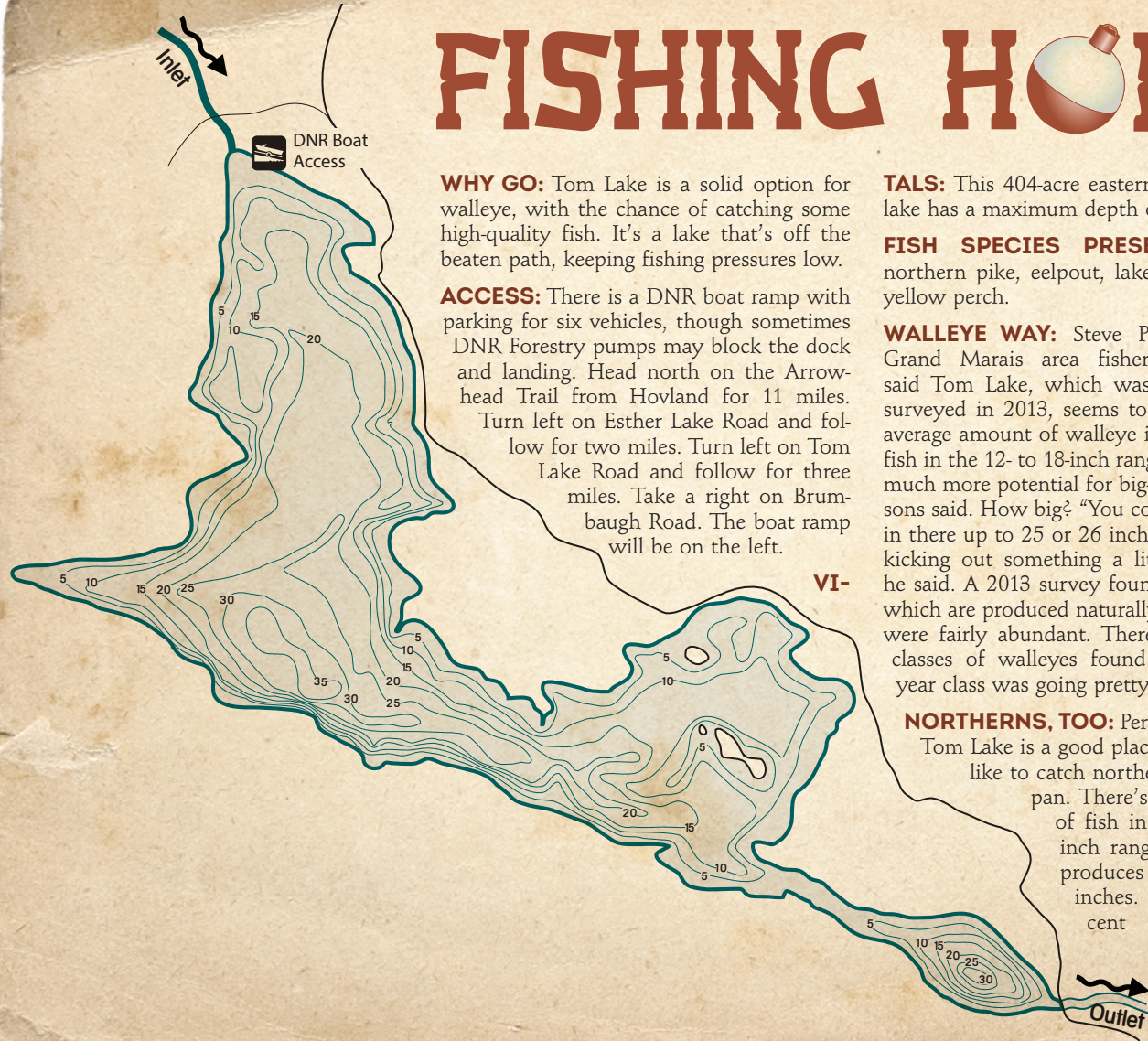


FISHING HOLE TOM LAKE



WHY GO: Tom Lake is a solid option for walleye, with the chance of catching some high-quality fish. It's a lake that's off the beaten path, keeping fishing pressures low.

ACCESS: There is a DNR boat ramp with parking for six vehicles, though sometimes DNR Forestry pumps may block the dock and landing. Head north on the Arrowhead Trail from Hovland for 11 miles. Turn left on Esther Lake Road and follow for two miles. Turn left on Tom Lake Road and follow for three miles. Take a right on Brumbaugh Road. The boat ramp will be on the left.

TALS: This 404-acre eastern Cook County lake has a maximum depth of 35 feet.

FISH SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, northern pike, eelpout, lake whitefish and yellow perch.

WALLEYE WAY: Steve Persons, DNR's Grand Marais area fisheries supervisor, said Tom Lake, which was most recently surveyed in 2013, seems to have about an average amount of walleye in it, with most fish in the 12- to 18-inch range. "But there is much more potential for big-sized fish," Persons said. How big? "You could get walleye in there up to 25 or 26 inches, occasionally kicking out something a little bit bigger," he said. A 2013 survey found that walleye, which are produced naturally on Tom Lake, were fairly abundant. There were 12 year classes of walleyes found and the 2010 year class was going pretty strong.

NORTHERNS, TOO: Persons noted that Tom Lake is a good place for those that like to catch northern pike for the pan. There's good numbers of fish in the 20- to 25-inch range and the lake produces pike up to 30 inches. "There is a decent northern pike

population," he said. "But it doesn't have the conditions to grow trophy northern." The 2013 survey didn't turn up any northern pike in the lake, but that has been the case in the past and the species has always recovered here.

TRY A FLY: Tom Lake, though not particularly deep, is also home to lake whitefish and most of the whitefish that turned up in the most recent 2013 survey were in the 20- to 24-inch range. "It has some big whitefish in it," he said. "If people want to try something different, they could give it a shot." Persons thought it would be possible to catch whitefish on a fly rod in the summer, when mayflies emerge on the lake surface. "I've also seen walleye feeding on the surface in July there," he said. "It could be a way to get a walleye on a fly rod. They will really gorge on mayflies at times."—*Javier Serna*