

A Trout Angler's Guide To The
LOWER AU SABLE RIVER
including
The Trophy Water

SAMPLE

CHALLENGE CHAPTER



Statement of Purpose

The Challenge Chapter of Trout Unlimited is a non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration and preservation of cold water fisheries in the state of Michigan. Proceeds from the sale of our River Guides go toward that purpose.

About This Book

This river guide is a major step beyond our first Au Sable guide. We have added many new sites and color photos, GPS coordinates for each site, and maps of the entire area. Over the years there have been roads added, as well as road name and number changes. This required us to update all existing site text. Our new guide follows the river as it flows from McMaster's Bridge Road in Crawford County through Oscoda, Alcona and Iosco counties, finally emptying into Lake Huron at the towns of Oscoda and Au Sable.

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Acknowledgements

The Challenge Chapter of Trout Unlimited wishes to express our appreciation to the following groups and individuals for their assistance in the preparation of this guide:

The Michigan DNR Historical Archives
Iosco Arenac District Library
Swartz Creek (Pleissner) Library

The Bentley Historical Library
Oscoda County Historical Society
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The Au Sable River, From Grayling to Trout

The Au Sable was not always a trout stream. Before 1890, Grayling were the sport fish of the Au Sable system. Early lumbermen called the Grayling "white trout" or "Crawford County trout", but in 1874 the fish were identified as Grayling.



At that point the small river town changed its name to Grayling. The last grayling reported caught in the Au Sable was taken by Dan Stephan in 1908 about three miles above McMasters Bridge.

Two attempts were made to reintroduce the Grayling into the Au Sable, once in 1927, when the Grayling Hatchery tried to revive the Grayling through a stocking program and then again in April of 1987, when 40,000 seven-inch fish were released into the river near Mio. Both programs were unsuccessful.

Early fisheries management began in 1938 with the stocking of 27,400 fall fingerling Brown Trout into Comins Creek, Glennie Creek, Perry Creek, and Wolf Creek, and that was the beginning of what we now call the "Troutery Waters!"

Michigan's Au Sable River is probably the best known Brown Trout water in the Great Lakes region, and may be the best east of the Rockies.

L. Dickerson making a cut rod
(from the Jack A. Van Coevering collection)

A Lumbering Days Icon

J.H. "Harp" Hayes is credited with founding the town of Glennie in the 1880s and was one of the last lumbermen operating on the Au Sable River. After a brief career as an Au Sable businessman, Hayes joined the mad rush for Michigan's green gold, around 1885, when he was employed by the Louds in their camps, on the river and in their mills.

The last big log drive on the Au Sable in 1896 was headed by Hayes, who put together his wannigan at McKinley. He took 40 men and spent 90 days hauling the last pine logs to the mouth of the river, bringing down the final curtain in the history of the famous Au Sable as a lumber stream.

Hayes then became a jobber, contracting with other firms to cut timber, and finally became associated with the firm of Solomon-Hayes-Cowley Company, which operated the last big mill at Oscoda using timber "deadheaded" from the river.

Working for the Louds in a variety of capacities, both as an employee and a jobber, Hayes took on a contract for removal of timber from Loud lands in a small area in southwestern area of Alcona County. It was not long before logging roads crisscrossed that entire region where Hayes also established numerous camps.

Around 1898, Hayes developed a unique new business. Lumber camps had always carried a supply of tobacco and some clothing items for the convenience of employees, but Hayes' camps began to stock staple groceries in order that his employees with families could take home supplies direct from the camp on weekends.

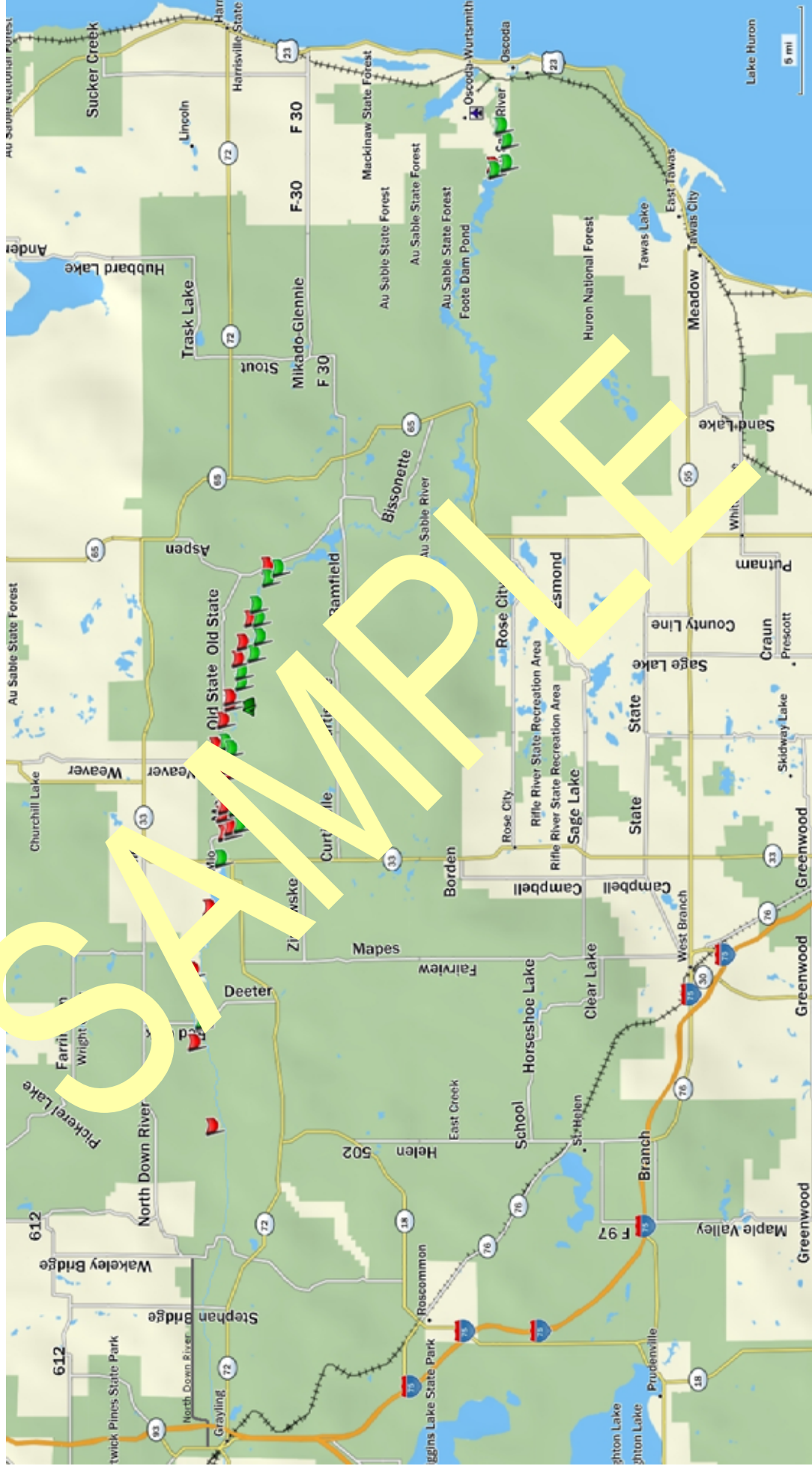
Having supported George A. Loud in his successful campaign for congress, Hayes was rewarded with a post office. Appointed postmaster for a then nonexistent town, he moved his operation to a new site and selected the name Glennie for his new town.

The town's name memorializes John W. Glennie, Loud's brother-in-law, who was killed on Friday, April 16, 1880. He was fatally injured in the explosion of a cannon while attempting to shoot a life line to a ship being battered to pieces on a reef off of Dead Au Sable.

While interested in other business affairs, Hayes continued his lumbering operations until 1923, when the Hayes and Cowley Company dismantled its mill. Hayes was always interested in public affairs and served his township as supervisor and in other capacities.

In his later years, Hayes was a well known character in Iosco and Alcona counties and had considerable influence in political matters. But maybe his greatest enjoyment in life came in meeting old friends from Iosco's lumbering days where his tales about Au Sable logging drives became legendary.

The Lower Au Sable - Area Map



INTRODUCTION

The lower section of the Au Sable River is quite different from the section above McMasters Bridge. See the Challenge Chapter Au Sable River Guide for a detailed description of that area. Generally the lower portion of the river is wider, and deeper, in many places, more difficult to wade. Canoe traffic is often heavy on weekends, but in most places the river is wide enough so that you can find a spot to fish that is relatively undisturbed by canoe traffic.



There are more opportunities to catch larger trout in this section, especially in the "trophy water" between the Mio Dam and 4001 Bridge. For large fish, this is some of the best water in the Au Sable system. Between 4001 Bridge and the mouth of the river at Oscoda there are five dams, each with sizable impoundments. Although there are trout to be caught in these impoundments, warm water species (bass, pike, walleye and panfish) predominate.

Between the Foote Dam and the mouth of the river, there is a large run of salmon (autumn) and steelhead (autumn and spring). During the summer this is primarily a warm water fishery.

The lower section of the Au Sable provides many fine fishing opportunities for both wading and floating. The Fishing Regulations vary within this area. Please consult the *Michigan Inland Trout and Salmon Guide* for the regulations specific to the area you intend to fish. Trout Unlimited strongly suggests following the practice of "catch and release" to maintain and improve trout fishing in this and other trout streams as well.

Water conditions in this section can change dramatically depending on the time of year and rainfall. This is big water, and can be very dangerous to wade in high water conditions. Before entering the stream at any point, check the water levels and current flow. Our guide describes water depth during optimal conditions; so the stream appears higher at any site, use extra caution when wading.

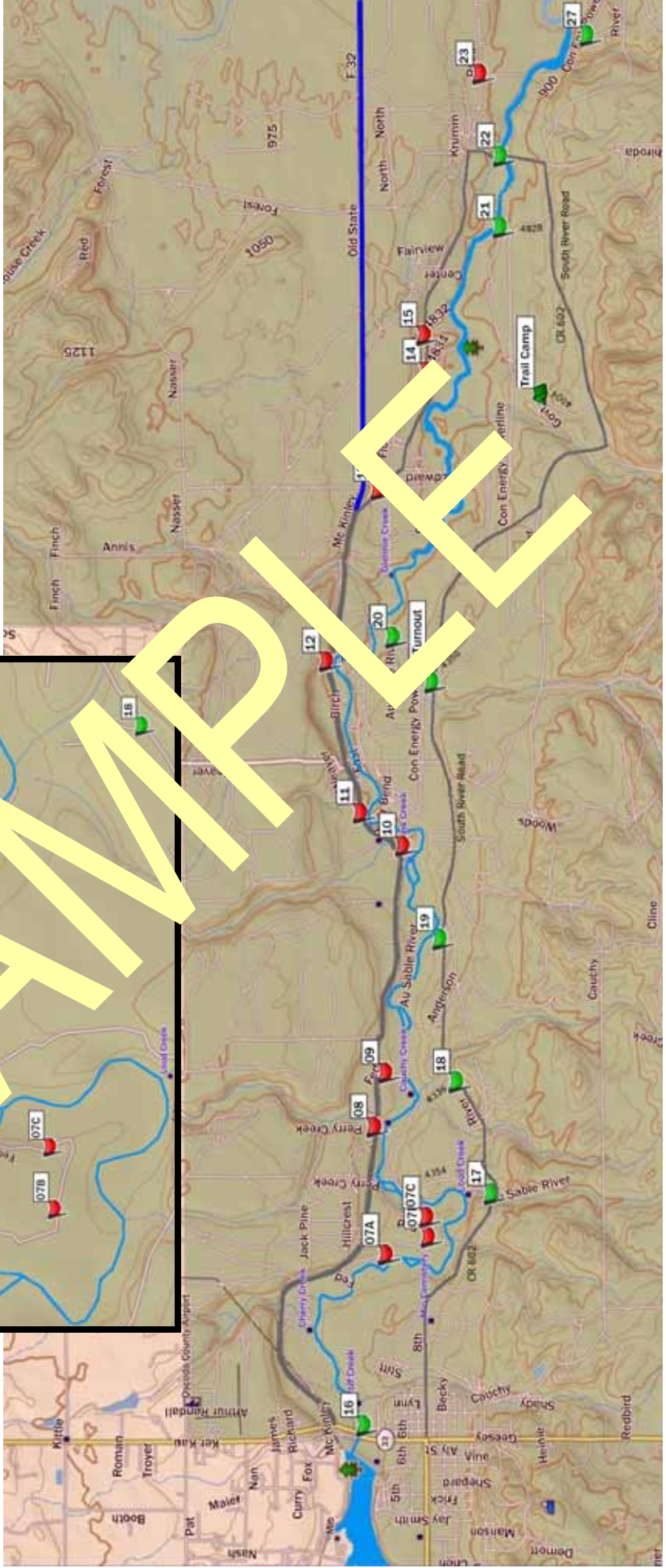
NOTE REGARDING GPS COORDINATES: GPS coordinates for the sites in this book are shown in decimal degrees. To set up your GPS unit, change the position format to decimal degrees (hh° dddd°) and the Map Datum parameter to WGS84.

NOTE ON THE MAPS:  Denotes a site on the north bank.  Denotes a site on the south bank.



High Banks Overlook

Section 2 - Mio to McKinley



SITE DESCRIPTIONS · MIO TO MCKINLEY
South Bank Access Points



Island View

Site 16 **DNRE Mio Boat Launch** **N 44.65943 W 84.12797**

From the intersection of **M-33** and **M-72** in Mio, proceed north on **M-72** 0.4 miles to the Au Sable River. Turn into the public access site on the south side of the river where you will find a boat launch, picnic tables, toilets and parking for 50 cars. The river is 3 to 5 feet deep and about 60 yards wide. The wadeable on the sides and the bottom is gravel. The banks are 5 to 10 feet high, wooded, and covered with brush. There is ample room to cast in the river but you will find heavy canoe traffic at times at this site.

Site 17 **Hidden Stairs** **N 44.64400 W 84.09379**

From the intersection of **M-33** and **M-72** in Mio, proceed east on **8th Street**. This becomes **CR 602 (South River Road)**. Proceed 2 miles to **USFS 4354** and turn left. Continue on the two-track 0.9 miles to "Y" in road.

The two-track to the left will take you to a small parking area for 3 to 4 cars. Follow the path straight to the high banks and walk downstream a set of stairs to the river. You may want to consider fishing down to the second access site below and walking back to your car.

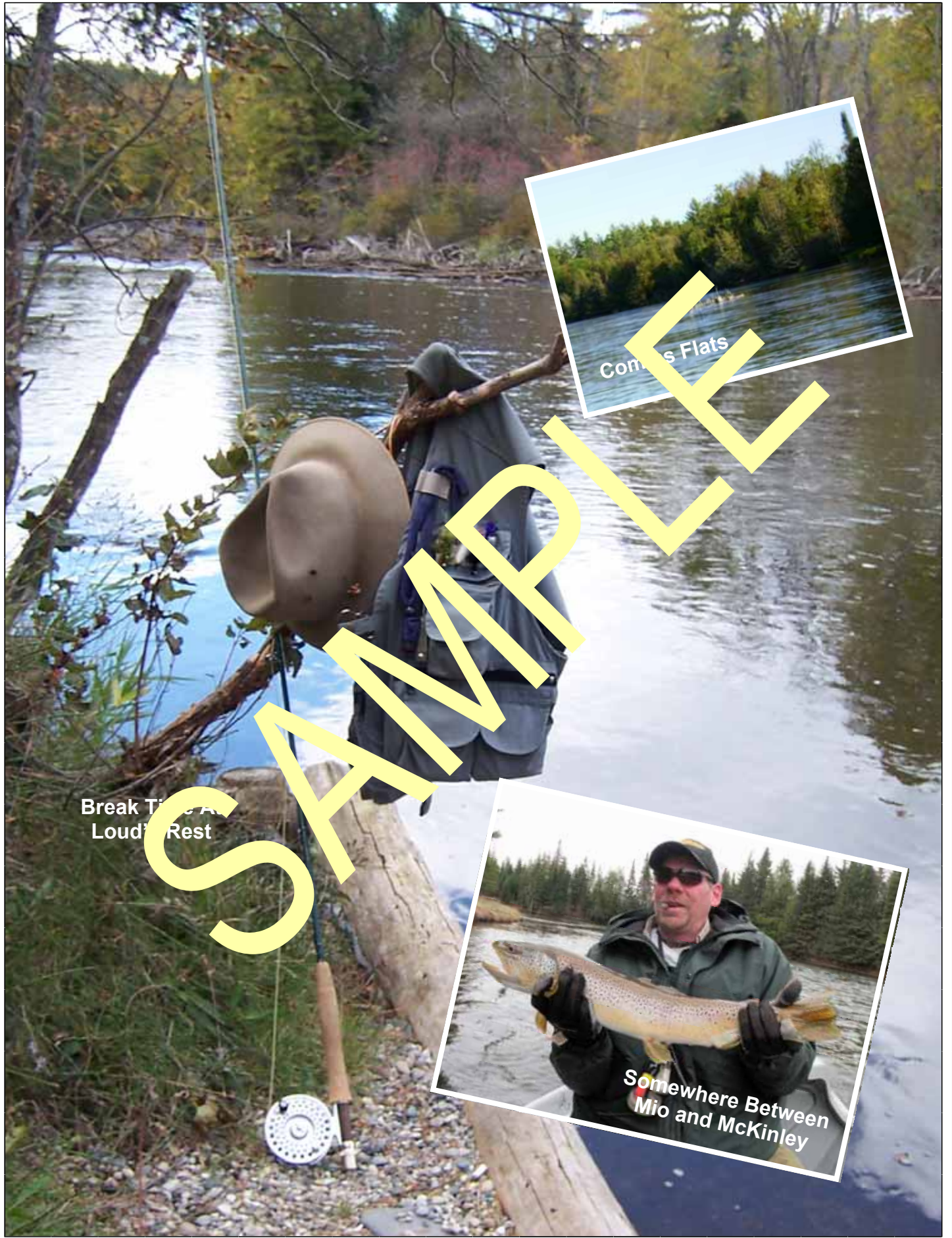
The two-track to the right will take you to a small parking area for 2 or 3 cars. This is a very large access area with pathways that parallel the river for several hundred yards. From the parking lot, the walk to the river is approximately 250 yards. The river is 100 feet wide with a small island upstream and is 4 to 5 foot deep at normal river levels. The current is fairly fast with good riffles and runs upstream and downstream. The bottom runs from sandy to small gravel. There is some woody debris in the river upstream and downstream.

Site 18 **Island View** **N 44.64823 W 84.07724**

Leaving site 17, return to **South River Road** and turn left (east). Proceed 0.8 miles to **USFS-4336** and turn left. Follow the two-track 0.3 miles to the parking area for 2 or 3 cars. Follow the path a few hundred yards to the river. The river is 150 feet wide with medium-high banks, and 3 to 4 feet deep at normal levels. The bottom is sand, gravel and cobble up to 6 inches in diameter. The current is fairly fast so crossing the river during high water is very difficult. There is a small feeder creek just upstream of the access point. There is structure along the south side, upstream and downstream.

Site 19 **Evergreen** **N 44.650022 W 84.05620**

Leaving site 18, turn left (east) on **South River Road** and proceed 1.1 miles just past the entrance to the Evergreen Club. Turn left on the unmarked trail at the power line crossing. Follow the trail for 0.1 of a mile and veer right to the wooden fence area along the high banks. You will find parking for 2-3 cars at this point. There is a set of stairs leading to the river. The river here has a moderate current with a depth of 3 to 4 feet. It has a gravel bottom with cobble and a few large boulders, so wade with caution.



Break Time At Loud Rest



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Early season fly patterns for the 'Trophy Waters'

Hendrickson



Hendrickson Dun

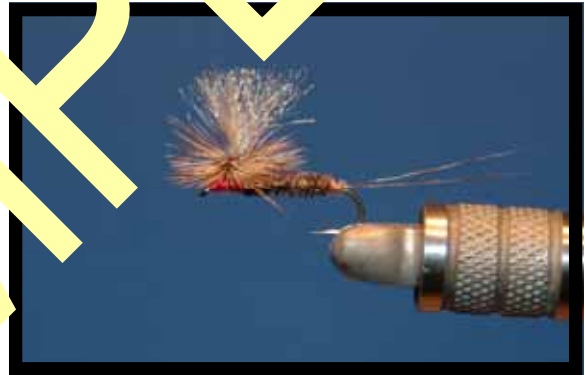


HOOK: Dry fly, size 14, **BODY:** pink, tan, grey dubbing mixed, **TAIL:** dun brown hackle fibers, **WING:** wood duck fibers divided, **HACKLE:** medium dun

Mahogany



Borner's Drake Parachute



HOOK: Dry fly, 2x long, size 10, **BODY:** brown turkey tail wrapped to form a ribbed body, **TAIL:** moose body fibers, **POST:** dun synthetic post material, **WING:** grizzly and brown hackle, **HEAD:** red tying thread

Brown Drake



Brown Drake Spinner



HOOK: Dry fly, 2x long, size 6-8, **BODY:** natural deer hair with black thread tied criss-cross over the body, **TAIL:** pheasant tail fibers, **POST:** white deer hair, **WING:** ginger hackle