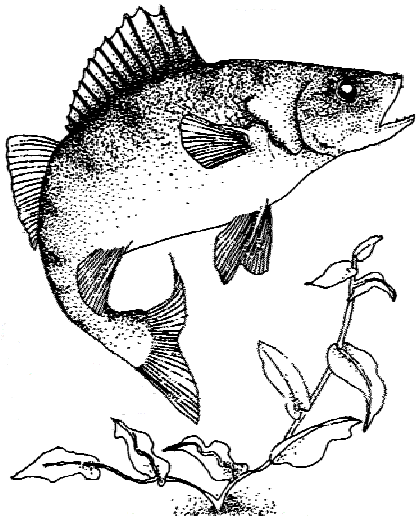
fishing

CHIPPEWA NATIONAL FOREST SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa 218-335-8600

As glaciers sculpted northern Minnesota's landscape 10,000 years ago, they also carved some of the nation's best fishing lakes. The frozen rock and ice formed deep clear basins, now home to trout. Glacial sediments filled other basins producing nutrient-rich lakes with complex food webs which feed walleye, bass and panfish. These fish, along with others, are in turn dinner for northern pike and muskie.

The Chippewa is at the headwaters of two major drainages, the Mississipi River and Hudson Bay. Twenty-five watersheds lace the Forest with 400,000 acres of open water; 1,300 lakes including three of Minnesota's five largest, 925 miles of streams and over 400,000 acres of wetlands. The combined acreage of lakes, streams and wetlands represents half of the 1.6 million acres within the Chippewa National Forest boundary.

With 23 National Forest campgrounds and a number of resort communities, Forest visitors can find a wide array of accommodations. Fishing equipment, boat rentals and guides are available in most localities. Launch services are available on Leech, Cass and Lake Winnibigoshish. The following tables highlight the best lakes for fishing and provide some basic natural history information for species found on the Chippewa National Forest.



BEST FISHING LAKES

Area	Walleye/Northern/Muskie	Bass	Panfish	Trout
Blackduck	Big, Rabideau, Blackduck, Pimushe, Round, Island, Dora, Clear, Whitefish, Moose, Big Rice	Kitchi, North Twin, South Twin, Rabideau, Gilstad, Noma, Meadow, Bass, Big Rice	Kitchi, North Twin, South Twin, Rabideau, Gilstad, Noma, Moose, Meadow, Bass, Pimushe	Benjamin
Cass Lake	Cass, Andrusia, Pike Bay, Portage, Leech, Kitchi, Lake 13	Windigo, Lake 13, Sucker Lakes, Big, Lost, Lydick	Sucker Lakes, Buck, Windigo, Blue Sky, Silver, Lost Lydick	
Deer River	Big Cut Foot Sioux, Winnibigoshish, Little Cut Foot Sioux, Bowstring, Sand, Six Mile, Little Ball Club, Little Winnie, Ball Club	Big Cut Foot Sioux, Little Cut Foot Sioux, Little Sand, Sand, Little Ball Club, Little Winnie, White Oak, Sugar, Vermillion	Big Cut Foot Sioux, Little Cut Foot Sioux, Middle Pigeon, Winnibigoshish, Bowstring, Sand, Six Mile, Little Ball Club, Little Winnie, Leech Lake River	
Marcell	Jessie, North Star, Little Jessie, Turtle, Spider, Wabana, Little Long, Big Ole, Little Turtle, Little Bowstring, Johnson	Turtle, North Star, Spider, Bello, Wabana, Clubhouse, Jack-the-Horse	Bello, Big Island, Burns, Arrowhead, North Star, Graves, Clubhouse, Holland, Pughole, Spider, Gunderson, Big Ole	Bee Cee, Trout, Caribou, Kremer, Moonshine, Lucky
Walker	Leech, Hovde, Townline, Boy, Long, Ten Mile, Inguadona, Steamboat	Leech, Gadbolt, Horseshoe, May, Portage, Stocking, South Stocking, Ten Mile	Leech, Moccasin, Little Bass, Big Bass, Three Island, Little Sand, Cedar, Howard, Pine	Diamond, Teepee, Hazel

chippewa national forest fishing

SEASONS

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulates fishing seasons in Minnesota. The fishing season begins in mid-May for northern pike and walleye, and early June for muskellunge and bass. These seasons run until the middle of February. Trout season runs from mid-May to October and mid-January to middle of March. Trout lakes in Cass County are closed to winter fishing. You can fill a stringer with panfish year long. Fishing on the Chippewa is good throughout the summer, but usually best in late spring and fall when waters are cool. Ice fishing is a popular sport December through February. Walleye fishing is very popular on area lakes.

LICENSES

Minnesota fishing licenses are required for all persons 16 years and older. Trout stamps are also needed for trout fishing. Within the Leech Lake Reservation, special licenses are not required for fishing. Licenses are available at bait and sporting goods stores throughout the Chippewa National Forest. The Minnesota DNR issues an annual Fishing Regulation booklet which outlines rules, seasons, limits, fish identification, and safety measures. Copies of the booklet can be obtained at any of the Chippewa National Forest offices or by calling 888-646-6367.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The DNR, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the Chippewa National Forest are partners in managing the fishery resource. The DNR is the lead agency for surveying, stocking, removing rough fish, renovating lakes and streams, and improving lake access in Minnesota. Management by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe includes both game and non-game species. The Band conducts lake surveys, habitat improvement projects, rough fish removal, and operates a fish hatchery which is open to the public in early spring. The Chippewa National Forest fishery initiative began in 1987. Under this program, the Forest Service is responsible for protection and enhancement of fish habitat and providing boat access, in cooperation with the DNR and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.

SAFETY

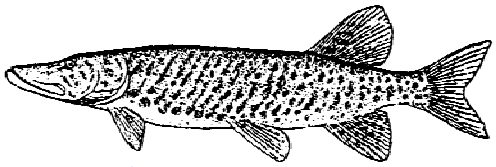
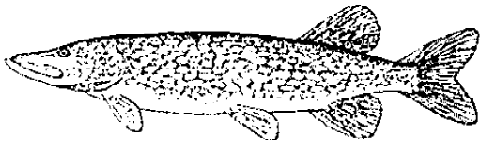
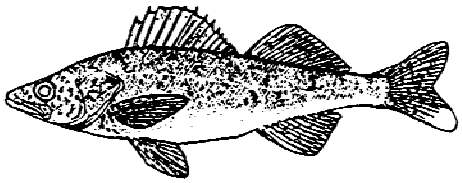
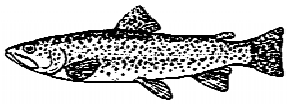
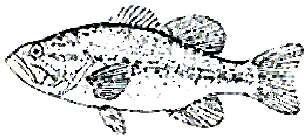
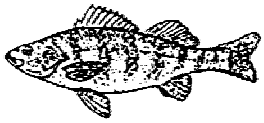
Area lakes provide a variety of recreation opportunties. Choose the serene quiet waters of a small, hidden lake or the excitement of the larger, open waters. Whatever your desire remember to always think safety first. The Chippewa National Forest is home to three of Minnesota's largest lakes: Leech, Cass and Lake Winnibigoshish. Small craft warnings are issued for these lakes when winds exceed 12 m.p.h. Smaller lakes offer safe and successful fishing alternatives. All boats must have a readily accessible U.S. Coast Guard approved Type I, II, II or V wearable lifejacket for each person on board. Type IV throwable devices are no longer acceptable primary lifesaving devices. In addition, on boats 16 feet or longer (except canoes and kayaks), there must be at least one U.S. Coast Guard approved Type IV throwable device, such as a buoy, cushion, or ring buoy, immediately available.

BAIT:

Fish	Preferred Bait
Muskellunge	Large plugs and spoons, jerk baits, bucktails. Live bait: large sucker minnows
Northern Pike	Wobbling spoons, rappalas, or spinners. Live shiner or sucker minnows
Walleye	Crank baits, jigs. Live bait: chubs, shiners, leeches or night crawlers
Bass: Largemouth Smallmouth	Poppers, plugs, plastic worms, inflated night crawlers, spinner baits, and spoons. Live bait: leeches. Floating plugs/surface baits, artificial surface lures, and jigs. Live bait: live frogs, crayfish, dragonfly larvae.
Panfish: Perch Crappie Bluegill/Pumpkin Seed	Live bait: minnows, insect larvae, and worms Maribou jigs, plastic minnows, and streamer flies. Live bait: minnows and wax worms Small jigs, flies. Live bait: worms and wax worms
Trout	Inflated worms, spinners, corn kernels for rainbows; spoons and airplane jigs for lake trout

➔ Please do not throw excess bait worms into the water or woods. Worms are exotics that impact Forest vegetation.

NATURAL HISTORY

Muskellunge average 7-10 pounds but reach up to 70 pounds and 5 feet in length. These solitary fish require weed beds for cover, feeding, and spawning. Muskies are daytime feeders and feed primarily on fish and are most active when water temperatures are in the mid-60s to 80 degrees range.	
Northern Pike average 2 to 3 pounds and reach up to 30 pounds. The northern pike lives along marshy shorelines and inlets, is most active during the day and prefers water 65 degrees F. or cooler. Preferred forage includes fish, crayfish, frogs, and leeches.	
Walleyes average 1 to 2 pounds and reach up to 8 to 12 pounds. They are abundant in larger lakes and feed in the shallows at dawn and dusk. Minnows and perch are preferred natural foods. Being sensitive to light, walleyes spend much time in deep water.	
Rainbow, Brown and **Lake Trout** are stocked in a number of forest lakes. Trout require cool oxygenated water and feed on minnows and insects.	
Bass are medium size fish favoring warmer lakes and streams. Largemouth bass frequent weed beds in turbid water and areas with structure while smallmouth prefer rocky areas and clear water. Natural baits range from minnows, and crayfish to dragonfly nymphs.	
Perch are one of the most abundant game fish on the Forest and travel in schools of 100 or more. Perch prefer cool deeper water and feed on minnows, insect larvae, plankton and worms. They are important prey for northern pike, walleye and bass.	
Crappies frequent weedy bays and spend their days in deeper water moving to the shallows to feed in the morning and evening. In the winter crappies are common 10-15 feet from the edge of drop offs.	
Bluegills and Pumpkin Seeds are usually found in or near beds of aquatic vegetation and feed on aquatic insects and invertebrates.	

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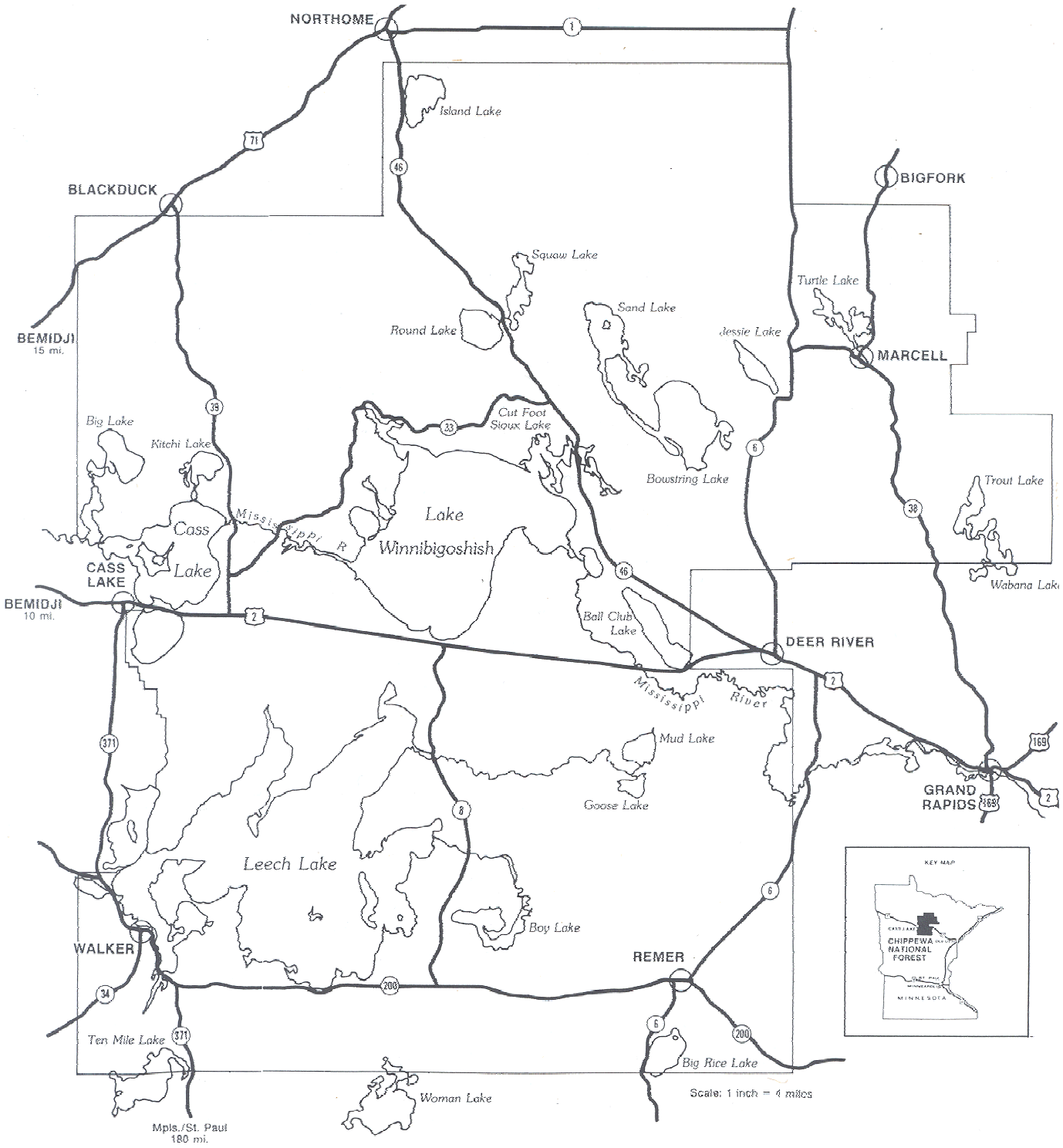

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
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