

FISHING HOLE FLOUR LAKE

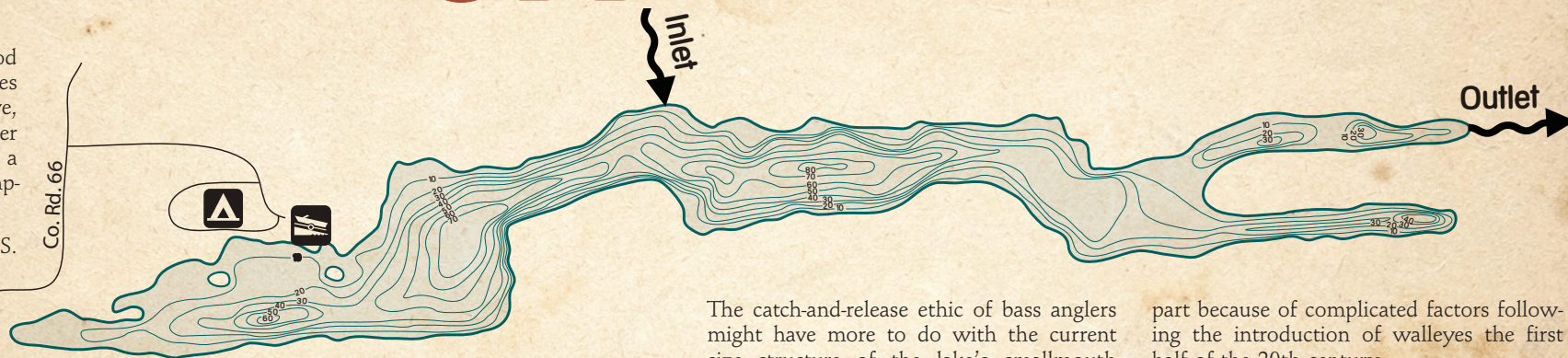
WHY GO: Good fishing opportunities for catching walleye, bass and a few other species, and there's a Forest Service campground.

ACCESS: The U.S. Forest Service has a concrete boat ramp, with parking for 10 vehicles and 12 vehicle/trailer parking spots, along with a toilet. To get there, head out of Grand Marais about 27 miles up the Gunflint Trail and take a right on County Road 66.

VITALS: Flour is a 330-acre Cook County lake in the Superior National Forest. It sits to the south and west of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The lake has a maximum depth of 75 feet, average water clarity of 13 feet, and has 8.46 miles of shoreline, according to Minnesota DNR's lake finder website.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, lake trout, tullibee and yellow perch.

WALLEYES: You'll have to put in a little time and effort to find the walleyes on Flour Lake, said Steve Persons, DNR's Grand Marais area fisheries supervisor. Persons



said walleye numbers could be better at the lake, but DNR is trying, through stocking, to improve the fishery. "There is a wealth of walleye habitat," he said. "You have to be willing to move around." Seek out those classic walleye haunts on the lake, Persons said, adding that the lake's decent clarity can make fishing best in the evenings and other low light-periods.

SMALLIES: The smallmouth bass fishery on Flour is doing quite well, Persons said, noting that it is managed with a 12-inch maximum size limit, allowing one fish over 20 inches. "There are times when it's hard to find bass smaller than 12 inches," he said, noting that the rule has been in place since the late 1990s. "We were trying to produce some bigger fish," Persons said, noting that there used to be lots of smaller smallies.

The catch-and-release ethic of bass anglers might have more to do with the current size structure of the lake's smallmouth population, though, Persons said. The most recent lake assessment turned up more bass in the 15 to 19-inch category than in any other category.

"There are some nice fish in the lake," Persons said, noting that DNR is looking at possibly opening up more harvest on the lake, though such a decision would go through a public process first, and a creel survey is planned soon for the lake. "We would be listening closely to what anglers want there," he said.

THE REST: Flour is one of those marginal lake trout lakes that is barely hanging on. A stocking program has kept the fishery going, though no natural reproduction has been documented at the lake, putting the future of that stocking program at risk. "It's not as deep as our best lake trout lakes," Persons said, noting that lakere were in the lake originally, and may have dwindled in

part because of complicated factors following the introduction of walleyes the first half of the 20th century.

The lake also has some northern pike in it. "Once in a while, we see some nice ones," Persons said, noting that pike, like all of the lake's larger predators, benefit from tullibee population that has persisted.

Last but not least, there are a few decent yellow perch in the lake. "There are some, and some of them are big," said Persons, noting that big for Flour Lake would go about half a pound.

CAMP OUT: The U.S. Forest Service has a 37-site fee campground on the northwest corner of the lake and Golden Eagle Lodge is the concessionaire. Campsites run \$18 per night, including tax, and have an 8-person limit per site, though additional vehicles are \$9. Reservations can be made at www.recreation.gov or by calling (877) 444-6777. -Javier Serna