

FISHING HOLE

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Ninemile Lake has a reputation as a good northern pike lake. Although most Finland-area lakes are rocky, Ninemile has some weedy bays that hold pike with a shot at something pushing 40 inches. Wall-eye numbers are good, and when you catch them, they tend to be keepers. The lake also boasts a campground and a good concrete ramp.

ACCESS: Ninemile Lake is on County Road 7 about 14 miles northeast of Finland. There's a concrete ramp in an area known for rough accesses, located on the east end of the lake. There's parking for eight trailers and a 24-unit National Forest campground is right on site. The road is gravel most of the way from Finland, but it is plowed in the winter, providing year-round access.

VITALS: Ninemile is 296 acres. The majority of the lake is shallow, with one deep hole, located between the islands. It has good cabbage weeds, which is sort of an anomaly in an area known for its rocky lakes. Weeds are the ticket for pike, and they'll hold walleyes and perch, too.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Northern pike, walleyes and yellow perch.

NORTHERN PIKE: "It's probably best known for northern pike," said Kevin Mott, assistant area supervisor at the Finland DNR

fisheries office. "Like most lakes in this area, it's more rocky than it is weedy, but it's got enough weeds to support a good pike population." Mott said the lake is capable of producing "memorable size" pike near the 40-inch mark. You'll find above-average pike numbers, but still at a size that would interest anglers.

WALLEYE: "After a partial die-off in 2013, we've stocked the lake in several years since then," Mott said. "The biggest year-class since then came from the only year we didn't stock." The DNR stocks walleye fry, but they account for only 36 percent of the catch, indicating good natural reproduction.

"Winterkill is probably more of a thinning of the population than a traumatic event," Mott said.

"The current population includes a lot of fish in the 15- to 20-inch range," Mott said. "If you catch them, they're probably going to be good-sized.

YELLOW PERCH: "Typically they're smaller-sized perch. You might occasionally find a perch that's of interest to anglers," Mott said.

Perch numbers are pretty high compared to area lakes, although the latest survey found the lowest perch numbers of the last four DNR lake surveys. Still, perch provide good forage for pike and walleyes, and with

NINEMILE LAKE



some fish up to 11 inches sampled, you might find some eaters. Mott said most keeper-sized perch are taken incidentally by walleye anglers.

PALTRY PANFISH: Bluegills and crappies

are present in Ninemile, but in low numbers. You'd be hard-pressed to find them.

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