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LCCMR Staff:

I am writing to support the LCCMR project proposal entitled "Increase Golden Shiner Production to Protect Aquatic Communities". Golden Shiner are a baitfish in high demand by Minnesota anglers. Unfortunately, the in-state supply of Golden Shiner in most years does not meet the demand, and there have been anglers, bait dealers and some legislators asking to allow importation of Golden Shiner from other states, specifically Arkansas. Present laws do not allow importation of baitfish to prevent the introduction of invasive species and fish diseases.

As a veterinarian focusing on fish diseases I find this project of great interest for two reasons: 1) It explores methods to increase production of Golden Shiner in-state, which negates the need to import and potentially introduce disease; 2) It also provides an approach to rear bait entirely indoors under bio-secure conditions. When wild Golden Shiner are harvested from local waters there is a risk that they may carry a disease, and that disease can then get transferred by anglers to other waters of the state where the bait is used. By rearing bait indoors over the entire life cycle, and starting with disease free stock, the disease threat is eliminated or greatly reduced.

Many of us in the veterinary science field that work on fish envision that the future of the bait industry may eventually move to more bio-secure methods. Indoor production using recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) is one of the methods presently available that would minimize the risk of disease exposure to our aquatic environment, and help protect the natural resources Minnesotans have come to enjoy and depend on for commerce. I request that you reflect on the many positive outcomes of this proposal and hope that you will give it high consideration for this round of LCCMR funding.

Sincerely,



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