

FISHING HOLE

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Lake Eighteen is a quiet, out-of-the-way lake with good shore fishing opportunities. Anglers have to carry in their boats, which keeps big boats out, although the trail from the parking lot to the water is only about 10 feet. The shoreline is entirely publicly owned and a trail all the way around the lake provides shore fishing opportunities.

ACCESS: Lake Eighteen is located 2 miles north of Isabella, just off Trappers Lake Road. There's a USFS carry-down access on the east shore with parking for about five vehicles. The lake also has three free USFS campsites available on a first come, first served basis. An outhouse is also available.

VITALS: At just 102 acres and with a maximum depth of 12 feet, Lake Eighteen is relatively easy to figure out, which is good, since anglers are limited to shore fishing or using small boats. It's a simple fishery, pretty much consisting of just perch and walleyes. The bottom content is mostly rock, rubble and gravel, with few aquatic plants. You'll also find downed trees along the shoreline for structure.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye and yellow perch.

WALLEYE: "(Eighteen) produces above-average walleye catches in our surveys," said Kevin Mott, assistant area fisheries supervi-

sor at the Finland DNR office. "It has good numbers of fish in the 14- to 18-inch range." Mott said most anglers who visit the lake target walleyes. He said the DNR began stocking walleyes around 1970 and has stocked them fairly consistently since then. In recent years, he said the DNR has stocked walleyes at a higher rate, but it hasn't seemed to increase the catch rate, so stocking will likely be pared back. With fairly good water clarity (6 feet) Mott said fishing during low-light periods is best. Campers at the three sites on the lake can even catch walleyes right from their campsites.

YELLOW PERCH: Yellow perch serve as forage for walleyes. "It's a pretty simple fish community," Mott said. "The perch tend to not get too big, but people can catch a meal of perch if you're willing to sort." There are about three little clearings along the walking trail where shore anglers can fish comfortably and have a chance at catching fish.

BYE BYE, BASS: Smallmouth bass were stocked decades ago, but few, if any remain. This bucks the trend of other area lakes where smallies are on the rise, to the detriment of walleye populations.

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