

# Lake Superior Migratory Trout



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# Covering Water

- The **Migratory Fish** of Lake Superior (fish ID)
- What is a **Steelhead**? Biology, History, and Life Cycle
- **When** To Fish for Steelhead
- **Where** To Fish for Steelhead
- **Current Fish Numbers** (North, and South Shores)
- How To **Read The Water**, and **Fishing Tips**
- The **Gear** You Should Use
- Steelhead **Flies**
- **Techniques** and **Rigging** for Steelhead

# The Migratory Species of Lake Superior

**Steelhead** (Migratory Rainbow Trout) - *Oncorhynchus mykiss*

**Brown Trout** (German Brown) - *Salmo Trutta*

**Brook Trout** (Coaster) - *Salvelinus fontinalis*

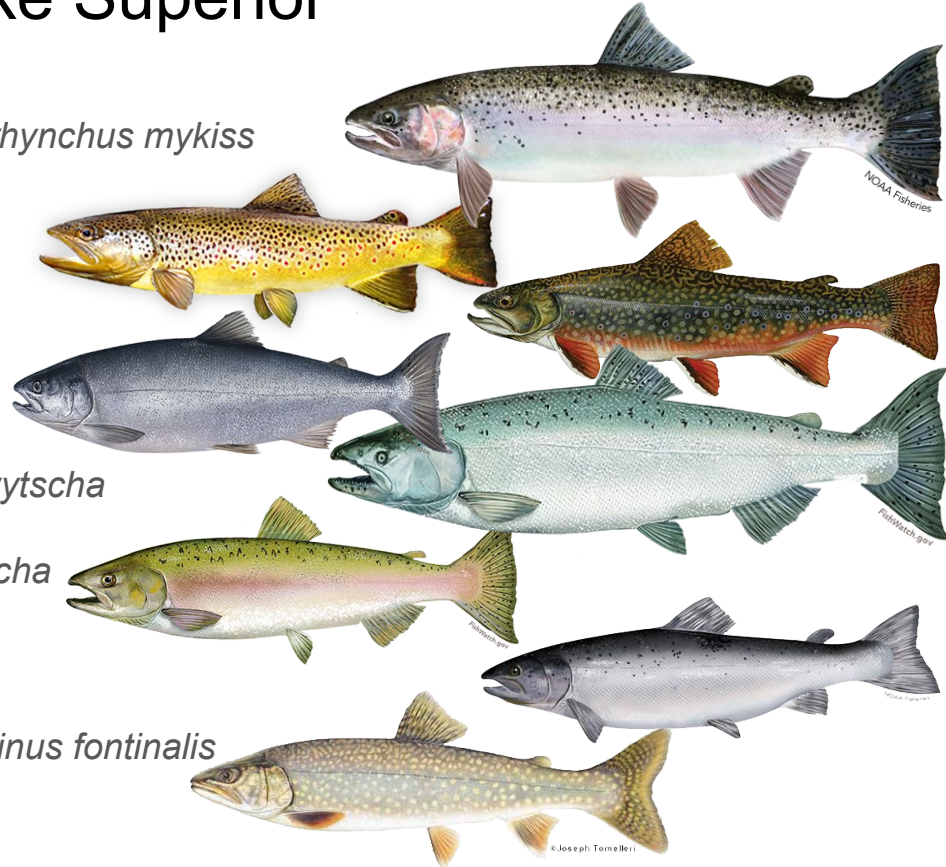
**Coho Salmon** (Silver) - *Oncorhynchus kisutch*

**King Salmon** (Chinook) - *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*

**Pink Salmon** (Humpy) - *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*

**Atlantic Salmon** - *Salmo Salar*

**Splake** (Hybrid) - *Salvelinus namaycush* + *Salvelinus fontinalis*



# Great Lakes Steelhead Timeline

**1900s:** First Stocking of Steelhead

...

**1930s:** Steelhead Naturalized

**1940s:** Great Fishing! (sea lamprey)

**1950s:** Great Fishing! (overfishing)

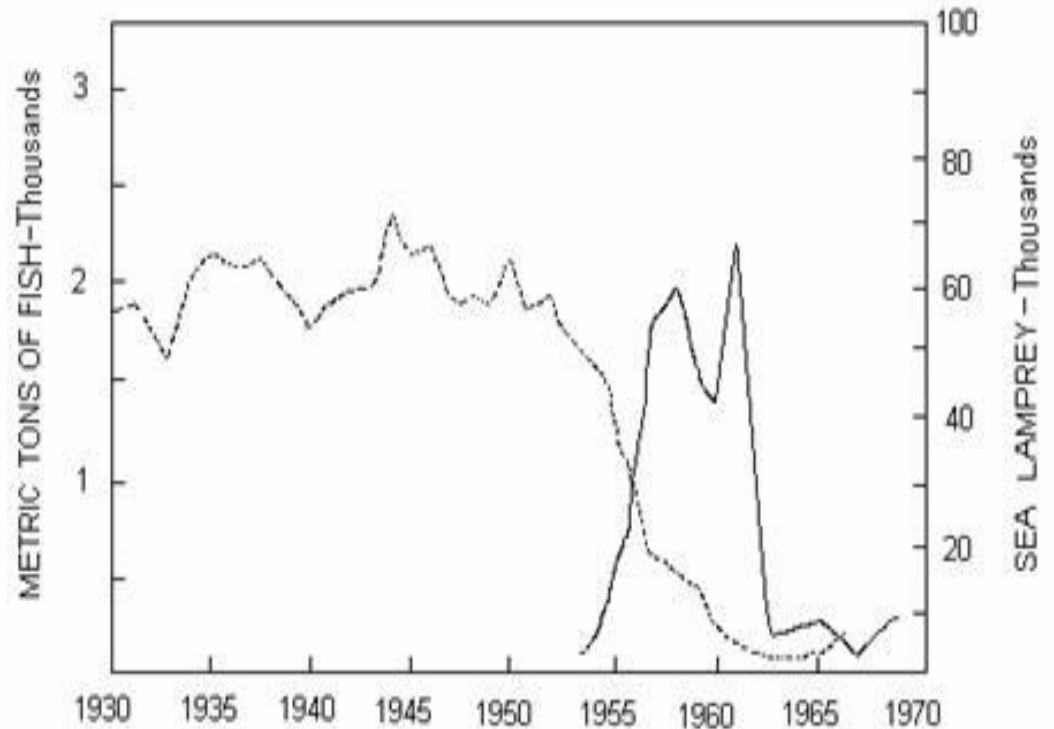
**1960s:** Great Fishing! (salmon introduced)

**1970s:** Not So Great Fishing (Kamloops)

**1980s:** More Steelhead Stocking (barriers)

**1990s:** Stricter Regulations (28", 26")

**2000s:** Even Stricter Regulations (C/R)





STEELHEAD



Wild Colored-Up Buck



Wild Chrome Hen



# BROWN TROUT





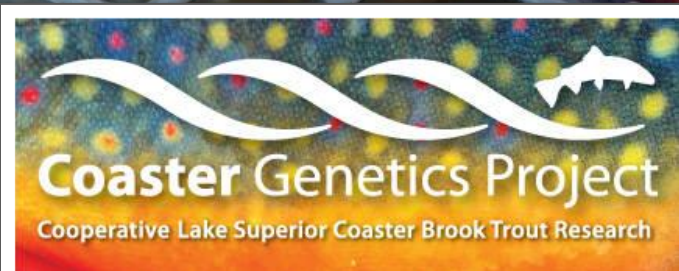




# COASTER BROOK TROUT







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# COHO SALMON



# KING SALMON







SPLAKE



# TIGER TROUT



# KAMLOOPS (looper)



# Steelhead Life Cycle

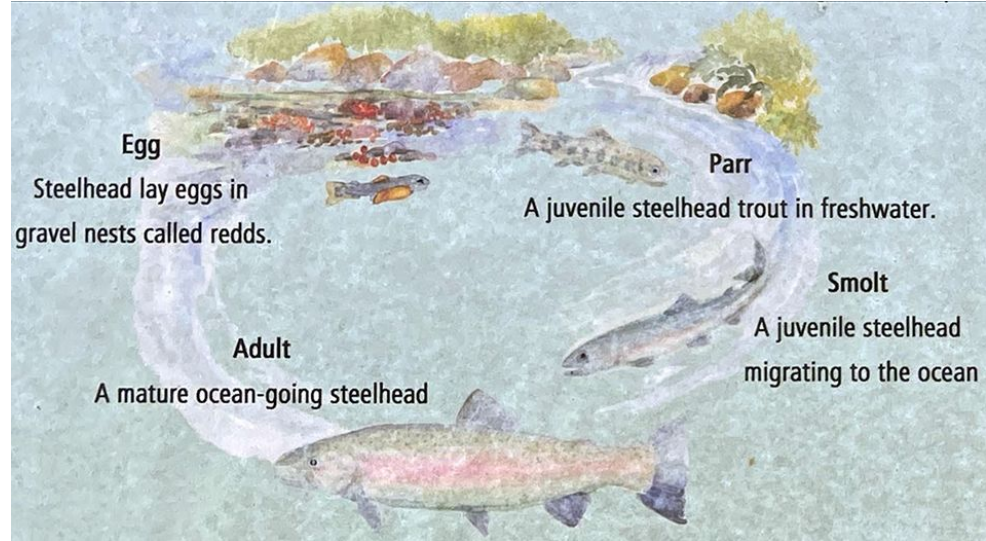
Steelhead spawn in the spring.

**ALEVIN / FRY (<2")** - Steelhead eggs hatch in the summer.

**PARR (2-6") / SMOLT (6-12")** - Juvenile steelhead typically spend **1 to 2** years rearing in freshwater before migrating into the lake to feed and mature.

**SKIPJACK (12-19")** - They sometime return to the rivers before full maturity at the age of **3** or **4**.

**ADULT (>20")** - Steelhead can then remain in the lake for up to three years before returning to spawn. On average our steelhead return to spawn when they are **4** or **5** years old. Often spawning multiple times over their lifetime.



# When to Fish For Each Species

## North Shore

No "Season"

### Spring - (April-May)

- Steelhead
- Coaster Brook Trout

### Fall - (September-October)

- Pink Salmon
- Coaster Brook Trout

## South Shore

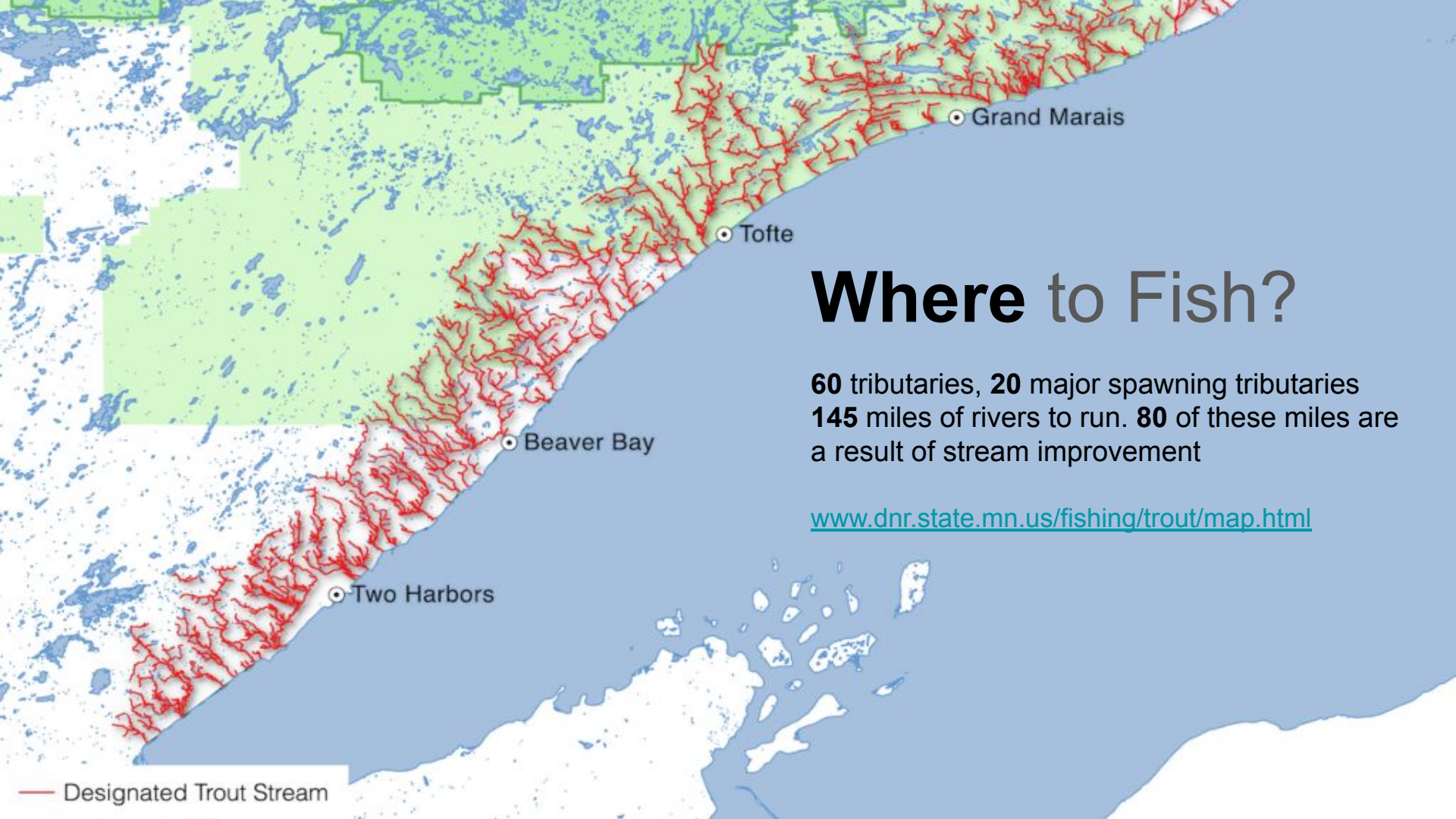
Last Saturday in March to November 15th.

### Spring - (April-May)

- Steelhead
- Brown Trout

### Fall - (August-November)

- Steelhead
- Brown Trout
- King Salmon
- Coho Salmon

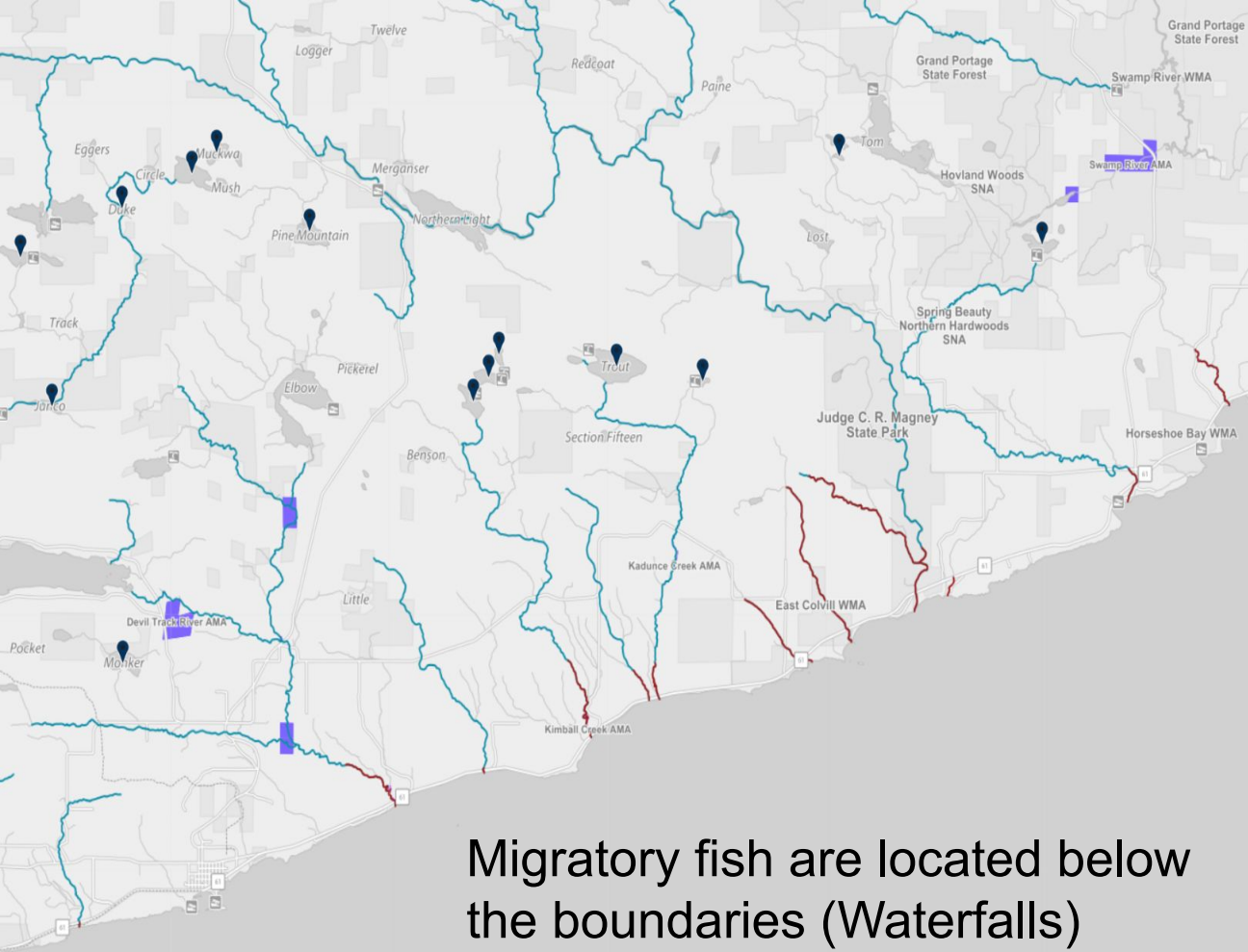


# Where to Fish?

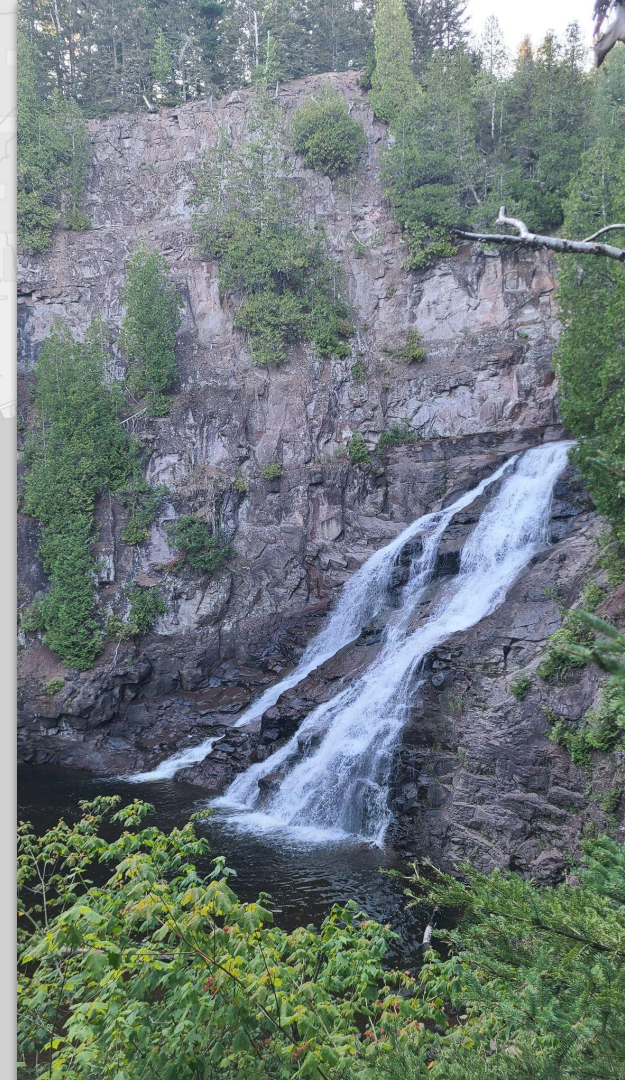
**60** tributaries, **20** major spawning tributaries  
**145** miles of rivers to run. **80** of these miles are  
a result of stream improvement

[www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/trout/map.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/trout/map.html)

— Designated Trout Stream



Migratory fish are located below the boundaries (Waterfalls)







# When to Fish For Each Species (Specific Conditions)

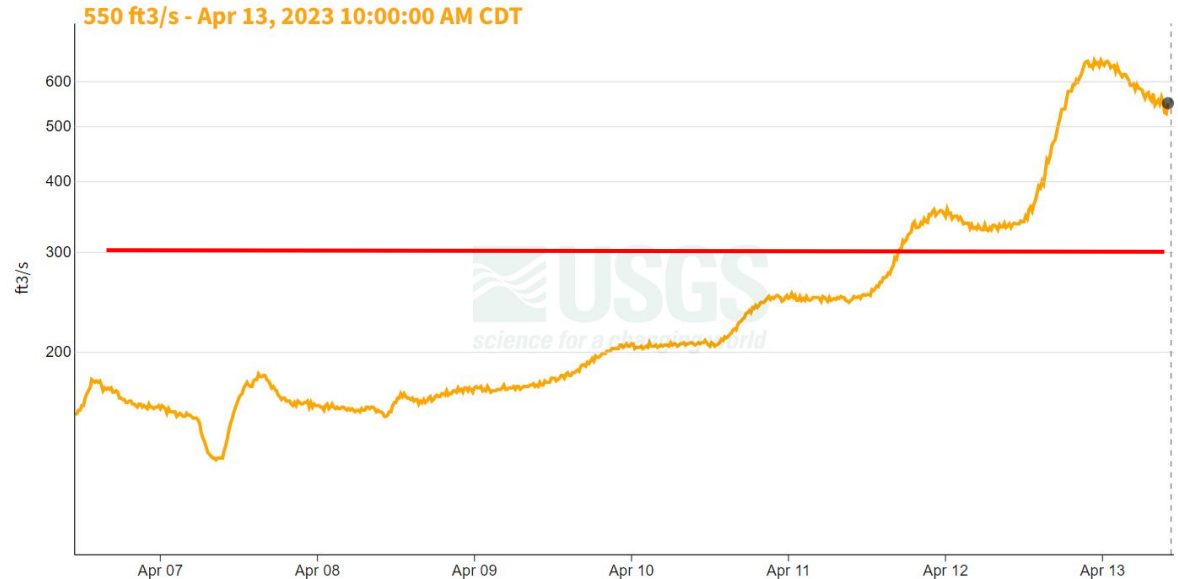
- Higher flows pull in more fish.
- Best fishing when levels are dropping, or after a spike.
- Each river has a different “blown out” level.

7 days  30 days  1 year

## Bois Brule River at Brule, WI - 04025500

April 6, 2023 - April 13, 2023

Streamflow, ft<sup>3</sup>/s ⓘ



[js-outdoors.com/north-shore-river-flows](https://js-outdoors.com/north-shore-river-flows)

# **When** to Fish For Each Species (Specific Conditions)

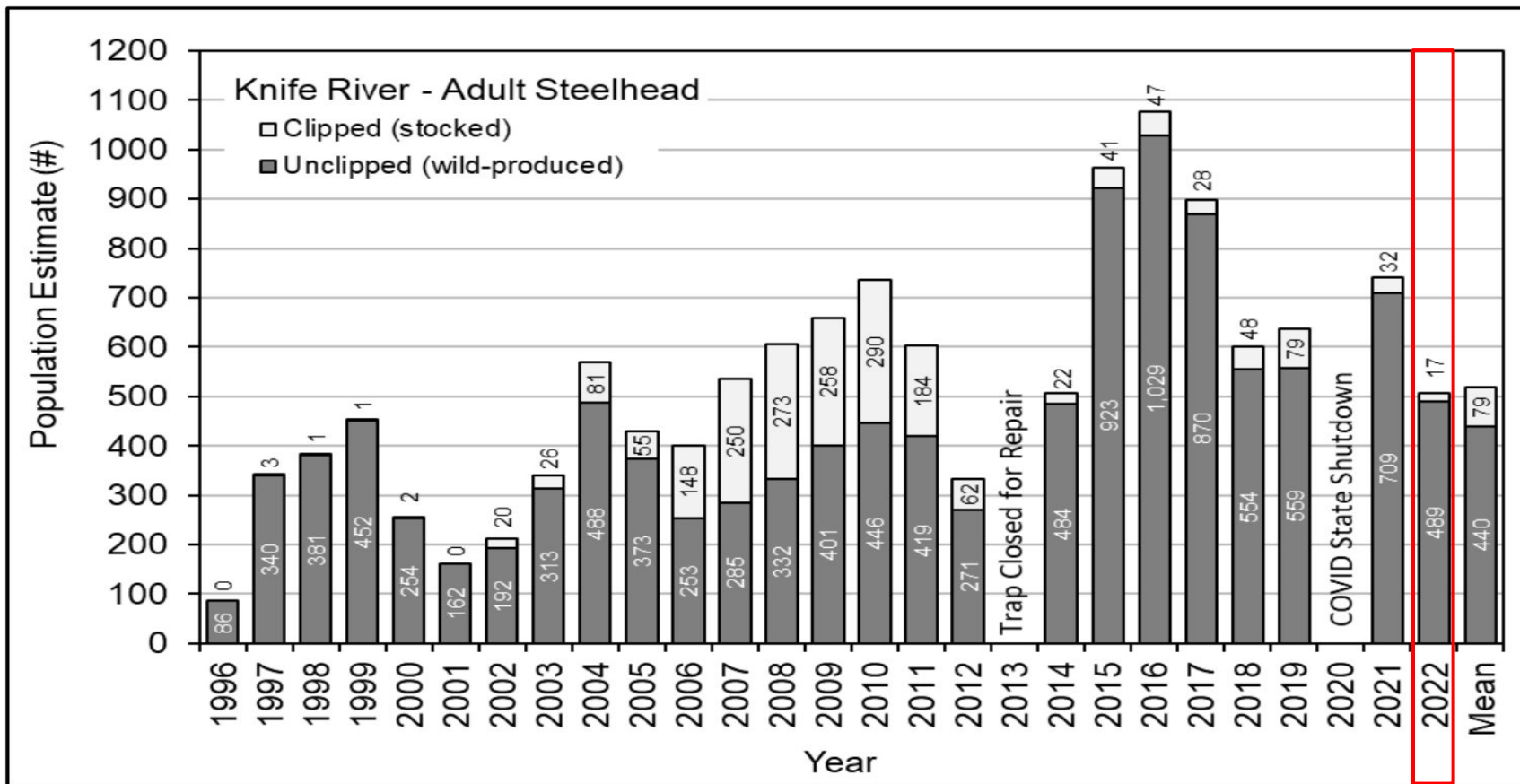
## **Water Temperature**

- 32 degrees - lethargic (deep, pools)
- 40 degrees - spawning (shallow riffles)
- 55 degrees - active (shallow heads)
- 70 degrees - too hot (back to the lake)

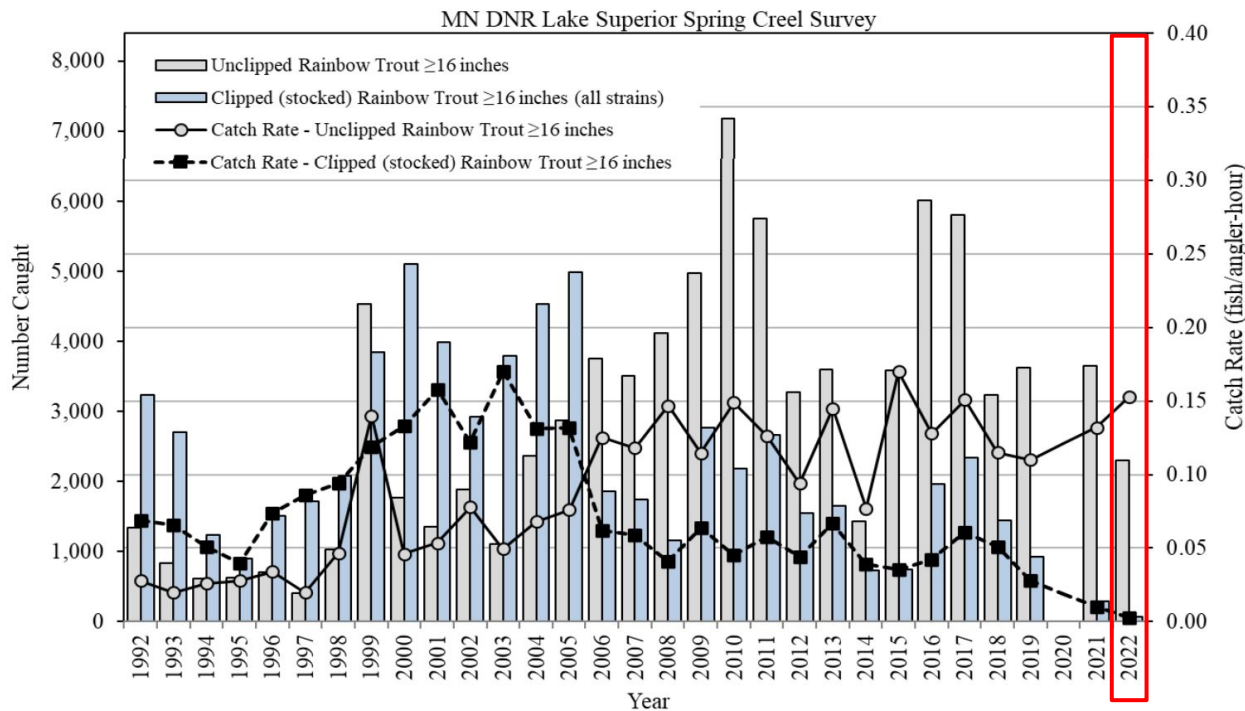
## **Water Clarity**

- < 0.5 foot (tough to unfishable)
- .5 foot (black flies, bright eggs)
- 1 foot (natural to bright colors)
- 2 foot (natural colors, fish can be spooky)

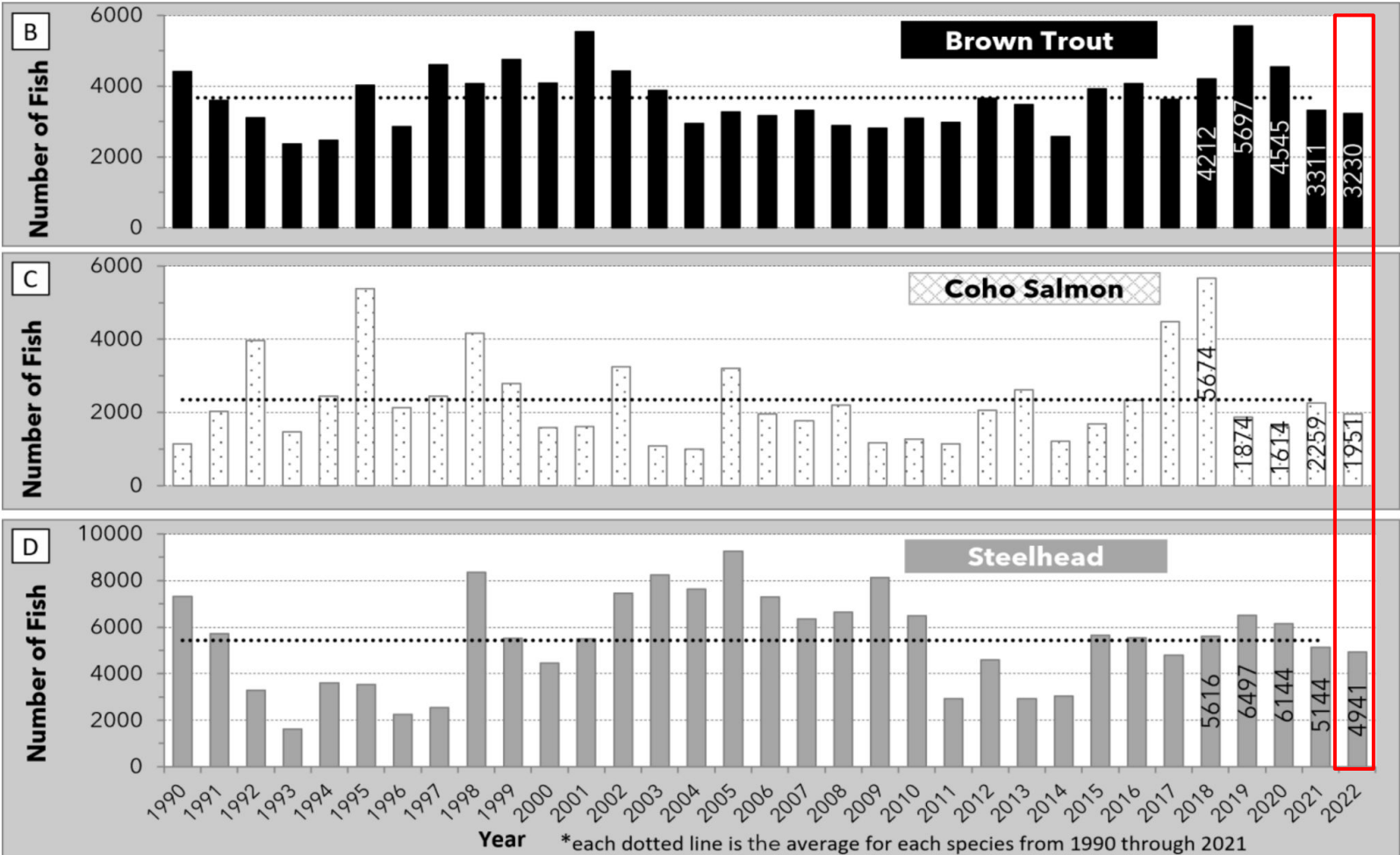
# North Shore: Knife River Fish Numbers



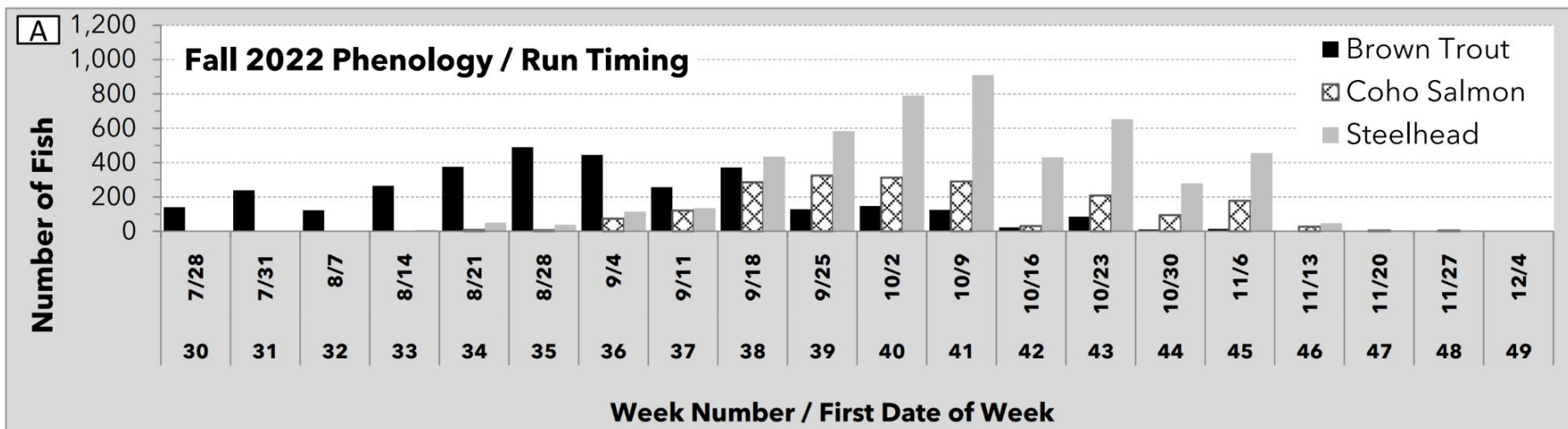
# How Long Does it Take to Catch a Steelhead? (6.5+ hours)



**Figure 5: Shorewide estimated catch and catch-rate (fish per angler-hour) of unclipped and clipped (stocked) Rainbow Trout from the Lake Superior spring creel survey by year. Totals in 2022 are combined for Kamloops and clipped Superior strain steelhead.**

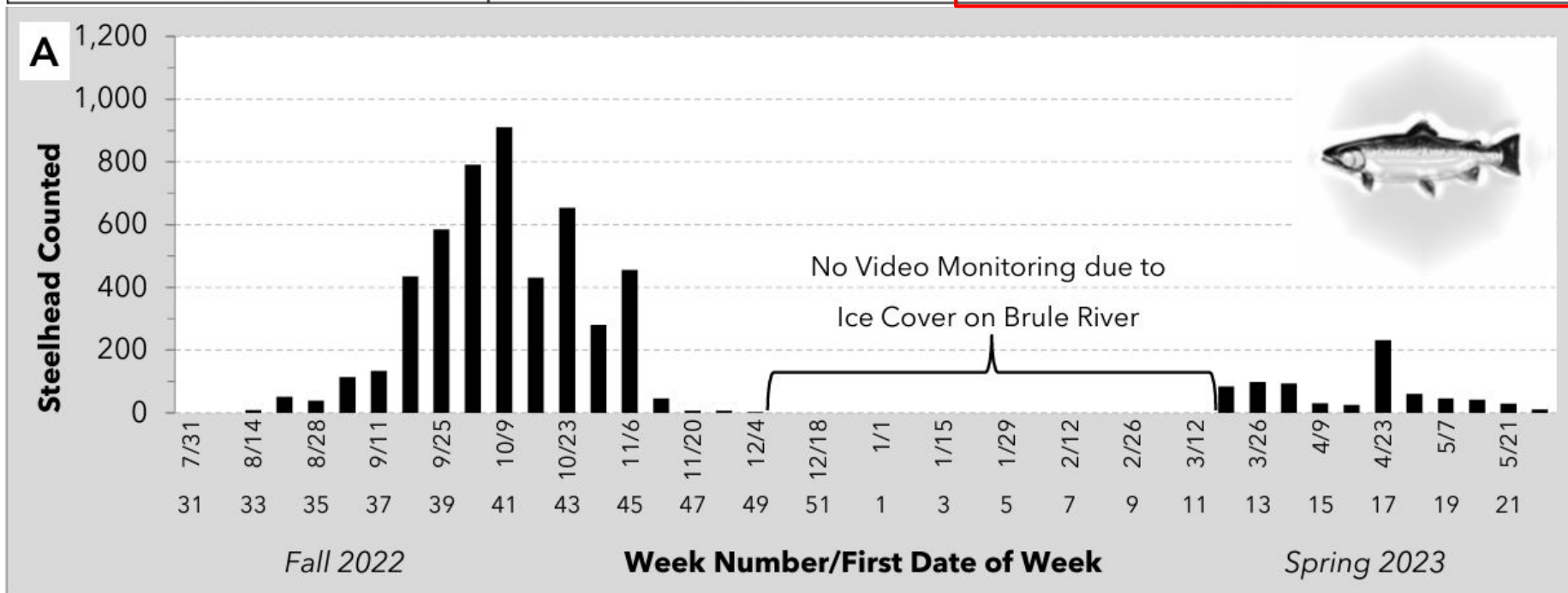


Brown Trout	Chinook Salmon	Coho Salmon	Fall Run Steelhead	Brook Trout	Pink Salmon	Splake
3,230	339	1,951	4,941	0	17	13

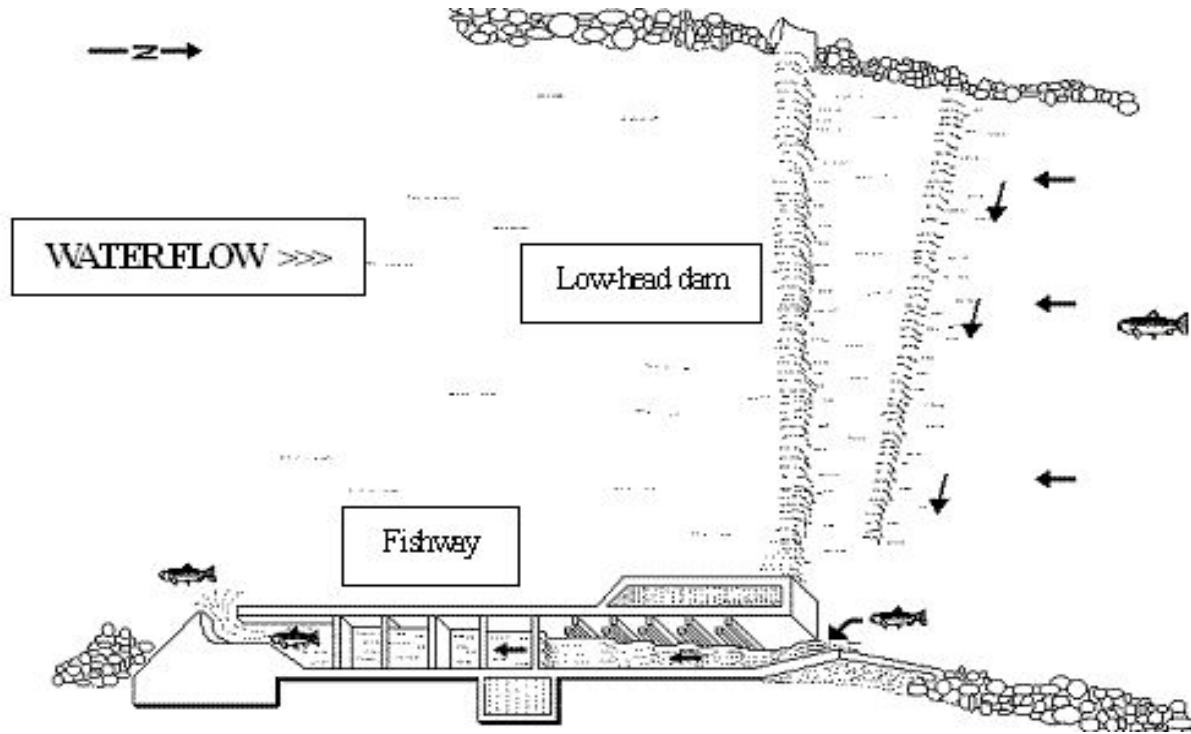


# Brule River Fish Number 2022/2023

Fall 2022 Count	Spring 2023 Count	Total Wild Steelhead Run Count
4,941	746	5,687



# Where do the **fish numbers** come from?



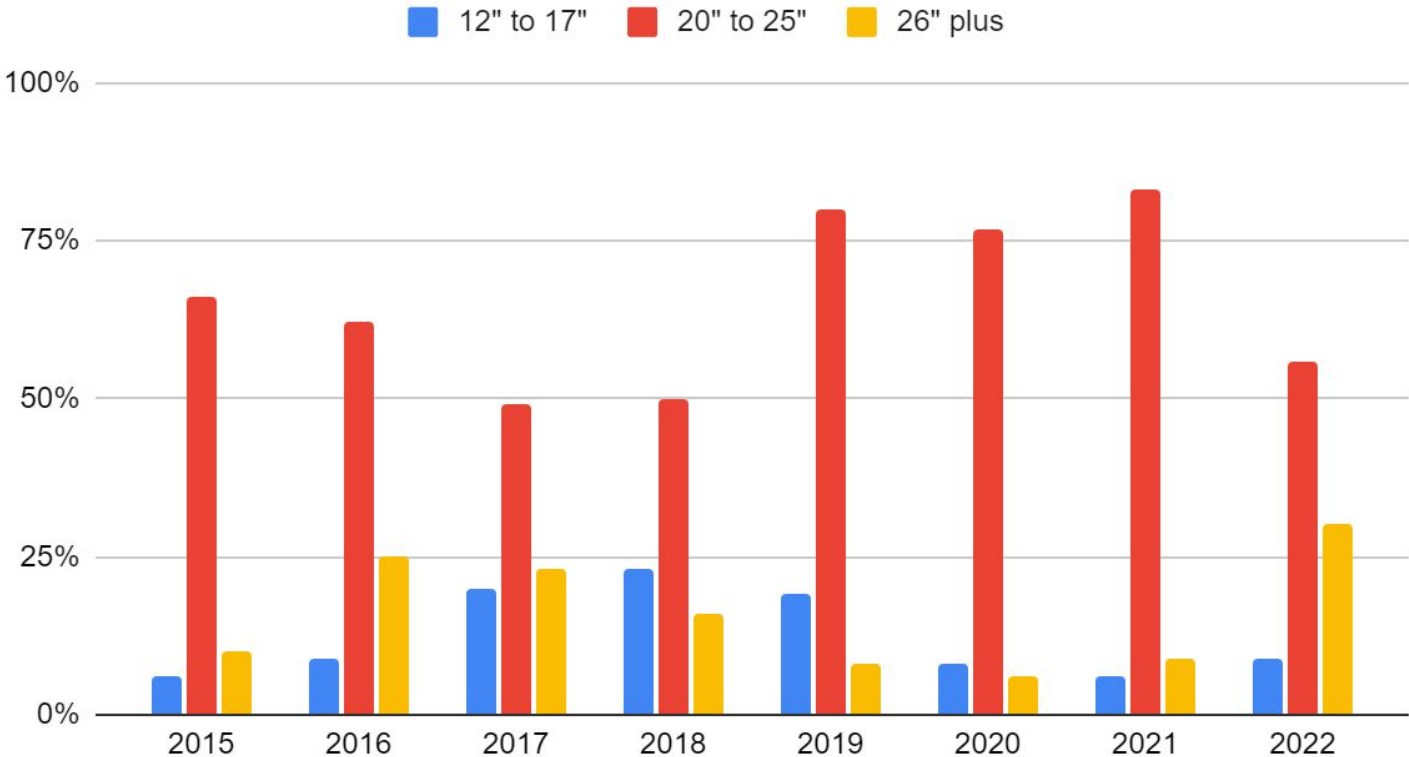
Brule River lamprey barrier and fishway (Built in 1984)





# How **Big** do Steelhead Get?

## Brule River Steelhead Sizes

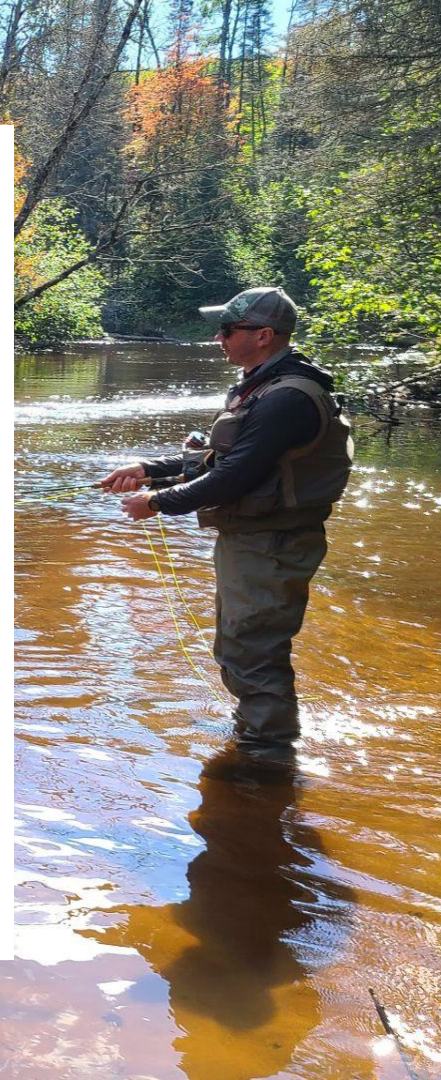






# 10 Pro Tips

1. Fish the inside seam first. (farbankitis)
2. Find “walking speed water”, then.. Fish the inside seam first!
3. Line management (Slack is the enemy).
4. Mending is important! *Cast for Show, Mend for Dough.*  
(increase depth by mending - GD)
5. Fish (relatively) deep (after you fish the inside seam).
6. Adjust your rig often (split shot, indicator depth, flies).
7. Imagine where the fish is. Change when you mend.
8. Cast slow, set fast.
9. Let the fish run!
10. Be patient.



# The **Gear** You Should Use for Migratory Fish



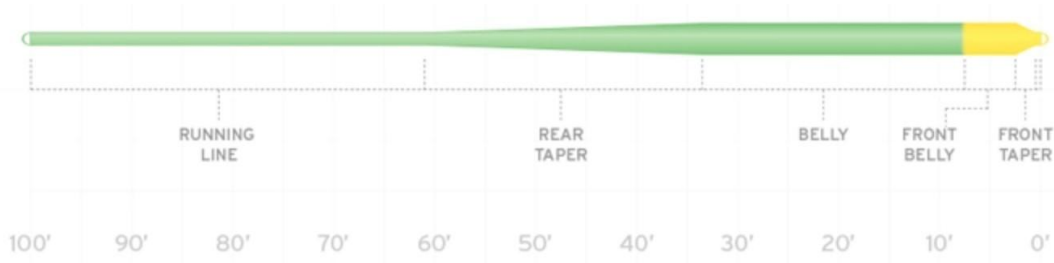
# Nymphing Setup

Rod - 9'-10' 7wt - 8wt

Reel - large arbor 7-8wt with smooth drag

Backing - 20lb -30lb

Line - indicator / steelhead line (overlined)



# Nymphing Setup (Leader)

Leader - 7.5' 0x nylon tapered leader

Tippet - 1x, 2x, 3x fluorocarbon

Indicator - Airlocks, Thill, Blackbird











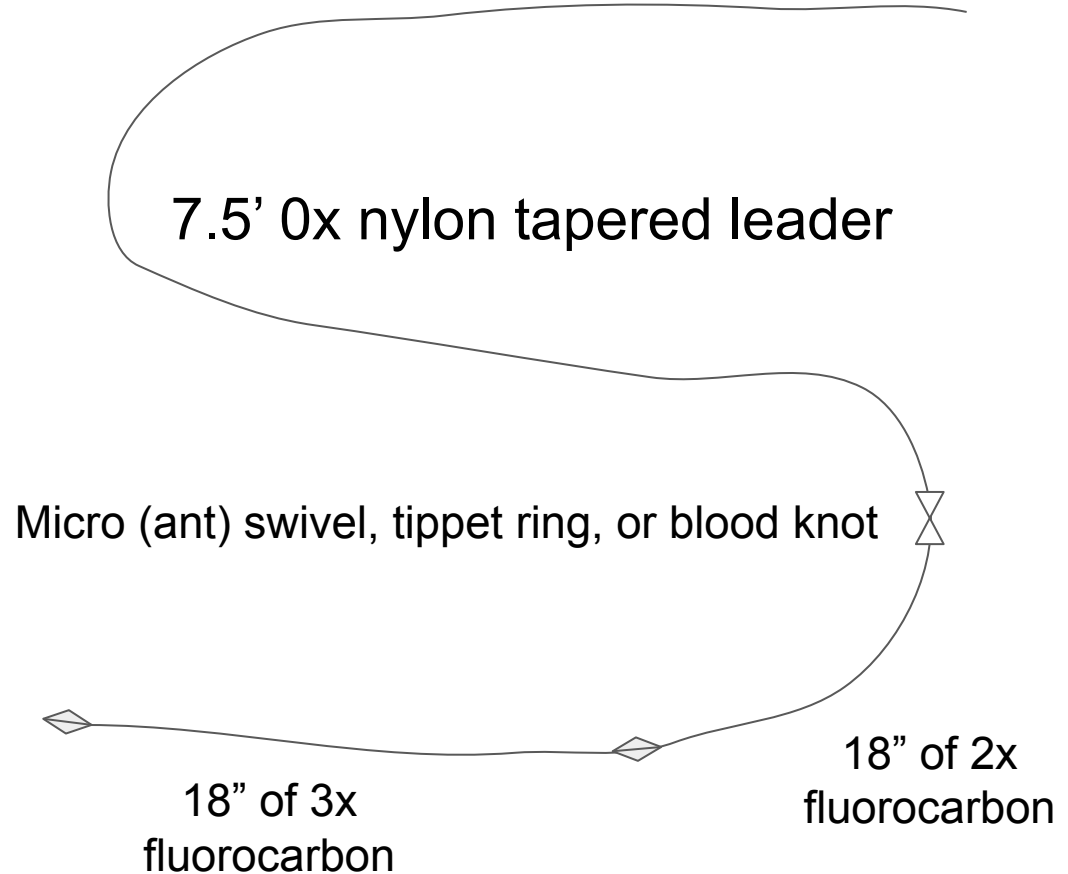
# Leader Setup

**Modular** - fish different depths

- $\frac{1}{3}$  indicator
- $\frac{1}{3}$  weight
- $\frac{1}{3}$  flies

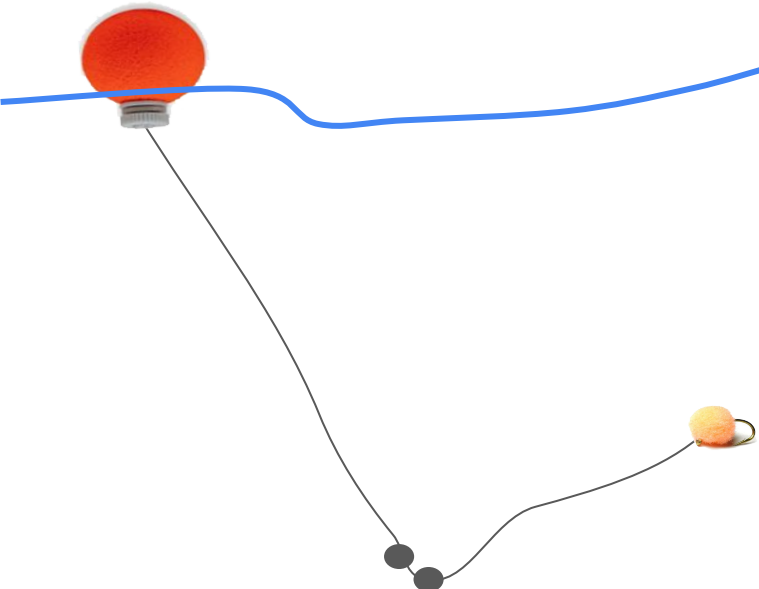
**Tapered** - turn-over

(lose less flies)

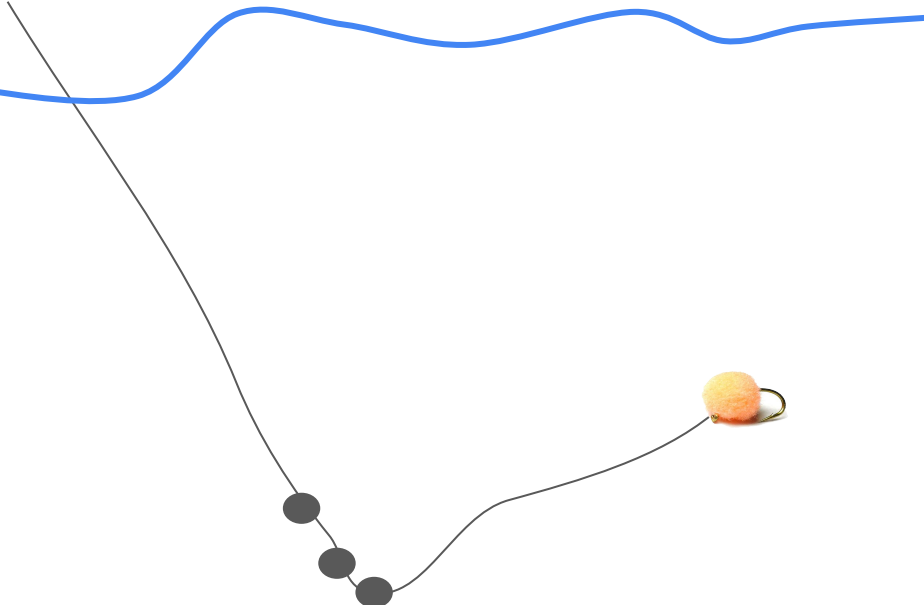


(You can only fish one fly on the north shore)

North Shore Rigging #1

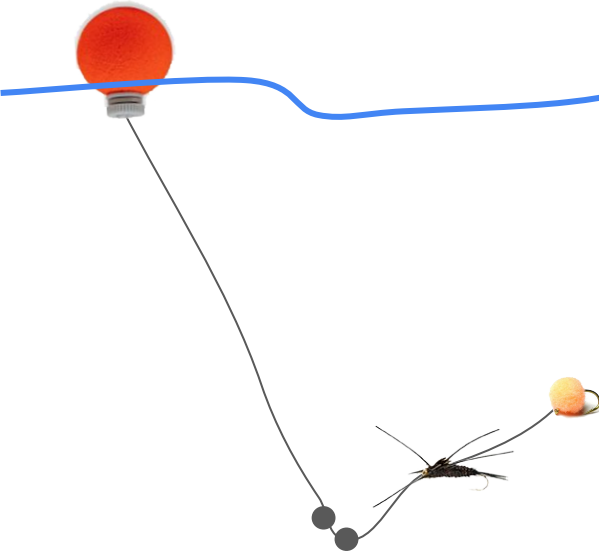


North Shore Rigging #2



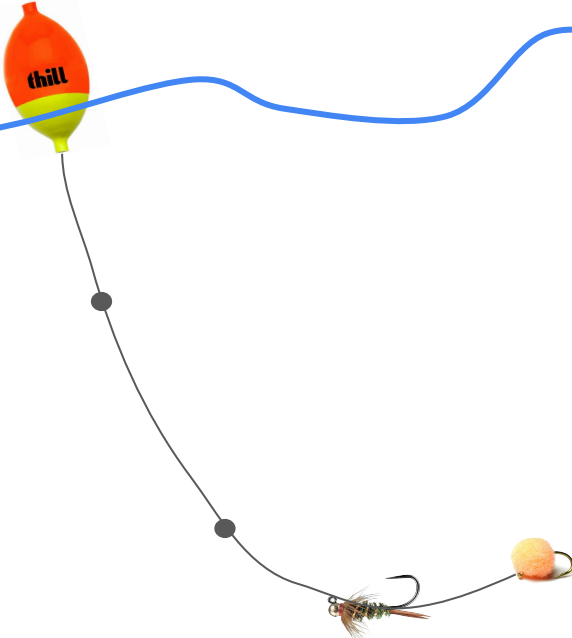
### South Shore Rigging #1

Water speed - fast  
Water depth - shallow



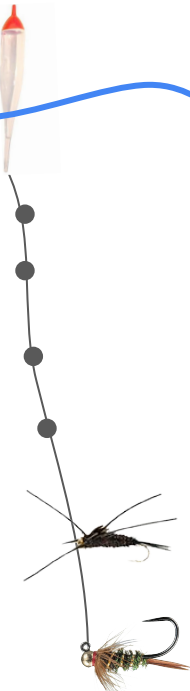
### South Shore Rigging #2

Water speed - medium  
Water depth - medium



### South Shore Rigging #3

Water speed - slow  
Water depth - deep

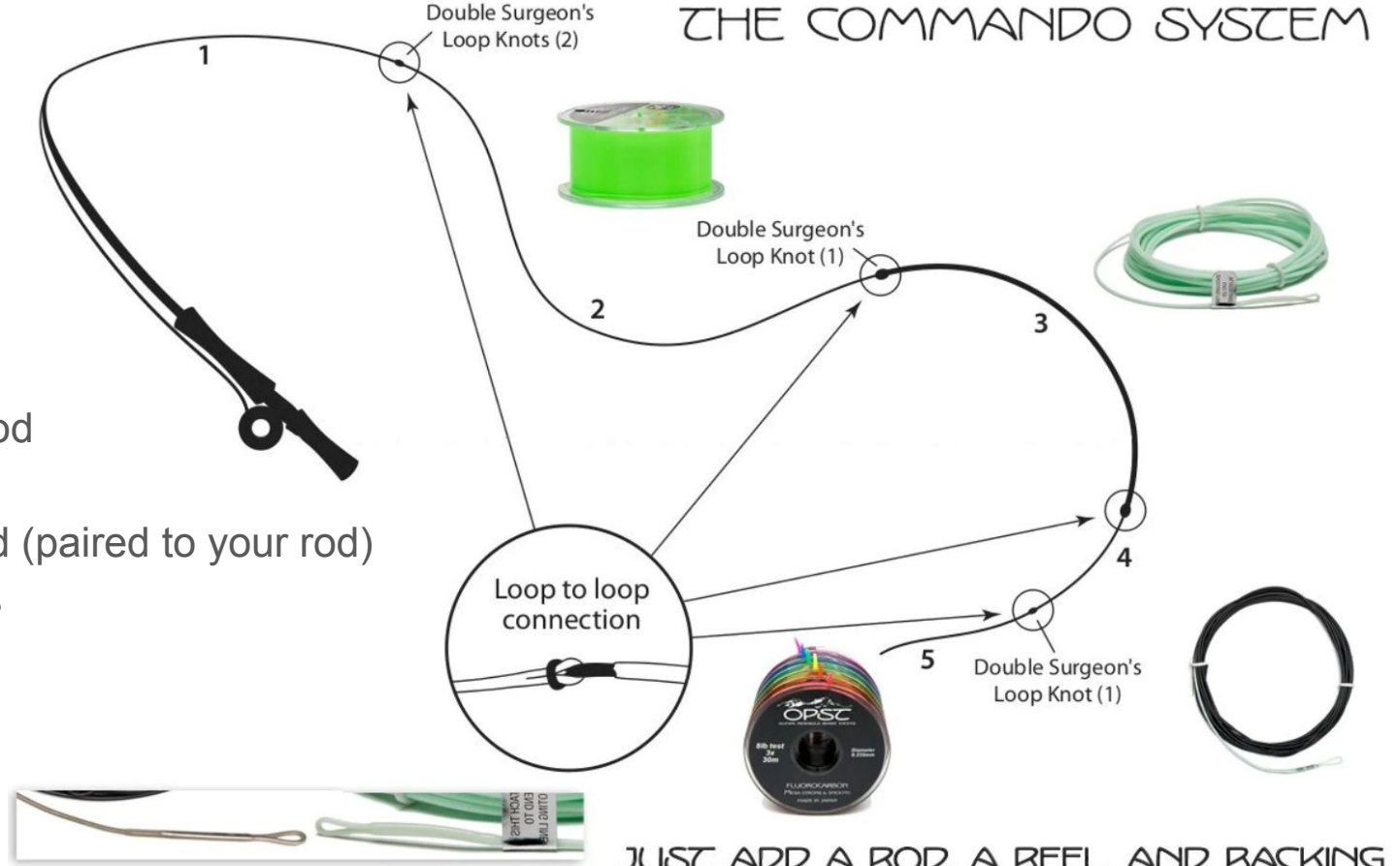


# Swinging Flies



# Swinging Setup

- 5wt-7wt 10'-12' rod
- 40lb lazer line
- Commando Head (paired to your rod)
- Various Sink Tips
- 25lb mono
- Swivel
- 12lb mono







BY  JASON SWINGEN

## The Gear You Need To Swing For Great Lakes Steelhead



# Lake Superior Migratory Trout



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