St. Louis River AOC Wild Rice Restoration Agreement

Quarterly Report

October 2021

Fall 2021 wild rice harvest produced a very low yield across the state of Minnesota, in particular in the region frequented by harvesters that the Fond du Lac Band is able to purchase wild rice for reseeding purposes. Drought conditions throughout the summer led to poor pollination and difficult access for harvesters. Due to these challenges no seed was able to be acquired for reseeding into the St. Louis River Estuary sites. In comparison over 10,000 pounds were acquired in only several days for reseeding in 2020.

Canada geese exclosure fencing was installed in late May, early June in North Duck Hunter and Walleye Alley Bays. 13 exclosures measuring 20 feet by 100 feet were installed, 8 in North Duck Hunter Bay and 5 in Walleye Alley Bay. PVC framed exclosures from previous years was used for a portion of the install, with snow fencing purchased to construct additional exclosures. The snow fencing exclosures proved to be simpler to transport and install, decreasing staff time needed toward this task. Sites selected were those reseeded at a 200lb+ rate in 2020. Drought conditions led to overall good growing conditions in the Estuary.

Exclosure removal was performed following seed formation and deposition in early September. Aside from the 13 exclosures in Walleye Alley and North Duck Hunter Bays, Fond du Lac staff removed the exclosures installed by Wisconsin and Minnesota DNR staff in North Bay on the Minnesota side of the Estuary. Despite not being being seeded in 2021, the exclosure sites of Walleye Alley and North Duck Hunter Bays should be productive given the density of plants protected by the fencing. Geese depredation continues to be a significant negative factor in wild rice restoration efforts in the Estuary.