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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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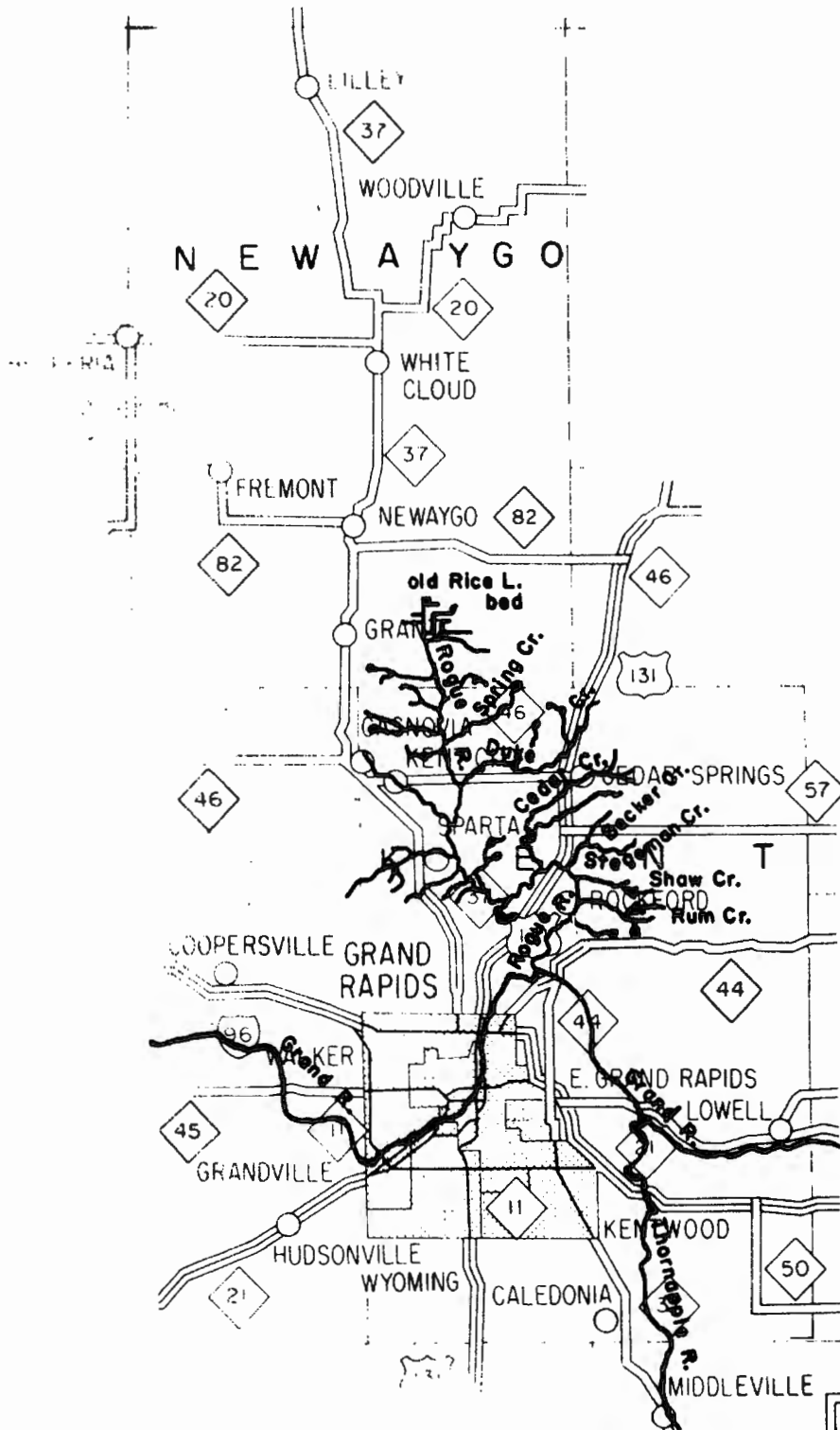
SERIES: THE TROUT STREAM OF MICHIGAN

NO. 14 ROGUE RIVER

~~David P. Borgeson, Inland Fisheries Section~~

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THE TROUT STREAMS OF MICHIGAN
"THE ROGUE RIVER"



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The Rogue River is a medium-sized stream of moderate flow lying almost entirely in Kent County, but originating in Newaygo County. It has its headwaters in a series of ditches that drain the old Rice Lake Bed. The stream in this area has been dredged and straightened to drain the productive onion field east of Grant. The ditched conditions extend a short distance into Kent County and into the Rogue River State Game Area. The river flows south through the game area, through flooded timber and swamp lands, downstream almost to Sparta. Below Sparta the river makes a sweeping curve northeastward through wooded terrain and then swings south again through Rockford and on to its confluence with the Grand River at Grand Rapids.

There are approximately 42 miles of main stream with an average width of 55 feet and an average depth of 30 inches. The water is light brown in color and well oxygenated. Flowing through low swamp land and agricultural land, it is rich in nutrients, but rarely exceeds 74°F in water temperature. Rogue River trout put on weight in a hurry and reach good size. The bottom is characterized by gravel, rubble, and sand, and in some areas large silt bars and pockets have formed.

The Rogue boasts several top quality trout tributaries; Spring Creek, Duke Creek, Cedar Creek, Stegman Creek, Shaw Creek, Rum Creek, and Becker Creek. All are clear, coldwater streams containing healthy brook and brown trout populations. These streams are very important to the Rogue because of the cold water they contribute and the natural trout spawning they provide.

Prior to 1969, the Rogue's fish population was dominated by carp, suckers, and burbot while some smallmouth bass, northern pike, and brown trout were present. Extensive trout stocking had taken place since 1954 with fair results, and the fish that did survive the competition and predation grew well.

In 1969, all fish were eradicated from the Rogue to eliminate the heavy rough fish population and the stream was restocked with browns and rainbows.

Excellent growth and survival of the planted fish has provided top notch trout fishing ever since, although occasional future chemical reclamation will be necessary to keep rough fish in check.

The bottom fauna of the Rogue includes a wide variety of insect types. Local entomologists claim that the insect species diversity is equal to that of the Au Sable River.

Between the State Game Area and 13 Mile Road conditions for wading and floating are poor, but below 13 Mile Road they are excellent. Fly fishing and bait and spin casting are all effective although through the game area, streamside brush and fallen timbers make fishing a challenge.

The stream section from Algoma Avenue to 12 Mile Road near Summit Avenue is broad, hard-bottomed and a fine, picturesque fishing area. From Childsdale Impoundment to the mouth, steelhead are taken seasonally and the water holds some nice resident browns and rainbows. This lower river is surprisingly remote and undeveloped. It is rocky and fast, a handsome stream.

Public access is available at bridges, the State Game Area, and county property at 12 Mile Road and Summit Avenue. Because of its nearness to Grand Rapids, the river serves a great purpose in providing high quality fishing recreation for a lot of people.

A thorough stream improvement project was begun on the Rogue in 1972 with the objective of clearing up the conjection and damage caused by elm die-off in the upper swampy areas and to improve trout cover in the lower reaches above Rockford. This attention can be expected to improve Rogue River fishing well into the future.