



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Approved Work Plan

## General Information

**ID Number:** 2026-013

**Staff Lead:** Tom Dietrich

**Date this document submitted to LCCMR:** May 25, 2026

**Project Title:** Native Fish Exhibits Transforming Aquatic Education in Minnesota

**Project Budget:** \$299,000

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Lee Furuseth

**Organization:** Headwaters Science Center

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**Web Address:** <https://www.hscbemidji.org/>

## Project Reporting

**Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR:** June 17, 2026

**Reporting Schedule:** April 1 / October 1 of each year.

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**Final Report Due Date:** August 14, 2029

## Legal Information

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2026, Chp. 104, Sec. 2, Subd. 05c

**Appropriation Language:** \$299,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Headwaters Science Center to design and construct interactive, year-round exhibits and conduct educational programming featuring native fish species that increase the public's understanding, awareness, and stewardship of northern Minnesota's vital lake resources.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2029

## Narrative

**Project Summary:** This project creates interactive, year-round exhibits featuring native fish species, educating Minnesotans about aquatic ecosystems. Hands-on programs emphasize conservation, empowering underserved communities and tourists to protect Minnesota’s vital lake resources.

**Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

Northern Minnesota’s lake ecology presents a significant knowledge gap for many Minnesotans, despite their frequent interactions with these waters. Most residents lack direct exposure to the intricate dynamics of lake ecosystems, such as fish life cycles, nutrient cycling, food web interactions, and the effects of human activities. Education about these systems often remains abstract and inaccessible, as much of what happens in lake ecosystems is hidden beneath the surface. Without hands-on opportunities to explore concepts like the role of native vegetation, the impact of invasive species, or predator-prey relationships, communities struggle to appreciate and act on the need to protect these environments. Compounding this issue, climate change, shoreline development, and pollution place increasing stress on lake systems. This proposal addresses the critical need to educate Minnesotans about how their actions can safeguard these vital natural resources.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

The Headwaters Science Center (HSC) will expand access to lake ecology education in northern Minnesota through a signature exhibit featuring year-round tanks showcasing native fish and aquatic vegetation. The largest tank, a 15-foot-long, 5-foot-high, 1,700-gallon centerpiece, will be prominently located in the lobby, visible to the public without admission fees during business hours. This exhibit will provide an engaging introduction to lake ecosystems, fostering awareness of aquatic biodiversity.

Hands-on educational opportunities will include fish species identification, food chains, invasive species, and aquatic ecosystems. Through a partnership with Trout in the Classroom, HSC will raise trout from eggs on-site, allowing visitors to observe the fish life cycle and learn about habitat, diet, and roles in aquatic food webs. Outdoor programming will enhance the experience, enabling participants to net fish from Lake Bemidji, including trout and other native Minnesota species under DNR-permitted netting, connecting them to local ecosystems.

HSC has offered small-scale lake ecology programming for over eight years. This project will scale up that proven model, expanding educational opportunities for visits from underserved schools, including several in the three Native nations in our region. HSC will deliver interactive, year-round programming to inspire stewardship and protect Minnesota’s vital lake resources.

**What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state’s natural resources?**

This project will enhance public awareness and stewardship of Minnesota’s aquatic ecosystems through an engaging, year-round native fish exhibit. The 2027 goal is that 29,000 guests will experience this exhibit at our center in downtown Bemidji, fostering a deeper understanding of fish life cycles, food webs, and conservation challenges. By integrating hands-on education, Trout in the Classroom, and interactive experiences, this initiative empowers residents and tourists to make informed decisions that protect water quality and native species, ensuring long-term conservation benefits for Minnesota’s lakes and aquatic resources.

## Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

Region(s): NW

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

Region(s): NW

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Bidding, Design and Engineering.

**Activity Budget:** \$44,000

**Activity Description:**

The Headwaters Science Center will secure a design / engineering consultant who will prepare detailed design and engineering drawings, advertise for bids, assist in selecting a construction firm, and provide consultation and guidance during construction phases.

The Headwaters Science Center (HSC) will secure detailed estimates for all major components. This includes plans for the fabrication of the primary and secondary tanks, plumbing and water treatment systems, applying for permits and notices, and engineering and construction necessary to reinforce the exhibit floor. The tank exhibit is conceptually proposed to house multiple habitats with combinations of fish, which may involve a multi-tank configuration with a connecting channel to provide artificial currents. All bid processes will follow applicable ENRTF and DNR rules and guidelines.

All construction funds will be legally secured prior to start of construction.

Preliminary application for the Certificate of Occupancy will be initiated with the City of Bemidji.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Enroll in the Minnesota B3 Guidelines Tracking Tool [non-ENRTF].	June 30, 2026
All funds legally secured and documented.	July 31, 2026
Secure design and consultant.	August 31, 2026
Finalize design and prepare bid packages	August 31, 2026
Release bids and award contracts	September 30, 2026
Complete Tank and Exhibit Design	November 30, 2026

### Activity 2: Construction, Fabrication, and Installation

**Activity Budget:** \$245,000

**Activity Description:**

Construction will include necessary improvements to the HSC facility to support the exhibit, including: reinforcing foundation walls and installing electrical and plumbing (reverse osmosis system) upgrades. Concurrently, tank fabrication will take place. The tank(s) will occupy a footprint of approximately 17' L x 5' H x 3' W. Once fabricated, the tank will be disassembled, transported to HSC, and installed by the selected contractor. A notice of funding restriction will be recorded, and a certificate of occupancy (or equivalent) will be obtained, prior to the exhibit opening for guest participation.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Building / structural reinforcement, plumbing, and electrical work complete	December 31, 2026
Fabrication of tanks, transport, and preparation for installation.	December 31, 2026
Installation of tanks.	January 31, 2027
Installation of signage with ENRTF logo	February 28, 2027

Notice of funding restriction recorded	March 31, 2027
Certificate of Occupancy Received and Open for Intended Purpose	April 30, 2027

### Activity 3: Programing and Implementation.

**Activity Budget:** \$10,000

**Activity Description:**

HSC staff will develop an evolving educational exhibit. The exhibit will be dynamic, highlighting multiple species of native fish changing seasonally, along with an interactive focus on the life-cycle of trout. MN Trout in the Classroom (MTIC) will be providing an annual training to HSC staff to support the exhibit, and provide the HSC director with guidance to plan on and off-site fieldtrips for interested schools. Exhibit programming will target multiple audiences ranging from the general public to students of all ages. HSC’s exhibit offerings will be shared via its website, social media, and distributed to a list-serve of teachers within the organization’s 15 county service area.

For interested schools, there will be opportunities for students to expand their learning beyond HSC’s walls and embark on fieldtrips to procure new specimens for the exhibit. The exhibit, fieldtrips, and supporting content will meet state science graduation standards.

Goals for this activity include reaching 6,000 students and 23,000 guests / year. HSC estimates that 1 – 4 off-site field trips per year, and ~40 on-site field trips. Evaluations will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the exhibit and inform changes to programming. Reports will be compiled and submitted annually to LCCMR.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Train staff (annually, in September)	June 30, 2029
Develop, refine, print, and implement educational materials (annually)	June 30, 2029
Engage and educate the general public / students on native fish and trout life cycles.	June 30, 2029
Engage students through hands-on field trip visits each year to obtain new specimens.	June 30, 2029
Conduct attendee evaluations, compile data, and submit annual reports to LCCMR	June 30, 2029

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Amber Taylor	Trout in the Classroom	Collaborator	No

## Dissemination

**Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.**

All reports whether print, shared virtually through a variety of multi-media channels, pictures and images, or group in-person or media presentations will include recognition of the financial support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) along with logos and other attributable language regarding the project.

Signage on the floor of the Headwaters Science Center will be the first and most common locations where results from the project will be shared publicly. The Headwaters Science Center has set attendance/admission goals for the following years: 2026 (end of year)-30,000 with 23,000 as admission guests and 7,000 as field trip attendees; June 30, 2026-June 30, 2027- 33,000 with 26,000 as admission guests and 7,000 as field trip attendees. The Headwaters Science Center has welcomed just under thirty thousands guest annually over recent years. The goals is a 10% starting in 2027 allowing for 330,000 guests to read and receive information from this project over the next ten years. Furthermore, the Headwaters Science Center will use local newspaper print/digital media, as well as local television, along with HSC Facebook, webpage, and other virtual outlets to disseminate results from this project. All outlets will include recognition of the financial support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) along with logos and other attributable language regarding the project.

The Headwaters Science Center will partner with Minnesota Trout Unlimited for analyzing findings and will serve as the best resource for communicating results which may alter human behavior regarding Minnesota natural resources. Getting people (kids) outdoors is a primary goal of this project. Learning about fishes and fish behavior will promote activities related to accessing water and interacting with Minnesota fishes, as well providing opportunities that change attitudes and behaviors. Minnesota Trout Unlimited produces annual reports surrounding efforts for their Trout in the Classroom projects. Management of Minnesota natural resources is an anticipated outcome of this project. The Headwaters Science Center will continue to participate in these Trout Unlimited reports. As noted in paragraph one, the Headwaters Science Center will provide recognition of the funding from the ENRTF.

The Headwaters Science Center conducts surveys to help gauge responses to HSC exhibits and programs. Survey questions measure levels of understanding and shifts in attitudes resulting from interactions with exhibits, including the exhibits in this project. Longitudinal data will allow identification of shifts in responses which may be indicators changes in behaviors. Results will be compared over years (10) and will be reported through a variety of outlets listed earlier.

## Long-Term Implementation and Funding

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?**

The Headwaters Science Center maintains a diversified budget that includes funding from government sources, memberships, admissions, and donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations. We will continue to develop these contributed and earned revenue streams to sustain the impact of this project beyond its initial funding.

Additionally, we are actively seeking long-term funding from private sources and governmental agencies to ensure ongoing support. The long-term operation of this exhibit will be integrated into HSC's core budget, ensuring its continued maintenance and educational impact. Our commitment is to sustain this work well beyond the conclusion of this project.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Project Manager/Exhibit Developer		Work with the fabricator to design, build and install tank including the coordination of facility changes.			15%	0.25		\$23,000
Assistant Aquarium Developer during construction phase		On-site Tank Specialist			15%	0.8		\$31,000
Docent		Lead the interpretation of the Native Minnesota Species Tank.			15%	0.4		\$7,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$61,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
TBD	Service Contract	Engineering design for exhibit floor reinforcement				0.05		\$9,000
TBD	Service Contract	Plumbing to support the tank				0.05		\$5,000
TBD	Service Contract	Construction to reinforce the tank on the exhibit floor				0.1		\$30,000
TBD	Service Contract	Fabrication of the primary tank and water processing equipment - built off-site. Includes transport costs, travel costs for fabricators, and installation.		X		-		\$126,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$170,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Capital Equipment</b>								
		1 smaller tank	To display other fish species and to separate competing species	X				\$40,000

		Water treatment system to support tanks	To treat and clean water to sustain fish and aquatic plants.	X				\$25,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	Printing of material for the curriculum	Curriculum printing. Include use of ENRTF logos and letterhead with signage and equipment					\$3,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$299,000</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
<b>Contracts and Services - TBD</b>	Service Contract	Fabrication of the primary tank and water processing equipment - built off-site. Includes transport costs, travel costs for fabricators, and installation.	Includes capital equipment - the completed tanks. The tanks are the central component of the exhibit and this project. Tanks will be used only as an ongoing exhibit for educational purposes at the Headwaters Science Center, and will not be removed, sold, or repurposed throughout their useful life.
<b>Capital Equipment</b>		1 smaller tank	This will be a ongoing exhibit at the science center and won't be removed or repurposed during its useful life. <b>Additional Explanation :</b> Tank will always be used to interpret Minnesota's native fish and aquatic plant species.
<b>Capital Equipment</b>		Water treatment system to support tanks	This will be a ongoing exhibit at the science center and won't be removed or repurposed during its useful life. <b>Additional Explanation :</b> The water treatment system will always be used to support the interpretation of Minnesota's native fish and aquatic plant species.

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	HSC core funding	Director's salary in support of the facility changes, tank fabrication and the administration of the capitol portion of this project.	Secured	\$20,000
In-Kind	HSC Core Funding	Exhibit developer salary .80 FTE to work with the capital portion of this project.	Secured	\$22,000
In-Kind	HSC Docent Salaries .75 FTE	Time for HSC docents to teach about Minnesota fish and ecology	Secured	\$16,000
In-Kind	Volunteer time	Facility and exhibit design and pre-construction, construction of the exhibit. Demo and HSC facility remodeling and construction. 1000 hours of volunteer time at \$15/hour.	Secured	\$15,000
In-Kind	Volunteer time	Volunteer time of skilled professionals in support of the capital portion of this project. 175-200 hours @ \$50 per hour.	Secured	\$9,000
Cash	Otter Tail Power Foundation Contribution	Partial match for capital project. This is to complement in-kind contributions.	Pending	\$38,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$419,000**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [e6d2d88c-e52.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Visual sketch of young guest pointing at a fish in aquarium (proposed 1,700 gallon). Attached photos show the 2023 trout release, as well as an actual photo of a young guest pointing at a trout at the Headwaters Science Center....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
2023 990 Opportunities in Science Financial Disclosure.	<a href="#">66212fc8-70b.pdf</a>
HSC IRS 501c3A	<a href="#">7b182090-139.pdf</a>
August 2025 Balance Sheet. Pay attention to the Contingency Funds	<a href="#">47b3de36-cd8.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Headwaters Science Center Board Resolution March 12, 2025	<a href="#">ae5a0357-158.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

#### *Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
Construction Engineer Statement of Support	<a href="#">87aef98b-33a.pdf</a>
Letter from Teacher at Trout in the Classroom School	<a href="#">50fd23b7-53a.pdf</a>
Letter of Support from Trout Unlimited Representative	<a href="#">847f1bdd-d30.pdf</a>
Certificate of Business in Good Standing	<a href="#">b6ed9855-bb3.pdf</a>
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	<a href="#">7fc0cf13-045.pdf</a>
Budget Addendum Aquarium	<a href="#">06e84d25-ef5.xlsx</a>

## Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

### *Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage*

Dissemination of information. Descriptions of communication and publications steps are now included. Also, The Minnesota Secretary of State certificate of Good Standing as a non-profits is in the attachments. Includes updated information about the Certificate of Occupancy. Construction funds legally secured document early in the planning phase of the proejct.

## Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

**Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?**

Yes

**Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**

N/A

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?**

No

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

N/A

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?**

N/A

**Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?**

No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

No

**Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?**

No

**Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?**

Yes

**Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?**

Yes

**Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this project:**

Paul Morin, Headwaters Science Center volunteer.

**Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements**

Yes, I understand