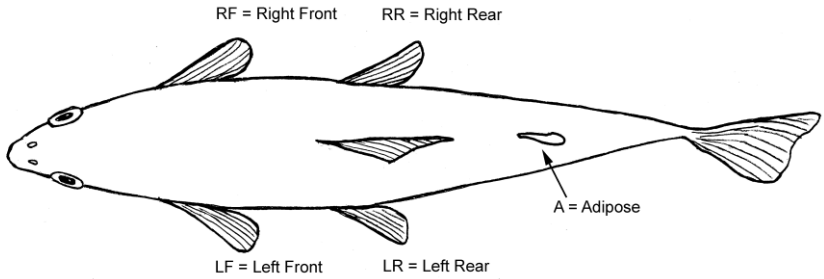
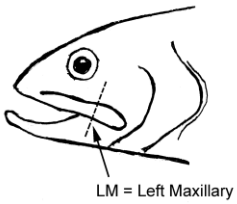
Rainbow Trout Fin Clips

Fin clipping is a management tool used to identify hatchery-reared fish. In Minnesota we use fin clips extensively in our rainbow trout management program. Fin clips are used to determine if a fish is stocked or wild, the strain of rainbow trout stocked, the stocking location, and whether or not an angler can legally harvest the fish. In Minnesota only rainbow trout over 16 inches with a healed adipose clip may be harvested. With the exception of the adipose fin, clipped fins do sometimes partially regenerate. Below is a table that describes the various fin clips that you are most likely to encounter while angling for rainbow trout along Minnesota's North Shore. Note that maxillary clips distinguish hatchery-reared steelhead from Kamloops. Most of the hatchery steelhead with front fin clips are no longer surviving and Kamloops will likely be the only Minnesota origin rainbow trout with a front fin clip.

		Kamloops	Hatchery Steelhead				
Year stocked	Age of fish in 2010		French River	Knife River	Silver Creek	Gooseberry River	Split Rock River
2003	9	ARF		LM			
2004	8	ALF		LM			
2005	7	ARF		RM			
2006	6	ALF		LM			
2007	5	ARF		RM			
2008	4	ALF					
2009	3	ARF					
2010	2	ALF					
2011	1	ARF					

A = adipose; LF = left front; RF = right front; LM = left maxillary; RM = right maxillary