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SERIES: THE TROUT STREAMS OF MICHIGAN

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The Hurricane River is a scenic little stream arising from several beaver dammed springs about nine miles west of Grand Marais in north-eastern Alger County. It drains about 10 square miles and flows generally northward through picturesque rolling sand and sandstone hills. The area is covered with a thin mantle of sandy loam inland, and sandy dunes near Lake Superior. It is vegetated with a mixture of red maple, white birch, beech and hemlock on the hills, and cedar and tag alder in the low areas. The Hurricane reaches Lake Superior by slicing through Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore dunes near Au Sable Point.

Of the roughly nine miles of stream, only about 25% of the adjacent lands are under public ownership. However, 33% of the private ownership is Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company land. Since this too is available for recreational activities, a little over half the adjacent lands are open to the public.

Road access to this stream is very limited. Direct access may be had from the Hurricane Truck Trail (County Road C.O. 714), County Road 700 and from an old logging road off C.O. 700. There is reasonable access from numerous foot trails and unmapped dirt roads. Because of the seclusion, this little stream provides some nine miles of reasonably remote fishing for brook trout and rainbow trout (steelhead).

The river can be arbitrarily divided into three segments: (1) headwaters to the Hurricane River Truck Trail; (2) truck trail to the bridge in Section 14; and (3) from the bridge down to the mouth. The river in the headwaters segment is up to 6 feet wide, 12 inches deep and the water is clear and light brown in color. The flow is very slow (slicks and pools) due to the flatness of the land and many beaver ponds. The bottom is largely silt over gravel and sand, but spawning habitat is ample to support a good brook trout population. The three major tributaries in this area are very similar to the mainstream.

Food organisms include: mayflies, caddis flies, stoneflies, dragonflies, dipteran larvae, beetle larvae and worms. The fish species include: brook trout, the non-parasitic American brook lamprey, slimy sculpin (C. cognatus) and mottled sculpin (C. bairdii). Fishing in this segment is mostly limited to the beaver ponds and is best when the ponds are active.

The river in the middle section (from the Hurricane Truck Trail down to the bridge in Section 14) ranges up to 40 feet wide, 30 inches deep and is dotted with several small islands. The water is clear and medium brown in color. The bottom is made up of about 60% sand, 25% gravel and 15% rock rubble. The velocity is rapid due to a series of riffles and slicks.

There are no tributaries in this segment. The stream is well shaded with an over growth of alder, cedar and balsam fir and instream cover is abundant, consisting of: logs, undercuts, rocks, pools, over hanging brush and vegetation (Vallisneria). Food organisms include: caddis flies, stoneflies, mayflies, dragonflies, beetle larvae, dipteran larvae, sculpins and scuds.

Fishermen will find this middle segment of stream readily fishable and moderately productive for spring rainbow (steelhead) and brook trout. Both mottled sculpin (C. bairdii) and slimy sculpin (C. cognatus) are abundant along with a few non-parasitic American brook lamprey. Spawning habitat is abundant for rainbow trout and brook trout in this area and so is nursery habitat.

The third segment extends from the road bridge in Section 14 to the mouth and ranges from 19 to 35 feet in width and from 15 to 30 inches in depth. The water is clear, cold (rarely exceeding 65°F), and light brown and flows along rapidly. The bottom is composed of 30% sand, 30% gravel, 20% rock and rubble and 20% bedrock.

Fishermen will find this area readily fishable and with a series of rapids and swift slicks. Wading can be treacherous because of the bedrock or rock rubble and the swift current. However, deep holes are nearly non existant. Cover is more than adequate for both juvenile and adult trout and is made up of logs, cut banks, pools, boulders and vegetation (Vallisneria). There are occasional clumps of wild celery (Vallisneria) and leafy liverwort (Plagiochila) clinging to the rock rubble. Food is abundant and includes mayflies, caddis flies, stoneflies, dragonflies, dipteran larvae, beetle larvae, annelids and sculpins (muddlers).

The gamefish are spring rainbow trout (steelhead) and brook trout. Other fish include the slimy sculpin (C. cognatus) and the non-parasitic American brook lamprey. The principal fishery is for the rainbow, although natural reproduction does sustain a small brook trout population.

Many of the rainbows caught in the river are taken from a pool at the base of a small falls about 400 feet above the mouth. Here, the fish pause for rest after negotiating a two to three hundred foot long sandstone incline with a grade ranging from about 30 to 40%. In addition to the stream fishery, a good menominee (round whitefish) fishery occurs along the Lake Superior beach adjacent to the river's mouth. This fishery commences in the spring, soon after break-up and continues thru mid-June then picks up again from mid-August thru to bad weather. Both the menominee and steelhead fishermen utilize the area near the mouth as a campsite. It appears to be a favorite of the early season anglers.