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SERIES: THE TROUT STREAMS OF MICHIGAN

NO. 24 THE MINERS RIVER

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The Miners River arises from a pair of small unnamed lakes in Sections 32 and 33 of T47N, R18W of northcentral Alger County in Michigan's Eastern Upper Peninsula. It flows south and east for about two miles, then turns to flow almost due north to Lake Superior, just east of Grand Island.

The headwaters, which include several small unnamed tributaries, pass through flat spruce balsam swamps with scattered open marshes and hardwood pine ridges. As the river turns north and crosses the Munising to Van Meer Road (Co. 637), the land becomes low and rolling with northern hardwood and hemlock ridges and cedar, spruce, and balsam rills. The river then flows through partially wooded dunes, through the Pictured Rocks and into Lake Superior. The soils in the area are basically sandy loams, Ternary fine sandy loam, Munising loam and Onota stoney fine sandy loam, except for Miners Beach which is beautiful Shelldrake sand. All of these soils are classified as medium to low productivity acid soils.

The area is used primarily for recreational activities: fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, stone hunting, etc. and lies largely within the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Over half of the lands adjacent to the stream are held by the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company, while most of the remainder is in public ownership.

The two major points of interest along this stream are; 1) the Miners Falls, where the river breaks over the Lake Superior escarpment, in NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 15, T47N, R18W (about one quarter of a mile above Miners Lake) and 2) Miners Beach in Section 3 of T48N, R18W. Here the river flows out between two large rock outcrops of the Pictured Rocks into Lake Superior.

Access to this stream is not as restricted as many others in the area. Direct access can be gained from several roads or trails: 1) Munising-Van Meer Road (Co. 637) at five points; 2) Evelyn Truck Trail (U.S.F.S. Road 2249) running south from Co. 637; 3) The Pictured Rock Trail near the mouth; and 4) Miners Beach at the mouth. There are also a large number of mapped and unmapped foot trails and two-track trails providing access to the stream. Therefore, this river can provide nearly 20 miles of tranquil fishing for the person willing to get off the beaten path.

There are three morphologically distinct segments to the Miners. The first section is from the headwaters down to the mouth of the feeder stream at the north line of Section 35, T46N, R18W. Here the river varies from 10 to 15 feet wide and up to 2 feet deep. The water color is brown and the bottom is made up largely of sand or silt. The water temperature rarely exceeds 70°F and velocity is slow to moderate. Four tributaries enter this area, and all are very similar to the mainstream.

Fishermen will find this area to consist of a series of slicks and pools. Cover is only moderately abundant and consists of undercuts, logs, pools, and tag alder. The banks are low and covered with tag alder and other brush. Food organisms include; mayflies, caddis flies, dipterans, beetles, crayfish, and forage fish. Vegetation is sparse but made up principally of Vallisneria (wild celery) and Ranunculus (buttercup).

There is adequate spawning and nursery habitat to support a brook trout population within the river's productivity limits. Forage species include both slimy and mottled sculpins and black nose, red belly and long nose dace. Other fish present are white suckers and the non-parasitic american brook lamprey. Fishing is fair to good for brookies but was no doubt much better when legal sized fish were being planted (1947-1964).

The second segment (from the north line of Section 32, down to Miners Falls) averages 10 to 20 feet wide, up to 30 inches in depth, is brown in color, and has a bottom composed of about 80% sand and silt and 20% rubble and gravel. Cover is moderate and made up of logs, holes, undercuts, and brush overhang. There is adequate brook trout spawning habitat in this segment. Three small tributaries enter this section.

Fishermen will find this area to be a series of slicks and riffles with banks up to 20 feet high and covered with cedar, balsam, tag alder, and brush. Food organisms will include mayflies, caddis flies, stone flies, dipterans, odonates, beetles, midges, crayfish, and minnows. Vegetation is again sparse and composed principally of Vallisneria and Ranunculus.

Fishing is good for brook trout, but again, was no doubt much better while the river was being planted with legal size brook trout. Forage fish are both slimy and mottled sculpin, black nose, long nose and red belly dace while noxious fish are white suckers and American brook lamprey.

The third segment is that area from the Miners Falls down to its mouth. Shortly below the falls the river flows through Miners Lake. The stream in this segment is up to 30 feet wide, 4 feet deep and has a rapid velocity. The water is brown in color and cold, rarely exceeding 70°F. The bottom is roughly 85% sand, 10% gravel and rock, and 5% hardpan or bedrock. Two small tributaries enter this segment.

Fishermen will find this portion of the stream to be a series of rapids and riffles with abundant cover (logs, undercuts, brush, and pools). Aquatic vegetation is rare and banks are high and covered with cedar, spruce, balsam, tag alder, and associated brush. Food organisms are made up of mayflies, caddis flies, stone flies, beetles, dipterans, odonates, crayfish, and minnows.

The gamefish species are rainbow (steelhead) and brook trout. Forage species include slimy and mottled sculpin; long nose, black nose and red belly dace. Noxious fish are American brook lamprey, white suckers and sea lamprey. There is adequate spawning habitat for both brook trout and rainbow trout.

Miners Lake is a 30-acre warmwater lake containing yellow perch, northern pike, and white suckers. It is light brown in color, fairly cool at the surface, has a steep drop from the sandy shoal and the shoal is covered with Elodea (water weed) and water lillies.

There is no direct access to the lake, but those fishermen willing to canoe or wade up river, or walk in from the road, should find fair to good fishing for both perch and pike. There is also the possibility of hooking good sized brook trout or rainbow.