



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Draft Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2026-532

Staff Lead: Becca Nash

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: December 15, 2025

Project Title: Regarding Native Fish: Outreach, Engagement, and Citizen Science

Project Budget: \$270,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Solomon David

Organization: U of MN - College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences

Office Telephone: (734) 274-1722

Email: srdavid@umn.edu

Web Address: <https://cfans.umn.edu/>

Project Reporting

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

Project Completion: June 30, 2028

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2028

Legal Information

Legal Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2028

Narrative

Project Summary: This study will directly address native fish knowledge gaps in combination with implementing native fish educational, outreach, and citizen scientist activities as prioritized by MNDNR and LCCMR.

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

Native rough fish play crucial roles in Minnesota waters by maintaining ecological balance as predators and prey, serving as hosts to freshwater mussels, and as environmental indicators. Unfortunately, these 23 Minnesota native species are understudied by researchers and underappreciated by anglers relative to their more popular game fish counterparts (e.g. Walleye, Largemouth Bass). Over the past decade, however, attitudes toward native rough fish have been shifting, with these species garnering more interest from recreational anglers and researchers. Progress was made in 2024 when Minnesota passed comprehensive legislation for native rough fish, including restitution values and separating them from invasive species (e.g. Common Carp); the first state in the country to do so. Significant knowledge gaps, however, still exist. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Native Fish Report (2023) identified “implement native fish educational and outreach initiatives” as a high priority alongside research efforts on native rough fish ecology and population dynamics. Anglers and hunters are key drivers of conservation in Minnesota and nationwide, and public perception of wildlife management can also be a powerful force. Therefore, engaging recreational anglers and a diverse public is an investment in future conservation of freshwater biodiversity (See Attachment: Reference Literature).

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.

To address the need for more education and outreach on native rough fish, we propose three integrated activities: (1) scientific field data collection, (2) engaging recreational anglers as citizen scientists, and (3) public outreach to diverse audiences. Knowledge gaps for native fish ecology will be addressed by fish collection from Minnesota rivers and lakes, generating datasets (age, growth, ecology) for Activities 2 and 3. Working with Native Fish for Tomorrow (non-profit native fish conservation group), we will engage recreational anglers as citizen scientists, leading fishing events at five field sites. Participating anglers will learn how to collect data on native fish they catch (e.g. species ID, measurements, fin tissue clips, photographs), contributing to the dataset from Activity 1. To expand outreach efforts on native fish, we will engage the public through “native fish day” events at cultural institutions (e.g. Bell Museum), community groups, Minnesota State Fair, K-12 schools, and online social media campaigns. Results from data collected in Activities 1 and 2 will be shared with the public at these events by in-person presentations, video, infographics, 3D models, and live fish displays. Through these activities, our results will be shared with collaborators, state agencies, and the diverse public.

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?

- 1: We will develop a citizen scientist angler network to collect data and collaborate with scientists on native fish conservation for this project and the future (e.g. distribution maps, timing of spawning).
- 2: Outreach activities aimed at diverse public audiences from K-12 schools to museum-goers will inform and engage members of the public on the importance of native fish, and conserving Minnesota’s wildlife overall. Metrics (e.g. attendance, feedback) inform future efforts for public engagement on native fish.
- 3: Age, growth, and ecological data will contribute to population models directly informing conservation and management of Minnesota native fish resources.

Project Location

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

Statewide

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

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Field data collection, age-growth and ecological analyses for citizen scientist and outreach activities

Activity Budget: \$108,000

Activity Description:

We will develop datasets for age, growth, and ecology (e.g. habitat use, food web position) of native rough fish from Minnesota rivers and lakes that will be used for all three project activities. To accomplish this objective, we will collaborate with MNDNR to collect native fish species (e.g. gars, suckers) from two river systems (Minnesota River, Mississippi River), and three inland lakes (Gorman, Long, South Center Lakes). We will use a combination of electrofishing and nearshore netting to collect native rough fish samples from spring through fall for two years (approximately 10 field trips/year). We will collect up to 50 native rough fish from each site, with 10 samples of baseline organisms (snails, mussels) and forage fish (baitfish, minnows, shad) to calibrate food web analyses, resulting in up to 60 samples per site. Each fish collected will be measured, photographed, tissue-sampled, and dissected (gut contents, ID sex, otoliths). Fish collected will be aged, and food web position and habitat use will be determined for all samples from stable isotope analysis of fin or muscle tissues. These data will be compared to citizen science angler data collected in Activity 2 and shared with the public in Activity 3.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Summer-Fall 2026 Fieldwork (Jul-Sept), Spring-Summer-Fall 2027 Fieldwork (Apr-Oct)	October 31, 2027
Measure, dissect, extract otoliths, process fin tissues from seasons 2026-27 - ship DEC each year.	December 31, 2027
Build age-growth & ecological models based on otoliths, SIA results (2026-2028)	March 31, 2028
Analyze data, write manuscripts, submit findings to scientific journals	June 30, 2028

Activity 2: Engaging native rough fish anglers as citizen scientists

Activity Budget: \$73,000

Activity Description:

We will engage recreational native rough fish anglers as citizen scientists to collect data and share information with fellow anglers. We will coordinate five native rough fish angling trips per year (10 trips total) with Native Fish for Tomorrow (NF4T) to train recreational anglers on field data collection and inform other anglers on the value of Minnesota's native rough fish. Members from the research team will join NF4T and interested anglers on shore-angling visits to sites established in Activity 1 during summer-fall 2026-2028. When a native rough fish is caught, researchers will show anglers how to identify, measure, photograph, and fin-clip the fish. A sub-sample of fish caught (up to 30 per site) will be kept for analyses listed in Activity 1, other fish will be released. Information collected with citizen scientist anglers will both enhance existing native rough fish datasets and provide comparisons between scientific field collection and recreational angling. For example, what size/age fish are anglers catching versus what researchers are collecting by electrofishing? An additional objective is for anglers to collect these data on their own in the future and contribute to native fish conservation by identifying species distributions, size range, and timing of spawning.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Year 1 Recreational angler citizen scientist events (5 events, August 2026-June 2027)	June 30, 2027
Analyze angler 2026-27 data and submit samples (COIL, Lackmann-UMD)	July 31, 2027
Year 2 Recreational angler citizen scientist events (5 events, August 2027-May 2028)	May 31, 2028

Activity 3: Outreach activities and engaging the public regarding native rough fish

Activity Budget: \$89,000

Activity Description:

To engage members of the public on the importance of native rough fish, we will organize five activities per year aimed at diverse audiences. We will produce 3D models of select native fish, live fish exhibits, stickers (and other give-away materials), and create a web page to share project information. Results from Activities 1 and 2 will be shared, providing a snapshot of food webs, ages of fishes, and recreational angler contributions. Activities include a native fish “expedition” at the Bell Museum, where attendees learn about native fish through the museum’s extensive fish collection, and a “passport” scavenger hunt for kids through the exhibits. In coordination with MNDNR’s native fish specialist, we will share results at the Minnesota State Fair. As part of this project, we will expand our team’s efforts presenting to preschool through K-12 groups. We will further connect to the public through social media. Our team co-organizes “Gar Week” with partners at U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, reaching hundreds of thousands of people annually. Metrics for Activity 3 success will be based on activity attendance and online engagement statistics. These activities will inform future native rough fish outreach efforts that will hopefully continue beyond the project timeline.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Minnesota State Fair 2026-27 Native Fish activity	September 30, 2027
Communicate project updates through social & popular media (continuously) over project timeline	June 30, 2028
Present at meetings (public and professional) continuously over project timeline	June 30, 2028
Native Fish Day outreach events 2026-2028 (Bell Museum, K-12 Outreach activities)	June 30, 2028
Social Media campaigns – Gar Week, ongoing 2026-28 (with federal, state, non-profit partners)	June 30, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Mark Hove	UMN Twin Cities	Mark Hove is a research scientist in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology with extensive experience in field data collection in Minnesota lakes and rivers. He will assist with boat operations and fish sampling for the project.	Yes
Dr. Alec Lackmann	UMN Duluth	Dr. Lackmann is one of the world's foremost authorities in aging techniques for freshwater fishes, particularly native rough fishes (e.g. gars, bowfins, buffalo). He has been a longtime collaborator with PI David. Dr Lackmann will age fishes for the project and train students in aging techniques.	Yes
Dr. Kassandra Ford	UMN Twin Cities	Co-PI. Dr. Ford is an assistant professor in the Dept of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology, and Curator of Fishes at the Bell Museum with knowledge and experience with fieldwork and fish identifications and active collaborations with state agencies.	Yes
Brett Nagle	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Native Rough Fish Specialist	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.

Our findings will be shared directly with the public through outreach activities (e.g. events at the Bell Museum of Natural History) and citizen science angling events (e.g. in coordination with Native Fish for Tomorrow partners). Research data will be shared with managers (e.g. MNDNR) and local stakeholders through reports and updates. Results will be shared with the broader scientific community through peer-reviewed publications and scientific presentations. The public will have access to findings through reports, publications, presentations, and popular media (e.g. social media, news coverage, online articles, K-12 educational outreach). If additional work toward dissemination of our research efforts is needed (e.g. additional field surveys, expanded public/scientific outreach), we will submit another proposal for continued research and outreach. These efforts will be ongoing throughout the course of the project period, and our lab will also continue outreach efforts beyond the completion of the project.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgment Guidelines. These acknowledgments include, but aren't limited to, social media posts, interviews, publications, and in-person outreach activities.

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?

Our findings will be shared directly with the public through outreach activities and citizen science angling events. Research data will be shared with managers (e.g. MNDNR) and local stakeholders through reports and updates. Results will be shared with the broader scientific community through peer-reviewed publications and scientific presentations. The public will have access to findings through reports, publications, presentations, and popular media (e.g. social media, news coverage). If additional work is needed, we will submit another proposal for continued research and outreach.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Solomon David		PI, lead and conduct research/outreach activities; involved in all aspects of project. Summer Salary for 2 months, both years of project			36.6%	2		\$59,000
Mark Hove		Fieldwork, specifically boat operations for field trips and outreach participation over the course of the study.			36.6%	2		\$10,000
Graduate Student		Graduate research assistant, lead and conduct research and outreach activities; 2 semesters at \$11,442 per semester (23.2% fringe = \$2500 benefits per semester + \$9000 tuition per semester) + 1 summer (\$8065 + \$1871 fringe) totaling \$51,000			23.2%	2		\$51,000
Alec Lackmann		Analysis of otoliths for age-growth models. Alec is one of the foremost experts on native rough fish otolith analysis.			36.6%	2		\$26,000
Kassandra Ford		Co-PI, conduct research/outreach activities; involved in all aspects of project. Summer Salary for two months, both years of project			36.6%	2		\$57,000
							Sub Total	\$203,000
Contracts and Services								
Cornell Isotope Lab (COIL)	Service Contract	COIL is a stable isotope analysis lab that will process our samples for carbon and nitrogen. We have worked with them for these analyses for over 6 years. Clarification: They know our work and are best-suited to carry out these analyses.				0		\$5,000
Native Fish for Tomorrow	Service Contract	Native rough fish conservation non-profit made up of expert native rough fish anglers and outreach personnel. Co-host native fish angling events and associated expertise needed. Five events per year for two years. NF4T will provide equipment and expertise needed for citizen scientist anglers to collect and contribute data to project.				2		\$10,000
							Sub Total	\$15,000

Equipment, Tools, and Supplies							
	Tools and Supplies	Field & Labwork supplies: nets, buckets, gloves, consumable field equipment, specimen vials, ziplock bags	Expendable items for sample storage & processing.				\$4,000
	Tools and Supplies	Outreach materials: 3D fish models (20 resin/painted high-quality models), stickers (3000 high-quality), hats (50), infographic sheets (750), flyers (750), promotional materials (15 signs, 15 posters), data sheets & collection for anglers (20 PIT taggers, 1025 tags, 2 readers; 20 FLOY taggers, 1100 tags), 10 outreach events, 10 citizen scientist angling events over two year project.	Visual aids for outreach events, give-away and promotional materials to generate interest in events, supporting materials for event-hosting groups.				\$30,000
						Sub Total	\$34,000
Capital Expenditures							
						Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship							
						Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota							
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	MN Standard lodging is \$165/ng. Mileage is \$0.70/mi. MN Standard meals are \$51/1st & last day of travel and \$68/ full travel day. 20 site visits + 10 citizen science angling trips + 10 outreach events (venues TBD) over course of study.	Trips to field sites (approximately 20 site visits to project-designated rivers and lakes) to collect fish, citizen scientist angling events (5 trips/year for two years), outreach events (5 events/year for two years).				\$15,000
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Minnesota American Fisheries Society annual meeting, 2 years (registration fee, lodging, meals, mileage) for PI or Co-PI and graduate student to present findings; estimated cost per year \$1500 MN Standard lodging is \$165/ng. Mileage is \$0.70/mi. MN Standard meals are \$51/1st & last day of travel and \$68/ full travel day	PI and graduate student to present findings at state chapter meeting of American Fisheries Society				\$3,000
						Sub Total	\$18,000

Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$270,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	University of Minnesota unrecovered indirect cost return (54% MDTC, updated beginning July 2024)	\$270,000 direct total - \$18094 tuition (exempt category) = \$251906 x .54 = \$136,029 unrecovered IDC	Secured	\$136,029
			Non State Sub Total	\$136,029
			Funds Total	\$136,029

Total Project Cost: \$406,029

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [2488e4aa-748.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Visual Component shows three integrated activities through images and text, Research: scientific field data collection, Citizen Science: engaging anglers as citizen scientists, and Outreach to diverse audiences, focused on native rough fish....

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Support Letter - Native Fish for Tomorrow	5d3706db-66a.pdf
David UMN Board Resolution Letter	8655170e-b95.pdf
Reference Literature - Supplemental	0b9acf0b-42a.pdf
Support Letter - Minnesota Conservation Federation	f23eba44-e8e.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Changes to the proposal are indicated by "****" below:

12/5/2025

***We have specifically mentioned ENRTF Acknowledgements in the Dissemination section, as recommended by reviewers.

1 08/01/2025 Budget

The "Description" for the "Tools and Supplies" - "Outreach materials" is not clear. Please revise the 'Description' to include a quantity of each item.

***We have updated the description of the tools and supplies section for "outreach materials" and revised it to include quantities of each item.

2 08/01/2025 General Information

You answered "No" to the question, "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 section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?" It appears your project will indeed provide children's services. Please answer "yes" to this question or contact Tiffany Schaufler if you have questions.

***We have updated this section and changed our answer to "yes" for the instructed question.

3 08/01/2025 General Information

Please change your answer to the question, "Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?" from "yes" to "no" on the General Information page (Tab 3). As indicated in the email Lisa Bigaouette sent to you on 7/28/25, we have determined that your project does not include original, hypothesis-driven research and therefore does not need to

be peer reviewed.

***We have updated this section and changed our answer to "no" for the instructed question.

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?
N/A

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?

Yes, I understand the UMN Policy on travel applies.

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:

Riana Fletcher, University of Minnesota

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