Sid Lake 2014 Survey Report

Prepared by Cory Kovacs

Introduction: A general netting survey was conducted on Sid Lake on May 27-29, 2014 to evaluate the annually stocked Brook Trout.

History: Sid Lake, 10 acres, was mapped in 1970 and management began in 1971 with stocking warmwater species; Bluegill and Largemouth Bass. Warmwater species management was ceased and Sid Lake was switched to a trout lake with the stocking of Rainbow Trout from 1975-1977. During this time fisheries managers were also investigating the plankton community. This study ended in 1979. In the mid-1980's, as part of the Arctic Grayling re-introduction program, they were stocked in Sid and Deer lakes. This experiment failed for various reasons and the program was discontinued. In 1995, Brook Trout were stocked for the first time creating a single-species trout lake. Sid Lake was also included in the Nipigon and Assinica strain comparison study (1998-2005). Brook Trout are stocked on a biennial schedule today and receives fall fingerlings. Sid Lake is a Type-D trout lake and is considered one of the better "trophy" lakes in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. The most recent survey in 2006, found 45 Brook Trout with an average total length of 12.8 inches. This survey was conducted when the lake level was extremely low and during the Nipigon and Assinica strain comparison study.

Methods and Materials: This survey was conducted for two nights using three large-mesh and one small-mesh fyke nets. Total length was recorded for all Brook Trout captured, while non-trout species were counted and measured to the inch group. Scale samples were collected from 10 Brook Trout per inch group for age determination.

Results: A total of 42 Brook Trout were captured with an average total length of 8.4 inches and a length range of 5-21 inches. A total of four fish (9.5%) were greater than legal size (≥15 inches). Age determination by scales found two year classes represented (Ages 1 and 5). Brook Trout growth was found to be slightly above statewide average.

Discussion: Comparing the 2006 survey results with 2014, data suggests a downward trend in both growth and size structure. However, the 2006 survey was conducted in the fall when Brook Trout are more vulnerable to fyke nets because of their cruising nature in shallow water habitat in the fall. The 2014 survey does suggest that the age-3 cohort (2011 year class) had poor survival since they were not present in the sample. Typically, if age-5 (2009 year class) fish are vulnerable to netting gear, age-3 fish would also be captured. Fall fingerlings have to make it through their first winter with very limited resources so it is possible that conditions were not favorable for good survival in winter of 2011/12.

Management Recommendations: Sid Lake continues to be a popular "trophy" fishery because of its reputation to grow big fish. The Type-D regulation is restrictive enough to protect fish long enough for them to reach large sizes and has been working well. Walk-in access also limits traffic to this lake which makes it valuable to those anglers seeking a tranquil remote trout fishery. Due to the failed 2011 year class, fisheries managers will consider changing the stocking regime to an annually stocking for the next management prescription cycle (2018). By stocking annually, Sid Lake is less likely to be missing larger Brook Trout in the event of a failed year class and would still maintain the "trophy" lake status.