix G: Materials

All documents provided to Task Force members:

Appendix H: Meeting Minutes