Smallmouth Bass are prized in the angling world for their economic and recreational appeal. They sport a number of traits, like speed, aggressiveness, and large body size, that make them difficult and exciting to catch. In fact, Smallmouth fisheries in the United States fuel a multi-billion dollar industry, which makes them economically essential in communities throughout their range. To expand angling opportunities, Smallmouth Bass are frequently and copiously stocked outside of their native range. Unfortunately, widespread introductions of Smallmouth can lead to uncontrolled mixing between different types of fish. Long-term, this kind of hybridization can dilute native gene pools, possibly even causing the species to lose desirable traits.

I study the two currently-recognized, geographically isolated subspecies of Smallmouth, including the Neosho variety (*Micropterus dolomieu velox*) and the Northern variety (*Micropterus dolomieu dolomieu*). Since they are grouped as the same species, there are no official conservation concerns regarding stocking between the subspecies. But, they have distinct features that make them unique. I am working to define the taxonomic status of the Neosho Smallmouth Bass in particular. I am analyzing and comparing their physical and genetic makeup to the Northern subspecies in order to determine whether they deserve to be considered different species that should be protected from stocking programs.