

A TALE OF WHIRLING DISEASE

Elk River Alliance 2022

Alright little fishies, it's time for a story
But do be advised that it gets a bit gory

No ghosts and no ghouls but you'll squirm with unease,
As I tell you the tale of whirling disease

In a stream like the Elk, a stream not too far
Lived a few happy trout, they were only just parr

One day some new trout showed up on the block,
They were big and they smelled just like hatchery stock

Some had dark tails and some a kinked spine,
But no fish could imagine what that meant at the time

The new trout lived on, 'til death knocked on their door
But as they decomposed the released little spores

The spores were then eaten by Tubifex worms,
And in the worm gut they grew and transformed

Until they became a completely new sort
A triactinomyxon, but we'll say TAM, for short

On one the TAM has three spikes, straight from hell
On the other a sporoblast carrying parasite cells

The TAM floated the water until they attached,
To some poor little troutlings who'd only just hatched

It latched on to mucous cells on the fish skin,
and the sporoblast then injects its own cells in

The cells travel down the fish nervous system,
To get to the tasty soft cartilage, then

They eat it, they munch it, they feast, and they dine,
Degrading the small little fishies poor spine,

This makes the fish cells enlarged and inflamed,
Now our cute little fishies never will be the same

The inflamed cells not only make their tails black,

But contort and put kinks into their little backs

They couldn't run, and they couldn't hide,
And for every 10 troutlings, nine sadly died

Inside of the fish the cells turned back into spores
So as soon as they died, the cycle started once more

You sit here thinking we're safe from this dread,
But there's whirling disease in the Crowsnest watershed

Our trout will suffer, our trout too will die,
That is if us humans don't clean drain and dry

The spores can survive on your boats and your waders,
So make sure to clean them to stop these invaders

I hope that this tale has taught you fine folk,
that whirling disease is no matter of joke

We can stop it together if only we try,
But you must, yes you must, clean drain and dry