

FISHING HOLE HUNGRY JACK LAKE

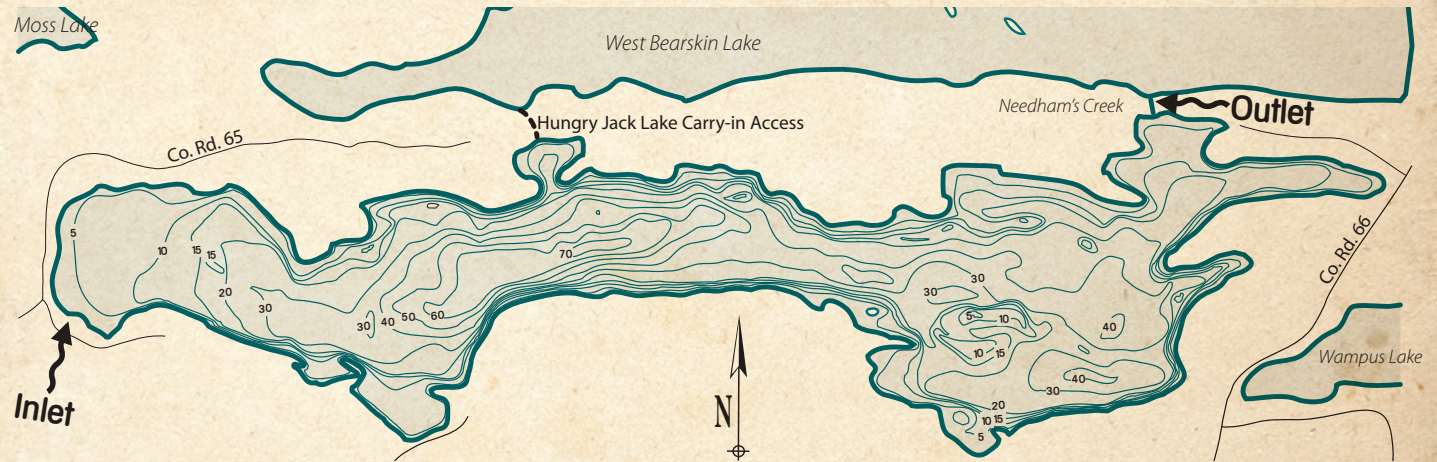
WHY GO: Hungry Jack has an improving smallmouth bass fishery for anglers that like to tangle with feisty bronzebacks. There's also a decent walleye fishery that seems to bite best in the spring and fall.

ACCESS: There is a county-owned unimproved dirt launch off of C.R. 65, on the west end of the lake, where there is roadside parking for two vehicles. The U.S. Forest Service also owns a carry-in access off C.R. 65, on a small bay of the north side of the lake. That access has parking for four vehicles.

VITALS: This 468-acre lake sits inside the Superior National Forest. It has a maximum depth of 71 feet, with a mean depth of 20 feet. The lake has clarity down to 12 feet, according to Minnesota DNR's most recent survey of the lake, conducted in 2012.

SPECIES PRESENT: Smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike, bluegill, green sunfish, hybrid sunfish, pumpkinseed, rainbow smelt. Past DNR surveys have also turned up lake trout, sculpin, splake, rainbow trout, black crappie and coho salmon.

SMALLMOUTH BASS DESTINATION: Forrest Parson, owner of Hungry Jack Lodge, said the DNR's assessment of the fishery in 2012 doesn't paint an accurate picture of the smallmouth bass fishery. The survey turned up only one smallmouth bass, the lowest number of smallies ever



collected by DNR biologists.

"The bulk of the fish that people are catching are well over the 15-inch category," Parson said, pointing to a special regulation that requires all smallmouth bass 12 inches or longer be released, save for one fish longer than 20 inches.

"It's definitely done the trick," Parson said. "We're seeing more and more fish every year in the low 20s. Overall, the regulation has really changed the dynamic of this lake. We went from having dinky smallmouth to all of the sudden having a sport fish that are really fun to catch. It has attracted a lot of sport fishermen."

If anything, Parson said he'd be in favor

of loosening of the slot size so that a few more fish could be kept.

WALLEYE A SPRING/FALL AFFAIR: While the lake is also managed for walleye, the lake has fallen below goals despite a stocking program that has put fish into the lake every other year, most recently in 2013, when 386 pounds of fingerlings were released.

Parson said the best walleye bite of the year is in May and June, though some fish can still be caught near deep water in the evenings during the summer.

"Typically, July and August are not the best months for walleye," Parsons said.

But that bite picks up again in the fall, he said.

A RARE BLUEGILL LAKE IN COOK COUNTY: The lake is one of the few in Cook County with a panfish population worth an angler's time, though Parson said the lake once had much larger bluegills.

"I've seen them almost as big as two pounds, but that was long ago," he said. "I would say a three-quarter pounder would be a big one these days."

"It seems like they get to a certain size and they just don't get any bigger," Parson said, noting that an occasional angler gets into a school of nice ones.