



Minnesota Division



Minnesota's Native Fish Bill

The First Comprehensive Native Fish Conservation Bill in the Country

What is Minnesota's Native Fish Bill?

The provisions in HF 4015/4420 and SF 4142/ SF 4898 represent the first comprehensive native fish conservation bill in the country. These DNR policy bills amend 36 statutes to formally define “native rough fish” and provide them the same legal protections as game fish and minnows. These recommendations are the product of the Native Fish Conservation report required by 2023 Minnesota Session Law Chapter 60, Article 4, Sec. 104.

What are “native rough fish”?

“Native rough fish” are the species formerly managed as “rough fish”, except the invasive Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*). The current statutory definition (97A.015 subd 43) is incomplete and uses ambiguous common names. This new definition lists the 26 “native rough fish” species, which comprise 16% of all native fishes found in Minnesota.

What protections will “native rough fish” receive?

The same protections provided to game fish, minnows, and leeches. The bill requires restitution values, prohibits unlicensed sales, prohibits transporting native fish in excess of the possession limit, and requires revocation of license after conviction for selling native rough fish. Note that Bowfin (*Amia calva*) is also exempted from the list of commercial fish species.

Why is Minnesota's Native Fish Bill necessary?

Minnesota law requires fish to be conserved and enhanced through scientific management (§84.941); however, current statutes combine native and invasive species which preclude scientific management and biases public perception. Native rough fish are a resource to the people of Minnesota. They provide fishing opportunities and numerous ecological services, such as hosting native mussel larvae, preying on invasive species, and as forage for eagles, ospreys, and otters. Several species are culturally significant to indigenous communities. Unfortunately, many of these species are in long-term decline or now gone from significant parts of their historical range. The Native Fish Bill is necessary for managing and conserving these species for generations to come.

Does Minnesota's Native Fish Bill ban harvest of “native rough fish”?

The Native Fish Bill does not close seasons, create possession limits, or restrict methods of harvest. All traditional methods of harvest (angling, bowfishing, spearing, and gillnetting) will continue. There is an administrative change to bowfishing and spearing seasons from starting “the last Saturday in April” to “May 1”, and from ending “last Sunday in February” to the “last day in February”. Possession limits for native rough fish will be made by DNR biologists under the commissioner's existing rulemaking authority, which includes substantial public input and review. Importantly, invasive Common Carp will receive fewer protections under the bill.