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SERIES: THE TROUT STREAMS OF MICHIGAN

NO. 23 THREE MILE CREEK

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Three Mile Creek is a small anadromous stream in northeast Luce County which flows into Lake Superior about half way between Crisp Point Light to the east and Little Lake Harbor to the west. The principal access is by County Road 412 which crosses it about 1½ miles above the mouth, and the Bodi Lake Road that crosses about another mile and a quarter above Co. 412.

This stream is spring fed and flows from a hardwood plateau east of Bodi Lake, draining an area of about four square miles. The stream bed is about six feet wide where it flows across the sandy beach into Lake Superior. The mouth changes at the whim of the north winds due to the sand dykes which are formed along the shore. Above the beach the creek widens to 15 to 20 feet and flows over a gravel bottom about 200 feet. Here the banks are low and vegetated with alder and black spruce.

Moving upstream, the waters narrow to about 15 feet at County Road 412 where banks are steep and 3-6 feet high. Lower banks and flats occur in the bends. Here the stream bed is mostly sand interspersed with gravel riffles. The stream bottomlands are vegetated with alder and black spruce while the highground contains jack and red pine, aspen and maple. The creek contains considerable cover represented by fallen trees, debris, alder and undercut banks. The creek valley is "pinched" in places so that spring runoff and heavy rains have a tendency to bring water levels up 3 to 4 feet above normal quite rapidly. At Co. 412 the stream gets a sluggish appearance.

Three Mile Creek continues to flow through jack pine plains from the Bodi Lake Road where it is about 10 feet wide. The bottom becomes more silty sand the further upstream one proceeds. Upland timber types change to northern hardwoods (maple, birch and beech) above the Bodi Lake Road. In this upper section there is considerable evidence of beaver activity - old beaver ponds and grassy meadows fringed with tag alder and conifers.

Stream temperatures remain relatively stable and tolerable to salmonid species. Water chemistry indicates low alkalinity and therefore low productivity. Green algae covers much of the stream bottom and patches of Valisineria (wild celery) abound in the quieter waters. Fish food consists of scuds (fresh water shrimp), caddis larvae and small snails.

Brook trout is the most common of the game fishes found in Three Mile Creek. Steelhead run this stream in the spring and a number of pink salmon were noted here in the fall of 1975. Other fish species found are burbot, pearl dace, the non-parasitic American brook lamprey, and slimy and common muddlers.

Fishing is considered fair to good for brook trout, especially in upstream beaver ponds. Some steelhead are caught here during May. Being an "isolated" stream it gets a good play from local poachers.

Natural fish reproduction is sufficient to sustain the fishery which this small stream presently affords. It should continue to be managed for brook trout.