



January 30, 2023

Senator Foug Hawj
Chair, Environment, Climate and Energy Committee
3231 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support of SF 0188 - Rough Fish Report Appropriation

Dear Chair Hawj and Committee Members

Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America, IWLA, is writing in support of a SF 0188. However, we respectfully request that the Committee adopt an amendment to conform to HF 245, as amended and approved by the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy on January 25, 2023. (See attachment.)

The Izaak Walton League of America has been a leader in conservation since its founding in 1922.

Native “rough fish” have been traditionally considered less desirable to eat and, consequently, are unprotected from over-harvest. Minnesota’s native “rough fish” are in rough shape—and the Izaak Walton League is leading the effort to change that.

Minnesota is home to 143 species of native fish, 27 of those native species are designated as “rough fish,” a pejorative term assigned to native species such as buffalo fish, freshwater drum, goldeyes, quillback and redhorse, without scientific or practical justification. Yet, this unscientific term is still used by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Our current fishing regulations, which allow unsustainable and, in most instances, unlimited harvest of native “rough fish” are an unscientific relic of the 1950’s.

The League’s position reflects the current scientific understanding that all native species provide important benefits to ecosystems. Historically, fisheries managers sought to minimize

populations of “rough fish.” This simplistic management strategy ignored the ecosystem services provided by all native fish. They are prey for birds, otters and even wolves.

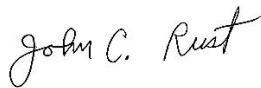
Many of these species, such as the shorthead redhorse, prey on invasive zebra mussels. The freshwater drum is host to 11 species of native mussels. Mooneye and goldeye are the only host of the endangered spectacle case mussel. Bigmouth buffalo, which can live to more than 100 years, compete directly with invasive Asian carp. These valuable fish face the same threats as game fish—along with the additional threat of increasing and, in some instances, unlimited harvest. Native “rough fish” are clearly a resource for bald eagles, but they are also a resource for people.

If there is anything we can do as an organization in support of this bill, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you for your efforts to promote conservation of Minnesota’s natural resources.

We strongly encourage the committee to approve this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John C. Rust".

John Rust, President MN Division IWLA
(763) 202-3346
imgahn2u@yahoo.com

Enclosure: HF 245, as amended