

Restoring manoomin (wild rice) on the Green Bay west shore through conservation partnerships and community outreach

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What is wild rice?

Manoomin (wild rice) is an emergent aquatic plant native to the Great Lakes with a unique life history.

Wild rice was lost from Lower Green Bay and the Fox River due to land use changes and other factors.

Wild rice provides habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, fish, and other wildlife, as well as improves water quality.

Manoomin is a way of life and a relative of the Anishinaabe people. Wild rice is also culturally and nutritionally important to indigenous peoples including the Menominee and Ho-Chunk.



Restoration seeding

Wild rice hand seeding has occurred each fall since 2016. Overwintering in the wetland supports spring germination.

The team has engaged conservation partners, volunteers, community members, and K-12 school groups in seeding efforts.



Germinating



Floating leaf



Emergent



Flowering



Senescence



Conservation partnerships

A collaborative team of conservation partners works together to review conditions and available data and incorporate monitoring findings into future management plans.

Site selection includes public access wetlands within the Lower Green Bay & Fox River Area of Concern and along the Green Bay west shore.

2022 Wild Rice Seeding Locations



Monitoring

Since 2018, the field team including students from UW-Green Bay monitors seeded rice throughout each growing season (May-August). Data gathered includes wild rice density, phenology, and damage, along with documenting environmental conditions.



Wild rice outcomes vary seasonally, but 6+ years of data offers a few trends for the west shore:

- Wetland sites farther north on the Bay tend to establish more quickly than sites on Lower Green Bay.
- Site conditions like water depth, herbivory or carp disturbance intensity, and/or storm damage may effect the growth and sustainability of wild rice.
- Rice seed may persist in the environment for at least 3 years to wait for improved conditions.

Outreach

Students from kindergarten through high school transplant wild rice they grew in their classrooms and learn about the importance of wild rice and wetlands during field trips.

In 2023, 17 educators and more than 500 students participated in their classrooms with more than 200 attending spring field trips. The experience offers place-based connections with their watersheds and opportunity to engage in local restoration.

