

FISHING HOLE DYERS LAKE

WHY GO: It's one of a handful of solid options in Cook County for panfish, with special regulations that seem to have helped with the size structure of bluegills and crappies. There's a decent northern pike population with a number of medium-sized fish available for a change of pace.

ACCESS: This little lake in southwest Cook County sits just north of Finland State Forest. It's about four miles west-southwest of Schroeder. A back-in gravel road access at the end of Cook County Road 30 is about a little over a half-mile south of Cook County Road 1. There's a small parking area and a small dock at the site, and Finland area fisheries supervisor Dean Paron advises against launching larger boats at the landing. "You're going to want a smaller boat," he said.

VITALS: Despite being inside Cook County, the 68-acre lake is managed out of the Finland area fisheries office in Lake County. It has a maximum depth of 23 feet and an average water clarity of 6.7 feet, according to Minnesota DNR's LakeFinder. It has 1.41 miles of shoreline.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Bluegill, crappies, northern pike, pumpkinseed, and yellow perch.

PANFISHING: In 2006, a special regulation was put in place restricting the daily and possession bag limit of bluegills and crappies to five fish of each species. The regulation was reviewed again in 2016.

"We did see slight improvement in size," Paron said of the decision ultimately to keep the regulation in place for a little longer. "Some people really like it. Most were neutral to positive about it."

Paron said the lake is one of the few lakes in the area that provides a winter panfishing opportunity. While he stopped short of saying the special regulation has been a smashing

success, fisheries surveys, the most recent completed in 2014, would indicate that the population is doing slightly better than before.

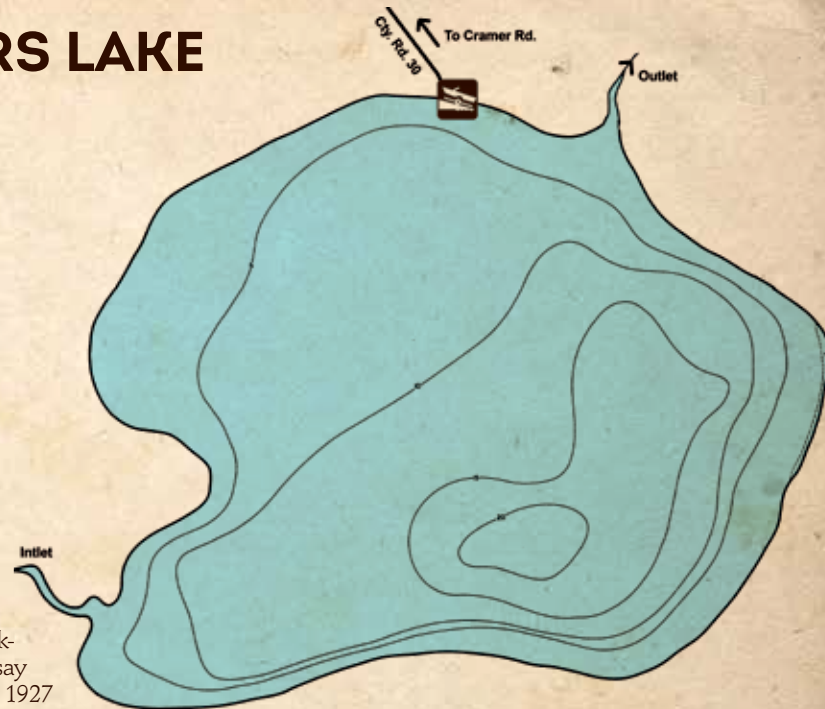
"The biggest bluegill we had was just under 10 inches," he said. "The majority of crappies were in the 5- to 8-inch range, and we had a few that were 12 to 13 inches. Not bad these days."

PIKE: A number of northern pike, in fact 22 of the 31 total that were sampled in 2014, were at least 20 inches. Six of those pike were in the 25- to 29-inch column. "There are some nice little keepers," Paron said. "If you get bored crappie or bluegill fishing, it might be worth it to fish for them for a little bit."

A STORIED STOCKING PAST: The stocking record for Dyers Lake is interesting to say the least. It begins with a period between 1927 and 1944, when brook trout and rainbow trout were stocked, as well as bass and northern pike. These days, fisheries managers wouldn't stock pike and trout into the same waters.

"Northern pike and trout management don't mix," said Paron, repeating modern common knowledge, but something that wasn't known back then.

There was "reclamation" back in 1963, and again in 1978, but Paron noted that the lake is connected to a stream that allowed pike to persist. According to the records, bluegills and crappies were first stocked in 1972. A year later, a long gone batch of 10,000 coho salmon were stocked. Management shifted to brook trout and splake stockings starting in



1978. Yellow perch were stocked in 1978, and have persisted, even if the fishery has never been known for producing keepers.

The brookie/splake effort was abandoned in 1999, as management shifted to panfish, with additional bluegill stockings that year and again in 2002. It's unclear if black crappies, which were first stocked in the early 70s, were stocked again at some point, or if they somehow persisted through the reclamation in 1978.—*Javier Serna*

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