



March 4, 2024

Representative Rick Hansen (Chair)  
MN House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy  
10 State Office Building  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support of HF 4015 – Legislation regarding native rough fish

Dear Chair Rick Hansen and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of HF 4015. As an aquatic ecologist specializing in native rough fish (e.g. gars, bowfins, suckers) for over 20 years, with research spanning the Great Lakes region to the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, I recognize the positive value and high-impact that HF 4015 will have on Minnesotans, and more broadly on freshwater biodiversity as a whole.

Protecting our native biodiversity is an integral component of natural resource management and can help reinforce the resilience of our freshwater ecosystems in the face of invasive species, habitat loss, and climate change (threats that indeed have severe negative economic impacts and must be addressed with urgency).

Game fish species (e.g. walleye, bass) already receive important protections, including harvest limits, however, they represent only a small fraction of our Minnesota native species diversity. Native “rough fish” make up a significantly larger proportion of our native biodiversity, yet most of these species receive little to no protection by way of harvest limits. HF 4015 facilitates much-needed protections for these species, and lays the groundwork for future management and research that will benefit the people of Minnesota for generations to come. Having worked with management agencies throughout the country, I assure you others are looking at Minnesota and encouraged by its leadership in this area of natural resource management.

I thank you for your efforts to promote conservation of Minnesota’s natural resources, and help protect freshwater biodiversity. I strongly encourage the committee to approve this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Solomon R. David  
Assistant Professor of Aquatic Ecology  
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Chair Rick Hansen  
MN House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy  
10 State Office Building  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: HF 4015- Support of legislation regarding native rough fish**

Dear Chair Rick Hansen and committee members

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a letter in support of HF 4015. This bill comprehensively addresses many of the issues surrounding the reclassification of native fish in the state of Minnesota. Native rough fish are an integral part of aquatic ecosystems in Minnesota. This legislation will help ensure that our state statutes fully recognize the value of these fish and allow our state agencies to manage the fish for their long-term population conservation and health.

After taking part in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Native Rough Fish Work Group it was clear to our organization that many native fish species not classified as “game fish” are not being managed in a manner consistent with the critical ecosystem services they provide. The Minnesota Conservation Federation supports the recommendations for legislative action as outlined in the Department of Natural Resources Native Fish Conservation Report that was provided to the legislature. HF 4015 addresses many of the recommendations in the report.

One recommendation from the report that HF 4015 does not address is the request that the DNR made of the legislature to “Grant DNR expedited rulemaking authority to establish daily and possession limits on native rough fishes currently listed as rough fish using best available science and stakeholder engagement”. The introduction of daily and possession limits for the harvest of native rough fish, similar to current regulations for game fish species, would, in our opinion, be a prudent action for the agency to take given the current trajectory of some native rough fish populations and the growing recreational user base engaging with these fish.

Sincerely,

Brad Gausman  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Conservation Federation  
[brad@mncf.org](mailto:brad@mncf.org)

Good afternoon,

I am writing in support of HF4015, the No Junk Fish Bill. I am President of nonprofit Native Fish For Tomorrow, and we strongly support the measures and changes included in this bill.

Our native fishes and their environments are very important to the quality of life in Minnesota. We need to strive to enact modern regulations for them, based on sound science. HF4015 is a great start to separate our awesome native roughfish from invasive exotic carps in the angling regulations.

This bill will go a long way to stop the wanton killing of these native roughfish. It will also educate the angling public and the public at large about how valuable these fish are both as recreational resources as well as important parts of a healthy ecosystems.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Drew Geving  
President, Native Fish For Tomorrow



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Chair Rick Hansen  
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy  
407 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 5, 2024

Dear Chair Hansen and committee members,

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on HF4015, the “Native Rough Fish” bill. Conserving freshwaters for biodiversity and communities are priorities for TNC. There are 26 species of “native rough fish” with proposed new protections in the bill, representing 16% of all native fishes found in the state. I represented TNC as an invited stakeholder under the Department of Natural Resources’ “Rough Fish Working Group” in 2023, which provided input used to develop the DNR’s recommendation to the legislature and ultimately the draft bill language. If passed, **HF4015 will be the first comprehensive native fish conservation bill in the country** that we believe is a significant step needed to ensure their sustainability for generations to come.

While TNC supports nearly the entirety of the draft bill language, the following are elements of the bill that we think should be included or retained to ensure that the bill works most effectively to conserve these “native rough fish” in the state:

Future expedited, permanent rulemaking needed: Expedited rulemaking was a recommendation of the DNR’s report to the legislature; however, that language is missing in the current version of HF4015. We recommend inserting language that directs the Commissioner establish daily and possession limits for “native rough fish” under section 84.027, subdivision 13a, as well as language explicitly requiring permanent rulemaking versus annual to ensure consistent protections as other sportfish species are currently provided.

Restitution values should be retained: Among the most important elements in the bill, is the establishment of restitution values for “native rough fish”. We strongly support retention and protection of restitution value language in the bill to ensure accountability needed for rule enforcement.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on HF-4015. We hope the above recommendations will be fully considered to ensure the bill provides durable protections for “native rough fish” per its intent. If passed, **HF4015 will be the first comprehensive native fish conservation bill in the country** and will protect our natural heritage for Minnesotan’s enjoyment for years to come.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Herrington, Ph.D.  
Associate Director of Water, The Nature Conservancy, MN-ND-SD