



## Tips for collecting Brook Trout fins for genetic research

**Have permit and envelopes with you- and scissors in your vest and accessible:** Before you hit the water, make sure you have your packet and permit, scissors, envelopes and a pencil. Many times anglers find themselves thinking "this is just a small exploration run" and they ended up hooking piles of fish without the materials to collect data. It is best to keep all your materials in your vehicle and/or with your fishing gear. Also, when fishing keep your scissors and envelopes in a convenient place like an easily accessible outside pocket in your fly vest, or jacket pocket – make sure you are prepared to sample when the fish comes to hand!

**Use a net:** Many anglers believe a net is mandatory to sample Brook Trout, and using a net significantly reduces stress on the fish. Brook Trout are particularly “floppy” and can be difficult to hold and fin clip. A net ensures that when (not- IF) you drop the fish, it lands back in your net in the water – and does not escape. A net allows anglers to keep the fish in water with just their fins out of water while collecting samples - and minimizes the time fish spend out of water.

**Use the buddy system, whenever possible:** If you are fishing with a partner, have one angler hold the fish securely while you collect the fin clip. If you are fishing solo but near another angler, ask if they would be willing to help you net and hold the fish while you collect the sample. In any case, it really helps to have a second angler handle fish for you.

**Fin clip → Measure → Release → Record:** Many anglers found it was difficult to collect fin clips and immediately put it into the envelope. Try this!

**SOLUTION:** Collect the **fin clip** (no more than half of the fin) immediately and “stick” it to the top of your hand, arm, or other relatively dry surface of your skin. Make sure you can see the fin and be sure it does not slide off into the water! With the fin clip stuck on you, **measure** the fish (at least to the closest ¼ inch). **Release** the fish. Next, place the fin clip in an envelope and **record** all required information - be sure to include catch location information on the back of each envelope. To avoid contamination among samples, **WASH YOUR SCISSORS THOROUGHLY IN THE WATER AFTER EACH FISH** and remove any excess fin tissue or mucus. Lastly, store your envelope in a dry pocket or bag...and keep fishing!

**Collect samples from other anglers, only if they give you permission:** One way to improve your fin sample collection numbers is to collect samples from fish caught by anglers fishing next to you. **BE SURE TO GET PERMISSION BEFOREHAND, AND REDUCE CONFRONTATION THAT COULD ARISE.** Do not be afraid to tell other anglers that you are helping with the project, and ask them if it would be ok to collect fin samples from the fish they catch - prior to them catching one.

**Store your envelopes in a dry place at the end of each day or trip- and turn in your envelopes regularly:** At the end of the day, take all envelopes out of your waders/storage bag and set them somewhere to dry. The fins will dry out in the envelope relatively quickly, as long as the envelope is stored in a dry place. Store them in a desk drawer or on a shelf that is not in direct sunlight. Do not store envelopes tied together by a rubber band- particularly when they are wet. **NEVER TAKE THE FINS OUT OF THE ENVELOPES.** Mail or use one of three envelope drop boxes located at the DNR Fisheries office at French River, the Lutsen Resort boat house at Poplar River, and at Scott Sorensen’s FlyBox and Company in downtown Grand Marais.

**Other important considerations: KEEP THEM WET!** Some anglers found it useful to bring along a bucket to hold the fish while they measured and collected the fin clip. Each fish should be sampled individually and released as quickly as possible. Do not hold a fish in a bucket longer than is necessary to collect a fin clip and measurement. No more than one fish should be in a bucket at one time.

An instructional video showing how to collect fin clips will be shared with you and other anglers in the near future. If you have any more questions or other useful tips to share with anglers, please contact Nick Peterson ([nick.peterson@state.mn.us](mailto:nick.peterson@state.mn.us)).