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SERIES: THE TROUT STREAMS OF MICHIGAN

NO. 30 CARPENTER CREEK

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Carpenter Creek lies almost entirely within the suburbs of the Village of Grand Marais in eastern Alger County. This small picturesque, but obscure, brown stained creek originates from springs and seeps atop the Lake Superior escarpment and flows into West Bay. The surrounding hills are vegetated with northern hardwoods, cedar, spruce, and balsam. Tag alder fringe the stream bed.

The stream varies in width from a few feet near its source to about 30 feet in the estuary. Water depth varies from about four inches to three feet. The gradient is relatively steep and the spring water flow can be considered torrential. However, erosion is not a problem due to the heavy bank cover. The bottom is composed principally of gravel, sandstone outcrop, and sand and as such, it provides excellent spawning habitat for anadromous species. Instream cover is also very good, consisting of sandstone boulders, undercut banks, logs, debris, and holes. Instream vegetation is sparse, but food organisms are moderately abundant. These include caddisflies, may flies, stoneflies, sculpins, and longnose dace.

Stream temperatures rarely exceed 70°F so brook trout and rainbow trout are present throughout the watershed. Although fish are small, some angling pressure for resident fish (mostly brookies) does occur in the headwaters.

Since growth of resident fish is poor and natural reproduction is abundant, stocking is not necessary. Carpenter Creek receives a spring steelhead and fall coho salmon run, thus providing some fishing in West Bay near the mouth. Both species reproduce naturally here and probably make a substantial contribution to the lucrative fishery in Grand Marais Harbor. Menominee whitefish are also caught in West Bay near the mouth of Carpenter Creek in the spring and fall.