



Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

A Minnesota Non-profit, Tax-exempt Corporation
www.snafriends.org

February 26, 2025

Via e-mail only
amy.zipko@house.mn.gov

Representative Josh Heintzeman, Chair, and
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Re: HF 819 – MN Sustainable Foraging Task Force: **Request for Two Amendments**
For Committee Hearing, Thursday, February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Heintzeman and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HF 819, which would establish the Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force.

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

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

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

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

Therefore, **state law does not allow foraging on scientific and natural areas.**

Amendment #1

Based on the statutory requirements stated above, **we respectfully request that scientific and natural areas be exempted from the bill** - by adopting the following amendment on lines 1.6 to 1.10:

“Subdivision 1. **Establishment.** The commissioner of natural resources must establish the Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force to develop scientifically sound, data-driven recommendations for foraging regulations on state lands, **except for state scientific and natural areas**, that balance the need for ecological sustainability with the right of Minnesotans to enjoy the state's bountiful natural resources through foraging.”

Amendment #2

We are supportive of language in the bill to “... develop scientifically sound, data-driven recommendations for foraging regulations on state lands ...”

However, we share the concern that the present language, on lines 2.19 to 2.21 of the bill, would allow the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources until the data supports otherwise. Therefore, instead, under the concept of the precautionary principle, **we respectfully request the following amendment to lines 2.19 to 2.21:**

“3) develop recommendations for science-based, data-driven foraging guidelines for state lands that balance public access with conservation needs, **~~setting limits on~~ allowing** foraging activities only where supported by data.”

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

Very truly yours,

Thomas E. Casey

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

Please send reply to:
2854 Cambridge Lane
Mound, MN 55364
(952) 472-1099 (telephone)
tcasey@frontiernet.net

TEC/tc

The following organizations have signed onto this letter:

Izaak Walton League of America, Minnesota Division

Minnesota Native Plant Society

Pollinator Friendly Alliance





Mr. Chair, members of the committee.

My name is Tim Clemens and I am submitting this testimony to support HF819. I live in District 67B. My State Senator is Fong Hawj and my State House of Representatives member is Jay Xiong.

I am an independent foraging educator and subject matter expert. I established Ironwood Foraging, a small business, in 2017 to create profound connections between people, plants, and mushrooms. In partnership with a wide array of 50+ stakeholder organizations, I have personally taught foraging skills to over 14,000+ Minnesotans; establishing Ironwood Foraging as the most prolific resource for comprehensive foraging education in Minnesota.

HF819 leverages diverse expertise to create a taskforce of knowledgeable and experienced stakeholders to participate in a transparent process of fact-finding in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in regard to foraging on state public lands in Minnesota. This bill therefore supports creating policy that is scientific, data-driven, and culturally coherent. Collaborative rulemaking helps foster public trust and cooperation, encourages sustainable practices, and aligns with the MNDNR mission of fostering a connection between people and nature.

Foraging is proven to increase volunteerism, foster nature ethics, and build self-efficacy in Minnesotans. Therefore this tradition and living practice is of great benefit to our public lands, water, ecology, and people, with immensely positive second- and third-order benefits. It is my sincere hope that HF819, and the taskforce it creates, will be remembered for centuries to come for its foresight and proactive support of the foraging tradition, Minnesota's native species, and the lifeway of reciprocal conservation.

Thank you for hearing my testimony and for your thoughtful consideration of this bill,

Tim Clemens



February 27, 2025

Chair Heintzeman and Members of the House Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HF819, a bill that would establish the Minnesota Foraging Task Force. The Minnesota Conservation Federation sees the development of this task force as a step toward providing Minnesota's growing and engaged foraging communities with appropriately developed rules and regulations that are needed to ensure that wild plants and fungi are being collected in a manner that conserves foraging resources for future users and provides foraging access for all Minnesotans.

Minnesotans that engage in hunting and fishing activities are able to harvest fish and game with a clear understanding of rules and regulations that are consistent across a patchwork of public and private lands and waters. Can ruffed grouse be hunted on a Wildlife Management Area? How many lake trout can a person have in their possession? What is the difference between a "daily" and "possession" limit? The answers to these questions can be found in the rules and regulations developed to provide hunters and anglers the opportunity to engage in the harvest of fish and game. These regulations also provide wildlife and land managers a tool to ensure that harvest is being done in a conservation minded manner with the long term health of the resource in mind.

Can a person harvest acorns in a Wildlife Management Area? Is it legal for someone to harvest wild mint on state forest lands? How many blueberries can a harvester pick before a permit is needed from a local Forestry office? What public lands allow for the harvest of ramps? These are the types of questions that, at the moment, are difficult to answer for folks interested in engaging in recreational and cultural foraging activities across Minnesota.

Interest in foraging for wild foods is growing across Minnesota and it is reasonable to update rules and regulations with those rules being developed in a transparent manner. We think bringing the groups and stakeholders included in this legislation to the table will ensure a thoughtful outcome. HF 819 would bring together individuals representing a wide range of foraging interests with the goal of providing clear expectations for the gathering of and access to wild foods. We request your support.

Sincerely

Brad Gausman
Executive Director
brad@mncf.org

February 25, 2025

Rep. Isaac Schultz
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155



Dear Rep. Schultz,

On behalf of the Minnesota Mycological Society, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for House File 819 which establishes the Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force. This initiative presents a meaningful opportunity to ensure sustainable, equitable access to Minnesota's diverse natural resources, guided by robust scientific data and sensitivity to cultural and traditional practices. Most of all, we are excited that this would ensure a transparent process to determining access to state lands for foraging activities.

Our members deeply value Minnesota's lands, recognizing that foraging is far more than simply gathering wild foods. It is a practice deeply rooted in tradition, culture, and a profound connection to our natural environment. Responsible and sustainable foraging promotes stewardship, ecological awareness, and community engagement, connecting Minnesotans to our shared lands and reinforcing the importance of conservation.

We commend the legislation's commitment to a scientifically rigorous approach. Decisions about foraging should be guided by accurate, data-driven assessments rather than restrictive measures based on assumptions or incomplete information. By developing science-based guidelines, the task force can effectively balance conservation priorities with the fundamental rights of Minnesotans to access and enjoy state lands.

Furthermore, the inclusive approach outlined in the bill—incorporating Indigenous voices, local businesses, academics, and diverse cultural groups—ensures that the recommendations will honor Minnesota's rich heritage and varied practices. We strongly support the provision for educational outreach, as public education is critical to fostering a responsible foraging community.

The Minnesota Mycological Society looks forward to contributing our expertise and collaborating closely with fellow stakeholders on this important initiative.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We urge your full support for establishing the Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force.

Warm regards,

Peter Martignacco
President
Minnesota Mycological Society (Since 1899)
125 Years of Citizen Science
612-308-2156
president@minnesotamycologicalsociety.org



Minnesota Foraging Alliance

The Minnesota Foraging Alliance (MNFA) is writing in support of House File 819. MNFA's mission is to protect access to public lands for responsible and sustainable foraging by all. MNFA believes the creation of this task force allows for all necessary parties to have a seat at the table when discussing the future of Minnesota's public lands. The task force will ensure educated and informed discussion with the goal of establishing policies and land management practices that will incorporate foraging as an outdoor activity vital to the conservation and stewardship of public land.

Foraging has been practiced by the Ojibwe and Dakota people since time immemorial, and is a time-honored tradition by many cultural groups who now call Minnesota home. Preservation of natural ecosystems does not mean human removal from interacting with those ecosystems, but rather careful stewardship by following ethical foraging practices are vital to the preservation and Minnesota's rich natural environment.

MNFA believes the task force will foster cooperation and trust among members of the foraging community. By involving the foraging community in policy making decisions such as permitting foraging activities, and creation of a guidebook that demonstrates sustainable foraging principles and practice, the future regulations DNR will establish regarding foraging will then be informed and balanced.

Working together with the public and organizations instills a culture of shared responsibility, which captures the spirit of public lands. MNFA believes this task force can play a critical role in DNR crafting well-rounded, effective, and widely supported foraging regulations.



February 26, 2025

Rep. Isaac Schultz
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155



Dear Rep. Schultz,

The North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS) is writing to thank you and your co-authors for authoring House File 819. It seems this legislation is needed to ensure that rules and regulations regarding access to state lands for foraging is done through a data-driven and transparent process.

NATIFS is a nonprofit organization founded by Chef Sean Sherman of The Sioux Chef and is dedicated to addressing the economic and health crises affecting Native communities by re-establishing Native foodways. We imagine a new North American food system that generates wealth and improves health in Native communities through food-related enterprises.

One way NATIFS educate is through teaching sustainable foraging of native plants and mushrooms. By providing education and training that gives Native people access to healthy, local, Indigenous food, we can not only address serious issues of malnutrition, food-related illness, and economic impoverishment on tribal lands — we can also use our shared heritage to build bridges and build power within and between Native communities and our allies.

At a time when people are looking back to nature for healing, food and connection, the MN Department of Natural Resources should be working with stakeholders on what new rules and regulations regarding foraging on state lands should look like. This bill does that and should align new rules with environmental conservation and responsible land management.

A collaborative approach prevents restrictive policies that disproportionately affect Minnesotans without access to private lands. Also, a public, inclusive process fosters trust between communities and state agencies.

Thank you for authoring House File 819!

Linda Black Elk
North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems

From: Olena Johnson <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2025 12:44 PM

To: Amy Zipko <Amy.Zipko@house.mn.gov>

Subject: HF 819 (Schultz) Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force meeting, February 27, 2025

Dear Members of the Committee,

Foraging has become increasingly popular in Minnesota over the past several years, and developing a Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force to oversee foraging could provide significant benefits, both to the foraging community and to the state itself. This is especially important now, as Federal budget cuts are leading to reductions in Minnesota's budget. Given these circumstances, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) should consider heavily relying on the foraging community to help supplement and promote conservation efforts in the state's natural areas.

Foragers often spend considerable time on public lands, where they not only gather but also observe the condition of these areas. This makes them an invaluable resource for identifying potential threats, such as invasive species or poaching activities, and ensuring the land is properly cared for. Creating strict rules without public input is unhelpful, as these regulations are often based on outdated information.

The foraging community can play a key role in educating the public on foraging guidelines and the importance of sustainable practices. Additionally, foragers can help raise awareness about alternative food sources, which is especially valuable for low-income communities.

By working together, the foraging community and the DNR can foster a better understanding of available resources and ensure they are used wisely and preserved for future generations. As someone who has been foraging since childhood and cares deeply about preserving nature, I would be interested in serving in one of the available positions to contribute to this important cause.

Thank you for your consideration.

Olena Johnson

Minnesota constituent

26 February 2025

Via email to: amy.zipko@house.mn.gov

Representative Josh Heintzeman, Chair, and
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

RE: HF 819: MN Sustainable Foraging Task Force

Natural resources are managed in public trust by the State on behalf of all Minnesotans. In addition, some species desirable for foraging are regulated as endangered or threatened in Minnesota, including various plants and fungi. Therefore, the proposed Task Force must consider recommendations that balance the need for ecological sustainability with the use of natural resources holistically. Therefore, I provide the following request for amendment for consideration.

“Subdivision 1. Establishment. The commissioner of natural resources must establish the Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force to develop scientifically sound, data-driven recommendations for foraging regulations ~~on state lands~~, that balance the need for ecological sustainability with the right of Minnesotans to enjoy the state's bountiful natural resources through foraging.”

I also support recommendations provided on behalf of Friends of MN Scientific and Natural Areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HF 819, which would establish the Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force.

Sincerely,

Christopher E. Smith
Pine County, MN Resident
Avid wildlife watcher, hunter, and angler

Dear Amy Zipko,

My name is Jaime Rockney and I am a resident of Jordan, MN, a member of the Minnesota Mycological Society (MMS), and owner of Chick of the Woods Foraging, LLC. I am writing in support of legislation that will determine rules for responsible foraging on state lands. The bill ensures that public organizations are at the table when Rules are being formed, which aligns with my goals of collaborating with the DNR on sustainable foraging practices.

Foraging is a healthy, time-honored tradition in Minnesota that promotes outdoor education, food security, and sustainable land stewardship. MMS members and Chick of the Woods Foraging LLC carefully follow ethical foraging practices. Protecting public access for responsible foraging would ensure that future generations can continue to engage with and benefit from Minnesota's rich natural environment.

I support HF819/SF1464. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jaime Rockney

jaime@chickofthewoods.com

612-481-6822



My name is Courtney Iverson, and I am the President of Morels & Memories, a local non-profit dedicated to supporting research for a cure for Alzheimer's Disease, advancing nature-based education, and scientific research regarding nature and health. I am a member of the MMS and MN Foraging Alliance. I am writing today in support of H.F. 819/SF 1464.

Foraging is a practice as old as humans that has proven nutritional, physical, and mental health benefits. With 78% of the 5.7 million people of the population in MN living in urban areas, 1 in 5 households dealing with food scarcity issues, 2/3rds of our population being overweight or obese, and over 37% of our population living with anxiety or depression, it becomes more and more critical for state lands in MN to be accessed for foraging purposes. Foraging is truly a public health solution, as it is a physical activity that gives access to healthy, organic foods at little to no cost, while simultaneously immersing in a natural environment, which research has proven to benefit mental health.

With access comes responsibility and the need for education, but also the need for rules that are realistic to follow, manage, and are beneficial and reciprocal to the environment. We are asking for a seat at the table when the DNR establishes rules so they be established with consideration to traditions and science.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Courtney Iverson
952-564-9000



Dave Lenz
4837 Central Ave
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
davelenz78@gmail.com
612-845-8591
February 25, 2025

Written Support in Favor of HF 819

My name is Dave Lenz. I am writing to you today in support of the original version of bill H.F. 819/SF which does not allow the DNR to select the task force.

This bill is being presented to create a task force to work with the DNR to develop realistic data driven regulations to better manage foraging on Minnesota public lands. Minnesotans have practiced foraging for food for centuries. This bill is essential in protecting our rights to continue to sustainably and responsibly continue this tradition.

I am a member of the Minnesota Mycological Society and the Minnesota Foraging Alliance. I have been foraging mushrooms for 15 years. A few examples of my harvests are pictured to the right. For me, foraging is a mental and soul healing activity. Bringing home enough to share with family and friends is incredibly rewarding. Just this week we enjoyed some frozen chanterelle mushrooms with our meal.

While our goal is to preserve safe public access to continue this tradition, we all must be responsible for the resources that provide our bounties and provide the public with education regarding the use of these rules.

I appreciate your attention to the H.F. 819/SF bill and am hoping for your support.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

David A Lenz

Cc. Rep. Brion Curran (DFL) District: 36B
Senator Heather Gustafson District 36, DFL





HAMLIN

UNIVERSITY

David Schultz, Distinguished University Professor

Department of Political Science

Department of Legal Studies

Department of Environmental Studies

MS B 1805

1536 Hewitt Ave

St Paul, MN 55104

**Written Testimony in Favor of HF 819
(without the DNR Amendment to
let the Commissioner Pick Task Force Members)**

**David Schultz
February 26, 2025**

Introduction

I am submitting this written testimony to support HF 819, a bill to create a Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force. My support for this bill is for a version that does not allow the Commissioner of the DNR to select task force members.

Identity

My name is David Schultz. I live at 1120 Saint Clair Avenue, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55015. My State Senator is Erin Murphy, my State House of Representatives member is Kaohly Vang Her.

I am a professor of political science at Hamline University where I have taught classes on environmental law, constitutional law, public policy, and American politics for more than twenty-five years. I am a former executive director of Common Cause Minnesota. I am also a law professor at the University of Saint Thomas where among classes I have taught include administrative law. I offer this testimony in my private capacity as a citizen and only list my occupation and employer for identification purposes. My views do not necessarily reflect the opinions of my employers.

I am also a mushroom forager and come from at least three generations of family members who have also foraged mushrooms.

Testimony in favor of HF819

Good environmental policy should incorporate good science. But to achieve that good public policy needs to solicit a wide spectrum of citizen and community input in order to gather the appropriate facts and evidence.

HF819 addresses both of these concerns. I share the concerns of DNR that the State of Minnesota needs to have a sound management policy for its resources, including for the practice of foraging. But in order to craft such a policy the DNR must take into consideration relevant and diverse input from the public, including those experts and constituencies who have important knowledge about

foraging. The only way that the DNR can make sound or good public policy is if, before it makes rules regarding foraging, it convenes a task force to gather input and then it is required to take this input and evidence and translate it into rule making.

This input should also come from parties with whom the DNR may not necessarily agree. A basic principle of the Minnesota Administrative Procedures Act, administrative law in general, and in recent Minnesota Supreme Court cases such as *In the Matter of the Denial of Contested Case Hearing Requests and Issuance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System / State Disposal System Permit No. MN0071013 for the Proposed Northmet Project St Louis County Hoyt Lakes and Babbitt Minnesota*, 993 N.W.2d 627 (Minn. 2023) affirm the idea that rule making should not be done based upon an agency cherry-picking what evidence or individuals it may wish to consult in making policy. Instead it has an affirmative obligation to receive diverse viewpoints and evidence when acting or making rules.

HF819, creating a task force with membership determined not selected by the DNR commissioner, gets us a long way to the goal of creating good public policy based on facts and community engagement.

Thank you for considering my written testimony and for your support for this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

David Schultz



North American Mycological Association

Promoting, Pursuing, and Advancing Mycology

Chair Heintzeman and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HF 819, which would establish a Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force to support the DNR's efforts to set policy and manage responsible sustainable foraging in Minnesota.

Foraging mushrooms for personal use has proven to be sustainable around the globe for centuries. We support this HF 819 legislation in its original form. We applaud Minnesota's efforts to develop an inclusive science-based collaboration approach to this management need. We are here to assist the task force with any expertise we can provide.

Kindest regards on behalf of NAMA's Executive Board,
Bruch Reed
Chief Operating Officer
Email address: coo@namyco.org

Trent Blizzard
NAMA President
president@namyco.org



FOUR SEASON FORAGING

Maria Wesserle • 1536 LaSalle Ave, Apt 308, Minneapolis, MN 55403 • 612.440.5958

February 25th, 2025

Representative Josh Heintzeman, Chair
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Re: HF 819 – MN Sustainable Foraging Task Force
For Committee Hearing, Thursday, February 27, 2025

Chair Heintzeman and Committee Members:

My name is Maria Wesserle; and I am a resident of District 61A, as well as a member of the Minnesota Mycological Society (MMS), a forager of over 20 years, and the owner of a small business that teaches safe and sustainable foraging practices. I am writing to respectfully ask for your support for bipartisan legislation that will determine rules for responsible and sustainable foraging on state lands. The bill ensures that public organizations are at the table when Rules are being formed. This aligns with MMS's goals of collaborating with the DNR on sustainable foraging practices.

Please note that my support for this bill does not include the recent DNR amendment which places the responsibility of appointing task force members with the commissioner. The purpose of this bill is to create an *independent team*, not one hand-picked by the very agency that is attempting to restrict foraging access. It is only through consultation with independent researchers that data-driven policies formulated by diverse voices can be crafted.

Foraging is a time-honored tradition practiced by a great many cultural groups in Minnesota and around the world. The question regarding the sustainability of foraging has already been answered many times over, by our ancestors and by people living directly from the sustenance of the land. If foraging wasn't sustainable, it wouldn't have fed all of humanity for 95% of our existence. All around the world, there is evidence of land management and harvesting methods that promote diversity and restore fractured habitats.

My vision includes a future in which foraging is as valued and protected as other outdoor pursuits, such as hunting, trapping, and fishing. Just as harvesting game animals creates a direct connection that supports their populations, so too can foraging support the proliferation of plants and mushrooms. It's just going to take some research, education, and the development of sound policies. Foragers and the government can support each other in conducting studies and developing regulations that make sense for everybody. Coming together, we can preserve the beauty of Minnesota's green spaces while instituting a more relational method of stewarding the land we love.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With Respect,

Maria Wesserle



MINNESOTA DIVISION OF THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

February 25, 2025

Via e-mail only
amy.zipko@house.mn.gov

Representative Josh Heintzeman, Chair, and
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Re: HF 819 – MN Sustainable Foraging Task Force - **Requested Amendments**
For Committee Hearing, Thursday, February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Heintzeman and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HF 819, which would establish the Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force.

Founded in 1922, the Izaak Walton League of America (the “Ikes”) is a nation-wide organization dedicated to the conservation of outdoor America and our precious natural resources. I am President of the Ikes’ Minnesota Division.

We are supportive of language in the bill to “... develop scientifically sound, data-driven recommendations for foraging regulations on state lands ...”

However, we are concerned that lines 2.19 to 2.21 of the bill would allow the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources until the data supports otherwise. Therefore, instead, under the concept of the precautionary principle, **we respectfully request the following amendment to lines 2.19 to 2.21:**

“3) develop recommendations for science-based, data-driven foraging guidelines for state lands that balance public access with conservation needs, ~~setting limits on~~ **allowing** foraging activities only where supported by data.”

We are also concerned that the present language, on lines 1.20 to 1.21, omits a requirement for the scientists on the task force having knowledge of fungi, a very popular group of organisms sought by foragers. Therefore, **we respectfully request the following amendment to lines 1.20 to 1.21:**

“(i) two scientists with expertise in botany, **mycology**, ecology, and environmental science from Minnesota universities; ...”

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Our Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Siekmeier".

John Siekmeier, President
MN Division, Izaak Walton League of America

Please reply to:
John Siekmeier, President
MN Division, Izaak Walton League of America
1150 Lawn Ave.
Grant, MN 55115
Telephone: (651) 600-2693
john.siekmeier@q.com