

# A Summary to Collecting, Microfishing, and Snorkeling in Minnesota and Wisconsin

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Things were so much simpler when I started collecting non-game fishes during the late 1970s. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued an annual permit for all lakes and streams statewide. All in all, only a half-page in length. No prior notification of local conservation officers or fisheries staff was required. No annual report was expected. I soon found out why there was such a lack of interest or concern. The prevailing attitude of the time is my “precious quarry” was considered and called junk and trash fish. Since then, there has been an evolution in perception and concern. Today, there are rare fishes listed endangered and threatened which receive some legal protection which includes collecting and exotic (i.e., non-indigenous) species which cannot be collected to prevent their spread. My permit has morphed into two filled with conditions and stipulations covering six-pages each.

I have been in contact with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Section of Fisheries about rules and regulations governing the field trips of the 2022 NANFA meeting in Winona, Minnesota. Snorkelers and micro-fishers may prefer to head out on their own. Snorkelers will have almost carte blanche where they wish to go without permits. Micro-anglers cannot keep fish alive from infested waters in Minnesota or any waters in Wisconsin. They will need angling licenses, and in Minnesota, a trout stamps for designated trout streams. However, it is strongly advised snorkelers and micro-fishers familiarize themselves with legal public access to streams. Laws are similar in both states, but there are differences. In many instances, streams can be accessed from public road right-of-ways at bridge crossings. Details about public access and trespass laws are available at the following links:

Minnesota: [https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/rlp/regulations/fishing/fishing\\_regs.pdf#20210301&view=fit](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/rlp/regulations/fishing/fishing_regs.pdf#20210301&view=fit)

Wisconsin: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/questions/access.html>

There are also many designated public accesses in Minnesota. However, please note the Zumbro River is designated infested waters from Lake Zumbro to the confluence with the Mississippi River:

Aquatic Management Areas: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/amas/index.html>

Root River: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/rootriver/index.html>

Whitewater River: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/whitewaterriver/index.html>

Zumbro River: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/zumbroriver/index.html>

Mississippi River: [https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/education\\_safety/safety/boatwater/miss\\_river\\_guide.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/education_safety/safety/boatwater/miss_river_guide.pdf)

and: [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Upper\\_Mississippi\\_River/map.html](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Upper_Mississippi_River/map.html)

Collecting and keeping bait fishes in Wisconsin is prohibited. Sorry, there are no exceptions. However, if time permits, John Lyons will offer a field trip in Wisconsin to the Mississippi or Black rivers for a “catch and release” demonstration. In Minnesota, the Mississippi River is designated “infested waters” with exotic species (e.g., zebra mussels and Asian carp) and no fishes may be kept and transported alive. However, DNR will issue a permit for a similar demonstration. This will provide an opportunity for those interested in seeing large river species and photographers to shoot their subjects bank-side. Native, non-game fishes can be kept from non-infested waters but collectors must transport them in water brought from where they stay during the meeting. Collectors will be required to purchase angling licenses. Regulations governing the harvest of bait fishes were not written to include aquarists. The legal definition of minnows does not

include darters and a number of other non-game species. DNR will issue a permit to cover these species with stipulated limits per collector. Minnows may not be harvested from designated trout waters. An interactive map of trout streams in southeastern Minnesota is available at:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/trout/map.html?region=SE>

There will be several guided collecting field trips to streams within one to two hours west of Winona. Let us know the species on your wish lists. We will be in striking distance of the following stream systems: Upper Iowa, Cedar, Root, and Zumbro rivers. There is an on-line database which can generate species lists for these systems at:

[https://maps2.dnr.state.mn.us/ewr/fom/mapper.html?layers=lakes%20streams%20wshd\\_lev01py3%20occurrences](https://maps2.dnr.state.mn.us/ewr/fom/mapper.html?layers=lakes%20streams%20wshd_lev01py3%20occurrences)