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Lake Fact Sheet – Parry Sound District Lake of Bays

Location	
<i>Official Name:</i> Lake of Bays	<i>Local Names:</i> Fork Lake
<i>County/District:</i>Muskoka	<i>Geographic Twp:</i> Franklin and McLean
<i>Municipality:</i> Township of Lake of Bays, Town ofHuntsville	<i>MNR Admin. Area:</i>Bracebridge
<i>Lat./Long:</i> 45.256 N 79.002 W	<i>UTM (NAD83):</i> 17 656731 5013311
<i>Topographic Map (1:50,000):</i>31E06	<i>Drainage Basin:</i> South Muskoka River

Physical Features		
<i>Surface Area (ha):</i>6780	<i>Maximum Depth (m):</i> 70	<i>Mean Depth (m):</i> 22
<i>Elevation (m asl):</i>316	<i>Perimeter (km):</i> 167	<i>Island Shoreline (km):</i> 31
<i>Volume (10⁴ m³):</i> 153,000	<i>Watershed (km²):</i> 1330 (excludes area of lake)	<i>Water Clarity:</i>

Land Use and Development	
<i>Crown Land (%):</i> 0	<i>Provincial Parks:</i> none
<i>Shoreline Development:</i> High; urban, shoreline residential, commercial	
<i>Access:</i> Public launches at Old Hwy 117, South Portage Road, Rabbit Bay, Dwight;private access through several marinas.	
<i>Water Level Management:</i> Regulated; water level is controlled by MNR-owned and operated dam atBaysville.Flows and levels are governed by the Muskoka River Water Management Plan.	

Fish Species	
<i>Major Fish Species:</i>	brook trout (R), lake trout, lake whitefish, cisco, northern pike (I), smallmouth bass (I), walleye (I?), black crappie (?)
<i>Other Fish Species:</i>	rainbow smelt (I), longnose sucker, white sucker, brown bullhead, burbot, trout-perch, rock bass (I), yellow perch (I?), bluntnose minnow, common shiner, mottled sculpin, pumpkinseed, slimy sculpin
<i>Other Species:</i>	spiny water flea (1995, I)

Notes: E: extirpated, I: introduced – intentional or accidental, O: occasional, R: remnant, S: currently stocked, ?: status uncertain, 2009: year of first record or introduction if known, blank: presumed native

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Fisheries Management

<i>Fisheries Management Zone:</i>	15
<i>Designation for Lake Trout Management:</i>	designated; natural reproduction; not at development capacity
<i>Fishing Regulation Exceptions:</i>	No lake-specific exceptions (2009)
<i>Current Stocking:</i>	None
<i>Historic Stocking (last year stocked):</i>	rainbow trout (1965), Atlantic salmon (1935), brook trout (1956) lake trout (1993), smallmouth bass (1922), walleye (1924)
<i>Contaminants (species tested):</i>	lake trout, lake whitefish, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, rock bass
<i>Assessment:</i>	Completed Projects:
	1988 lake trout egg mortality study
	1990 Winter Creel Survey
	1990 Lake Trout Spawning Observations
	1993 Lake Trout Spawning Observations
	1994 Lake Trout Spawning Observations
	1990's Lake trout spawning shoal enhancements
	1996 Winter Creel Survey
	1999 Lake Trout Spawning Observations
	2000 Spring Littoral Index Netting (SLIN)
	2004 Winter Creel Survey
	2004 Summer Profundal Index Netting (targets lake trout)
	2005 Brook trout spawning survey
	2006 Smelt spawning survey
	2006 Northern pike spawning survey
	2007 Summer Profundal Index Netting (lake trout)
	2008 Broad-scale Monitoring (randomized fish community sampling)
	2011 Summer Profundal Index Netting (targets lake trout)
	2013 Broad-scale Monitoring (large and small mesh netting)
	Temperature/dissolved oxygen profiles are collected on a regular basis

Synopsis

The water quality in Lake of Bays is excellent. The temperature-oxygen profile indicates there is a considerable amount of habitat available to lake trout. The District Municipality of Muskoka lake capacity model indicates there can be a significant amount of additional development before there is an impact on lake trout habitat.

The lake trout fishery on Lake of Bays has been important locally for more than 100 years with an outpost camp present on Bigwin Island as early as 1853. The lake trout in this water body attain trophy proportions with average weights from previous surveys ranging from 2.2-4.4 kgs.

Water level management activities have been a concern for lake trout reproduction on Lake of Bays in the past. A 1988 study quantified the percentage of egg loss due to drawdown estimates egg loss in any given year to be between 10% and 21%. The small sample sizes used to quantify egg density and subsequent loss suggests these numbers should be viewed with caution. A local group involved with CFIP

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have done extensive work on the lake including spawning bed rehabilitation. The Muskoka River Water Management Plan implemented in 2006 prescribes lake levels that should not have a significant effect on lake trout reproduction.

Several winter creel surveys have been completed. Estimates of fishing effort and lake trout catch and harvest varied substantially. In 2004, lake trout effort was estimated to be approximately 18,000 ang/hr or about 3 hr/ha which is moderately high. It was estimated that 3,800 lake trout were caught and 3,400 were harvested. Creels from other lakes in the Muskoka area indicate the winter fisheries account for at least 75% of the years' total harvest.

Lake of Bays is one of few larger lakes in the area which still supports a significant brook trout population; though it is a small fraction of what it would have been prior to the introduction of bass and other warm water species. Their persistence is dependent to a large extent on tributary stream that are used as nursery areas. Some effort has been made to identify, protect and enhance these habitats.

Northern pike became established in the lake in the 1990's, probably through an intentional, unauthorized introduction. Pike have not become abundant because of limited juvenile habitat but have the potential to reach large sizes.

Lake of Bays lake trout stocking was discontinued after the 1993 plant to preserve the genetics of the native stocks and the lake has since been managed as a self-supporting lake trout fishery. No special regulations or harvest controls apply. Many area lakes have had special regulations applied which has resulted in a redistribution of fishing activity, some to Lake of Bays. Regular monitoring of this important fishery is required to ensure the lake trout population is managed sustainably.

From 2008 to 2011, adult lake whitefish were transferred live from Lake of Bays to Mary Lake in an attempt to re-establishing a self-sustaining population in Mary Lake. In the same years lake trout eggs were collected, again to try to re-establish a reproducing lake trout population in Mary Lake. In 2009 and 2010 the eggs were reared at the Haliburton Highlands Outdoors Association hatchery, to be stocked as yearlings. In 2011, fertilized eggs were stocked directly into Mary Lake.

Lake of Bays was sampled as a "trend", lake for Cycle 2 of the provincial Broad-scale Monitoring program. Results will be reported through that program. Five species not previously documented were captured; Bluntnose Minnow, Common Shiner, Mottled Sculpin, Pumpkinseed and Slimy Sculpin. All are thought to be native to the lake.

In 2019, an angler reported catching a Black Crappie. The report or the presence of an established population have not been verified.

Updated: 2019

Refer to Lake Fact Sheet Interpretation document for explanation of content.

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