

FISHING HOLE FRENCH RIVER

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: The French River provides good fishing for brook, brown, and rainbow trout above the posted barrier from Lake Superior. And although fishing isn't allowed between the lake and the fish trap at Highway 61, shore anglers casting into Lake Superior along the mouth catch coho salmon and steelhead.

ACCESS: There are ample opportunities to access the French River. You'll find a nice parking area at the mouth along Scenic Highway 61. From there you can fish Lake Superior, but the river is closed to fishing in the short stretch between the mouth and the highway. To reach this access point from Duluth, head northeast up Highway 61. Turn right onto Scenic Highway 61 at Brighton Beach (just before the railroad tracks). From there, travel northeast 6 miles to the parking area just beyond the bridge over the French River. You'll also find angling easements at several road crossings, including Ryan Road, McQuade Road, Cant Road, Lismore Road, Pioneer Road, French River Road and Normanna Road. These easements permit anglers to walk along shore on private lands to fish. The areas are well signed. Make sure you

remain in the water when fishing outside the posted easements.

VITALS: The French River lies in St. Louis County between Duluth and Two Harbors. It flows 12.9 miles before emptying into Lake Superior. A fish trap just upstream of the mouth is used to catch steelhead. Eggs collected from these fish are reared in a hatchery and are ultimately stocked back into the river. Formerly, Kamloops rainbow trout were stocked here, but this popular fishery was discontinued several years ago. Today, clipped steelhead are stocked to provide some harvest opportunities. Above the barrier, anglers will find naturally reproducing populations of brook and brown trout, as well as stocked steelhead fingerlings. Allen Brandt, DNR fisheries specialist, says downstream of the Cant Road easement, angling is more popular and the stream banks are more open, permitting easier casting. Upstream of there, it's brushy and harder to fish.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Brook trout, brown trout, and steelhead (rainbow trout).

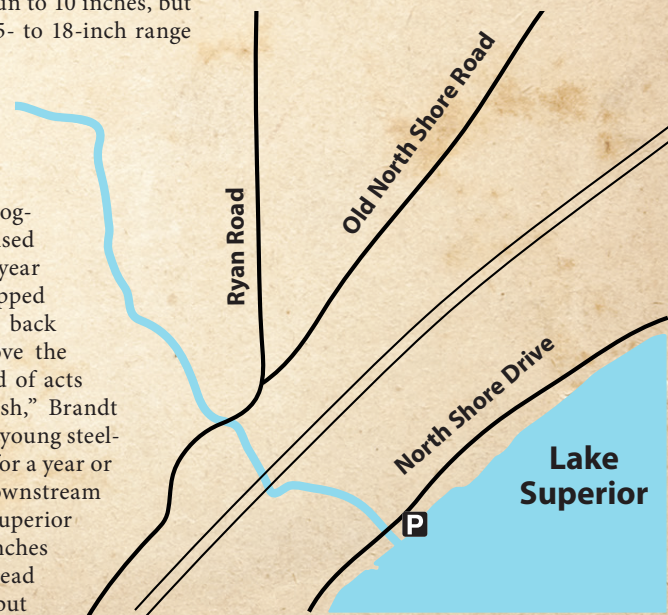
BROOK TROUT: Although brook trout can be found throughout the river, they are mostly found in the headwaters area, Brandt

said. He says brookies commonly run up to 8 inches, but you may find some 10-inch fish.

BROWN TROUT: Both brown trout and brook trout have naturally reproducing populations in the French River, Brandt said. He said browns commonly run to 10 inches, but some larger fish in the 15- to 18-inch range do inhabit the river.

STEELHEAD: The French River trap catches adult steelhead attempting to swim upstream and spawn. Progeny of these fish are raised in a hatchery, and each year 60,000 young 4-inch clipped steelhead are stocked back in the French River above the barrier. "The stream kind of acts as a nursery for these fish," Brandt said. Stocked in June, the young steelhead remain in the river for a year or so before swimming downstream and entering Lake Superior when they are about 8 inches long, Brandt said. Steelhead can't be kept in the river, but

anglers may keep steelhead caught in Lake Superior if they are at least 16 inches long and have a clipped adipose fin with a healed scar, indicating a stocked fish.



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