



**WISCONSIN DNR  
FISHERIES INFORMATION SHEET**

**Water:** South Branch Oconto River

**County:** Oconto

**WBIC:** 480900

**Year:** 2005

The Department of Natural Resources assessed the South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, on August 23rd and August 24th, 2005, to conduct a comprehensive survey of the brook and brown trout fisheries. The survey was conducted on a 0.38 mile section of the river upstream from the bridge crossing on County Highway W just east of Mountain in the Town of Doty (T.31N. -R.15E. Section26) (Figure 5). A mark-recapture survey was conducted by a stream shocking run to mark trout on August 23, 2005 and a recapture shocking run on August 24, 2005. The population estimate (number per mile) of legal size brook trout (>8 inches) was 55 and legal brown trout (>12 inches) was 111. Brook trout had a catch rate of 444.5 per mile and brown trout had a catch rate of 356 per mile. The overall health of the trout fishery looks good with above average numbers of legal sized brook and brown trout when compared to previous surveys.

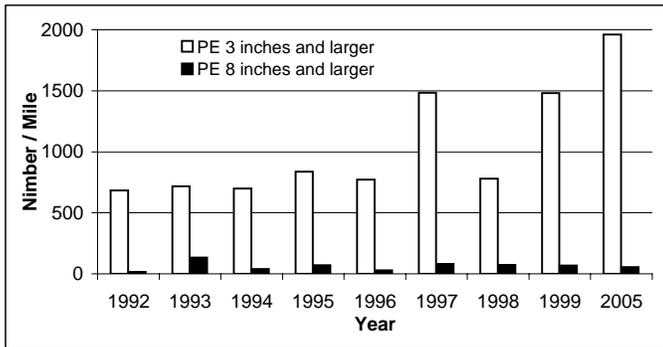


Figure 1. Brook trout population estimates for South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, Wisconsin 1992 - 1999 and 2005.

**Brook Trout**

A total of 174 brook trout were caught and marked using a fin clip on August 23, 2005 and a total of 163 (117 new, 46 marked) were caught on the recapture run August 24, 2005.

The population estimate (number per mile) of brook trout over 3 inches was 1962 and over 8 inches was 55. Population surveys were also carried out from 1992 to 1999 (Figure 1). When compared to the average population estimate for 3 inches and larger from 1992 - 1999 (932) and 8 inches and larger (64), the current brook trout population is well above the average for trout 3 - 8 inches and slightly below average for trout over 8 inches.

Brook trout ranged in size from 2.5 to 10.3 inches with an average length of 5.2 inches from the marking run on August 23, 2005. And ranged in size from 2.6 to 10.4 inches with an average of 5.0 inches on August 24, 2005 (Figure 2).

Catch per effort was calculated for both dates combined. For catch rates of 444.5 per mile, 0.28 per meter and 168.5 per hour.

The average length of all brook trout surveyed in 2005 of 5.08 inches is below the average length from 1992-1999 of 6.28 inches.

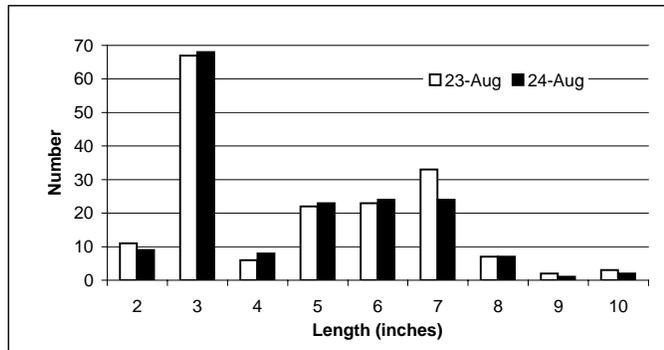


Figure 2. Length frequency of brook trout from South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, Wisconsin from the August 23 and 24, 2005 population estimate survey

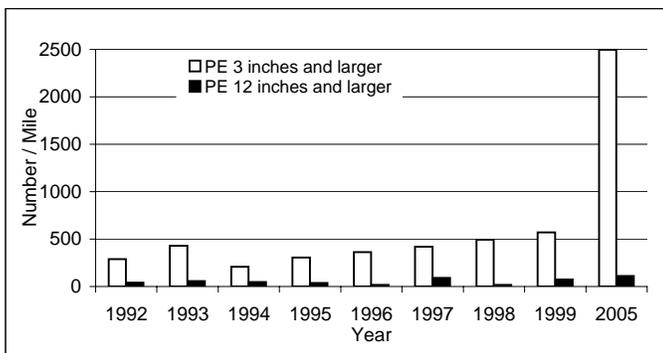


Figure 3. Brown Trout population estimates for South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, Wisconsin 1992 - 1999 and 2005

**Brown Trout**

A total of 140 brown trout were caught and marked by a fin clip on August 23, 2005 and a total of 130 (92 new, 38 marked) were caught on the recapture run August 3, 2005.

The population estimate (number per mile) of brown trout over 3 inches was 2496 and over 12 inches was 111. Population surveys were also carried out from 1992 to 1999 (Figure 3). When compared to the average population estimate for 3 inches and larger from 1992 to 1999 (385) and 12 inches and larger (48), the current brown trout population is well above the average for all size ranges of fish.

Brown trout ranged in size from 2.4 to 21.4 inches with an average length of 6.8 inches from the marking run on August 23, 2005. And ranged in size from 2.7 to 21.5 inches with an average of 6.9 inches on August 24, 2005 (Figure 4).

Catch per effort was calculated for both dates combined. For catch rates of 356.1 per mile, 0.22 per meter and 135 per hour.

The average length of all brown trout surveyed in 2005 of 6.88 inches is below the average length from 1992-1999 of 7.85 inches.

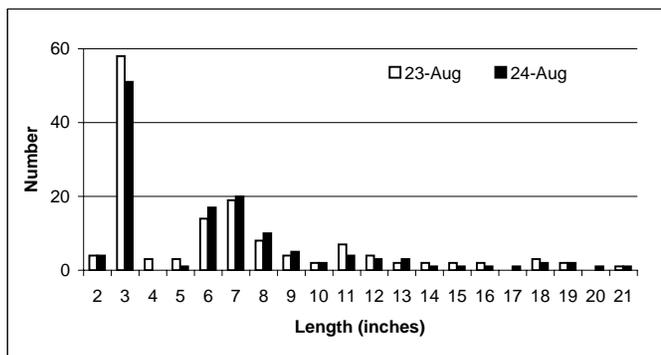


Figure 4. Length frequency of brown trout from South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, Wisconsin from the August 23 and 24, 2005 population estimate survey

The South Branch Oconto River joins the North Branch Oconto River near Suring to form the Oconto River. The watershed is primarily forested with limited agricultural activity. It has a total river length of 15 miles, with a surface area of 72.7 acres and an average width of 40 feet. The South Branch of the Oconto River Fishery Area was created in 1961 and to date over 450 acres of land bordering the river has acquired by the Department of Natural Resources. The purpose of the fishery area is to perpetuate the native trout population, provide access for anglers and improve overall trout and wildlife habitat. Over 11 miles of the South Branch of the Oconto river flows through the fishery area.

Brook trout have been stocked annually from 1998 - 2004 and brown trout annually from 1994 - 2005 in the South Branch of the Oconto River. All the fish stocked during this time period have originated from a wild stock. The broodstock for the wild fish come from adults shocked out of the South Branch in the County T area of Oconto County into Langlade County. The wild trout program is a cooperative program carried out by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Oconto River Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Suring Sportsmens Club. The wild fish were initially only stocked into the special regulation area of the South Branch, in more recent years the wild trout have replaced the domestic fish stocked into the main Oconto River south of Suring and have also been stocked into the North Branch Oconto River.

There are many road crossing access points along the entire South Branch Oconto River. Major Road Crossing occur on County HWY W, T and AA and State Highway 32. A parking area is also located at the end of Spruce Road with access to the Fishery Area.

The current (2005) fishing regulations class the South Branch Oconto River upstream of the Menominee Reservation as a category 4 trout stream, With a 12 inch minimum size limit for brown trout and an 8 inch minimum size limit on brook trout and a daily bag limit of 3 in total. The section of the South Branch Oconto River between CTH AA and STH 32 is classed as category 5 trout stream, with only artificial lures allowed, a 12 inch minimum size limit for brook trout and and 18 inch minimum size limit for brown trout with a daily bag limit of one in total.

You may obtain a copy of current fishing regulations when you purchase your fishing license, or download a copy from our web site at: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/fish/>

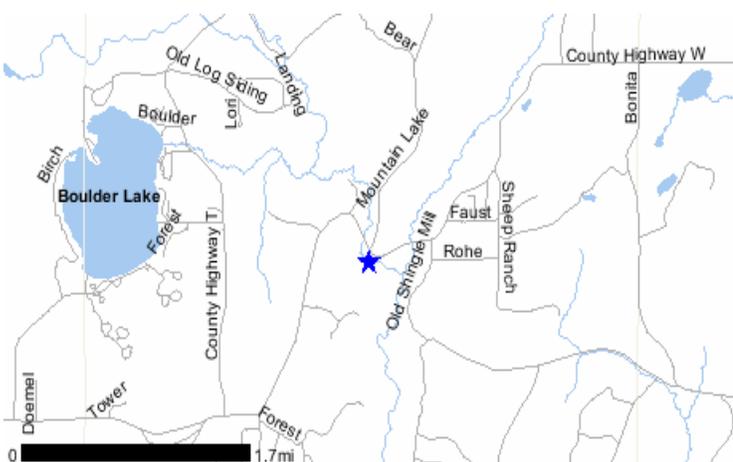


Figure 5. Map of the South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County (blue star highlights the location of the assessment site).

For answers to questions about fisheries management activities and plans for South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, contact:

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