

Fish Egg Disinfection Procedures Bill

Summary

The health of Minnesota's fish populations is of the utmost importance to the DNR, anglers, and recreationists that enjoy Minnesota waters. Minnesota statutes and rules establish high standards to protect fish from the introduction and expansion of diseases and invasive species. Disease management rules address both high-profile pathogens like the virus that causes viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHSV) as well as many lesser known or emerging pathogens. However, some of these statutes have become outdated and are impeding DNR's ability to effectively manage certain high value fisheries in the Lake Superior Basin.

While strategies for managing each pathogen are unique, general management tools such as egg disinfection can be used to reduce or eliminate disease risks. Standards for egg disinfection of many fish pathogens including VHSV have been adopted by all

Great Lakes States and Canadian Provinces and their use is recommended by the authoritative council on best practices for Great Lakes fish health management (The Great Lakes Fish Health Committee). It is now recognized that standard disinfection is effective for eliminating multiple pathogens including VHSV. However, current Minnesota statute is outdated and does not recognize these developments, preventing state programs from collecting eggs from important sources of lake trout, muskellunge and walleye genetics. The current statute also allows fish infected with VHSV to be moved into areas where the disease has already been detected. This is neither a useful nor safe practice for Minnesota's fish production programs. Closing this loophole, while allowing the transport of disinfected eggs will improve Minnesota's fish health management.



Proposal

This proposal updates fish health statutes in Minnesota to allow fish eggs exposed to viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus (VHSV), epizootic epitheliotropic virus, and *Tetracapsuloides bryosalmonae* to be used for stocking if disinfected with a Commissioner-approved treatment, and permits the transfer of such disinfected eggs between licensed facilities; it also removes language allowing the stocking of live fish exposed to VHSV into waters where the pathogen is present and replaces outdated references to “disease testing” with more accurate terminology identifying the specific pathogens, a change supported by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and private aquaculture producers.



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For more information contact:

Shannon Fisher, Fisheries Populations and Regulations Manager

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

500 Lafayette Rd, St. Paul, MN 55155-4047

Phone: 651-259-5206

Email: shannon.fisher@state.mn.us



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