

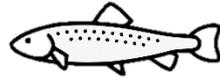
FALL 2020



STEEPROCK RIVER FISHING PACKAGE



As one of the most distinct rivers in the area, many locals refer to the Steeprock River as a “hidden gem”. The Steeprock River originates at North Steeprock Lake and meanders north-eastward through the Porcupine Provincial Forest and the Steeprock Wildlife Management Area until eventually flowing into Lake Winnipegosis. Angling opportunities exist throughout the system and up into the many feeder tributaries of the river. The most frequented areas by anglers exist between the headwaters at North Steeprock Lake to the crossing at Highway 10 near Mafeking, Manitoba.



THE FISHERY:

The Steeprock River and its tributaries home a naturalized population of brook trout and is supplementally stocked with brook trout regularly. The river has been stocked since the 1950's with multiple species including brook trout, rainbow trout, brown trout and even tiger trout. Today, the river is stocked solely with brook trout at two primary locations: the bridge at Highway 10 and the headwaters at North Steeprock Lake. In 2020, SVSFE conducted presence/absence surveys in preparation for this document. Targetable brook trout were found in all reaches of the Steeprock River from the headwaters to the bridge at Highway 10. Targetable brook trout were also found in all reaches of the unnamed tributary referred to as the North Fork. Surveys were not completed in the lower reaches, however in recent years there have been confirmed reports of commercial fishermen capturing bycatch of large brook trout in Steeprock Bay of Lake Winnipegosis. Interestingly, naturalized populations of brook trout were found in some of the small feeder tributaries including Rogers Creek and the unnamed river that intersects Snoman Trail 549. Due to general fish size in these tributaries we would not consider these populations targetable. It is likely that these naturalized populations are supplementing the brook trout fishery in the middle and lower reaches where anglers frequent.



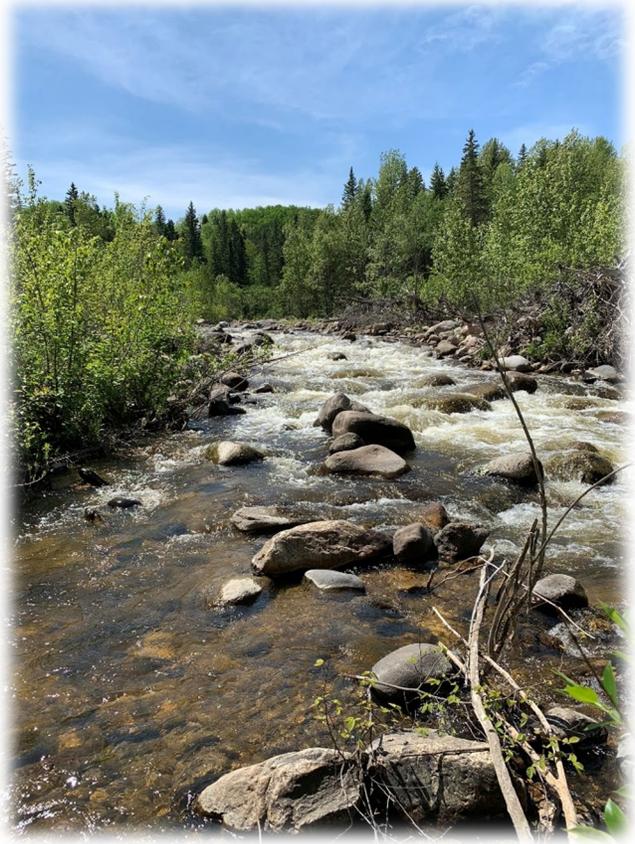
Mature Male at Rogers Creek Headwaters



THE RIVER:

Beginning at the headwaters near North Steeprock Lake the river is generally slow with a few holes where angling opportunities exist. Also known as “The Swamp” this area receives little angling pressure and is difficult to navigate due to the many downed trees and hummocky terrain through the black spruce bog. The river quickly changes downstream from the access location near the South Fork Confluence. Here you can find a long stretch of river which is primarily run with pools every so often. This stretch is very aesthetic and generally easy trekking as you can follow various game trails along banks and gravel bars. The river continues like this until it slowly begins to level out near the Old Stove Access Point upstream of the Old Mill. It is from this point that the angling quality increases considerably. From the Old Mill site downstream to the access near the Trappers Cabin the river can be described as boulder strewn with various

cut banks and gravel bars. Downstream of the Trappers Cabins is where the river slows, walking gets much easier, and angling opportunities are exceptional; however, so is angling pressure. Throughout this stretch are multiple entry and exit points until the Bridge at PTH 10. Downstream of PTH 10 has angling opportunities as well; however, entry/exit points are limited without gaining permission from private landowners. The lower reaches near Provincial Road 483 the river is much slower where native species from Lake Winnipegosis are present as well.



PLANNING A TRIP



TIME OF YEAR:

In Manitoba, trout streams are closed to angling from November 1st to and including April 15th. In spring, high levels of discharge often make the rivers unfishable. In general, by early-June flow has slowed and the water has cleared enough to allow safe travel. Angling opportunities exist from this point until November 1st, however by late fall fishing quality seems to decrease when brook trout become focused on spawning and migrating to wintering areas. In general, the best time of year to fish the Steeprock River is between mid-August and mid-October when the water starts to cool, and the bugs are absent. It is not advisable to plan trips immediately following heavy rainfall as water levels are known to increase considerably and dirty up the water.





GETTING THERE AND AWAY:

Most of the access roads and trails are active logging roads, therefore conditions and accessibility can change significantly depending on time of year and current logging activity. Roads are often closed or decommissioned to protect wildlife populations from truck traffic. For this reason, it is advised to contact either SVSFE or a local outfitter to gain knowledge on road/trail conditions while planning your trip. The headwaters are accessed from North Steeprock Lake. North Steeprock Lake is located along Provincial Road 365; where you can find park facilities and a Provincial Campground. The hub to the lower reaches is Mafeking, Manitoba which is located along Provincial Trunk Highway 10. Many of the best ways to explore the Steeprock River is accessing the river at one point and exiting at another. For this reason, it is advised to either arrange a friend for drop-off/pick-up, stash a second vehicle at your exit point, or hire a courier service. Wayne at Steeprock River Outfitters provides a courier service for angling the Steeprock River. Wayne can be reached at +1 (204) 281-1500 and can help facilitate any trip you may be planning. Utilizing digital river access info will enhance your experience and offer the capabilities of adjusting your trip as need be. Data files come in the form of .gpx or .kmz and can be uploaded onto smart devices or GPS units for offline applications.



Visit www.swanvalleysportfishing.com/lakes/steeprock-river/



WHAT TO BRING:

The crucial consideration for any river expedition is to **pack light!** River trekking can be much more challenging than most would consider. Some vital gear to consider; Trekking pole(s), good hiking boots with ankle support, quick dry pants, hiking and/or neoprene socks, good polarized sunglasses, compass, GPS or equivalent, water filter, ice fishing/telescopic rod that can pack down easily, tackle of your choosing, bug control, survival/first aid kit, and miscellaneous backpacking/camping gear for overnight trips (sleeping bag, tent, tarp, hat, headlamp, dehydrated meals, etc.)





FISHING:

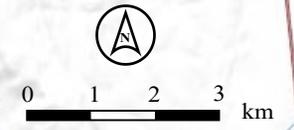
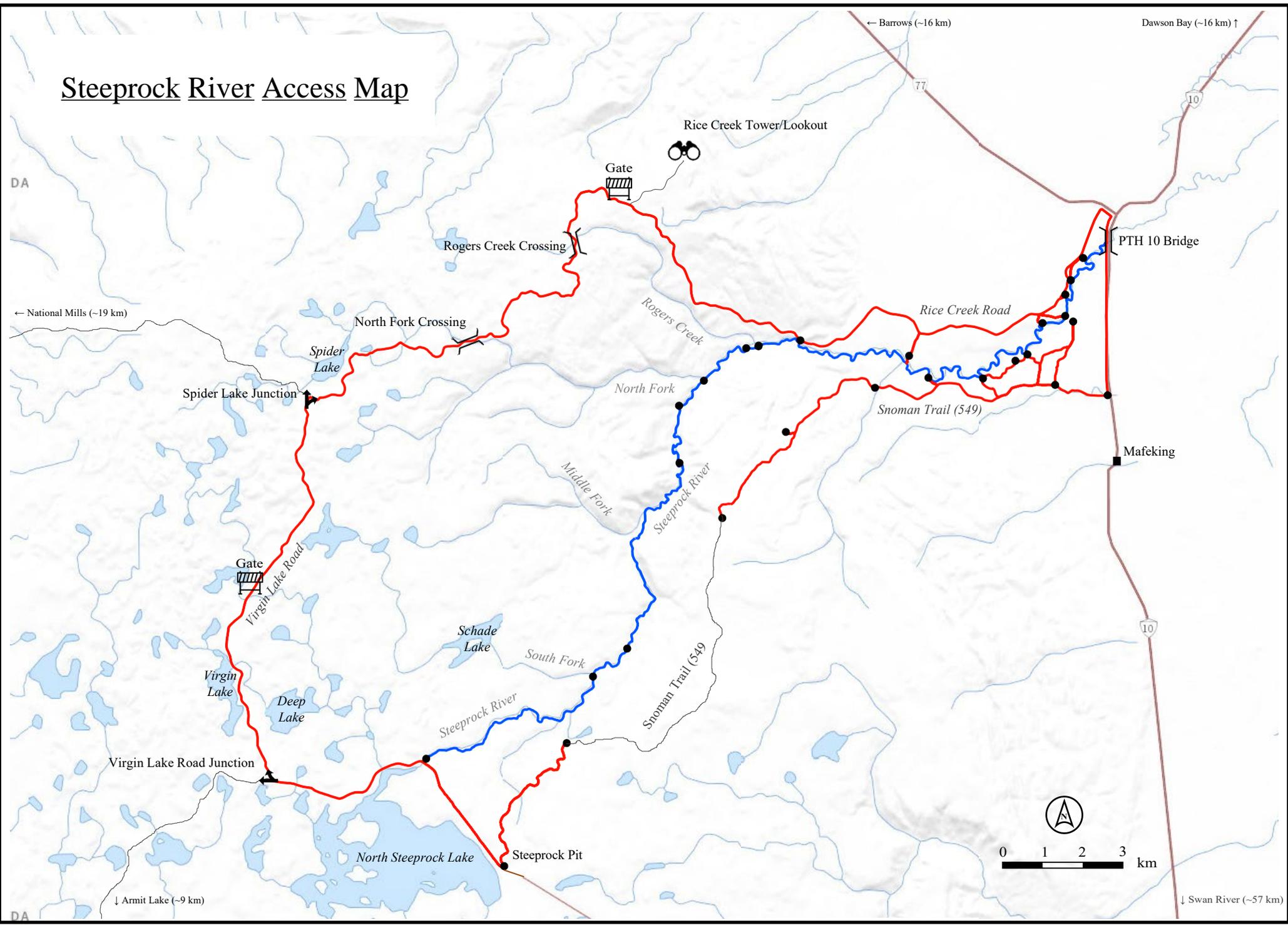
When angling streams for brook trout the first places to look are areas with cover. Cover can come in many forms including depth, water turbulence, undercut banks, overhanging vegetation, boulders, and of course, instream woody debris. Perhaps the best advice would be to do more looking than actual fishing. In the Steeprock River brook trout are everywhere, but the shallower areas with little cover will be dominated with little guys. Larger, adult fish are usually found in the best habitats which include plunge pools on bends, large boulders, beneath downed trees, and beaver floods. There are no guarantees in stream trout fishing. On many occasions the best habitats will yield nothing (likely because of angling pressure and/or natural predators), while some of the smaller overlooked pools will yield the biggest trout of the day.

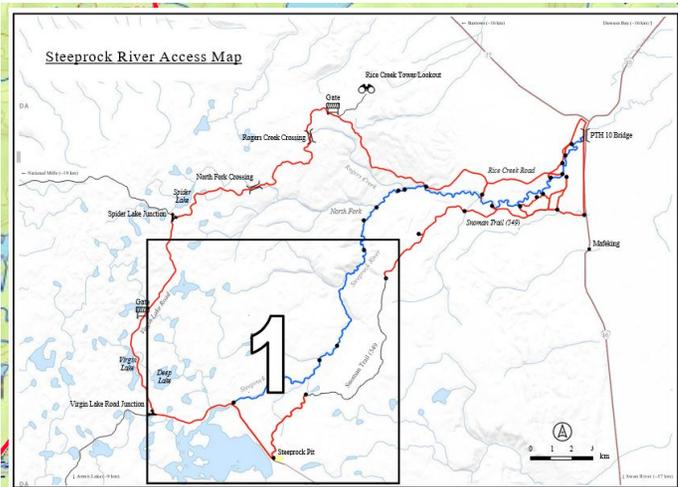
The next step is catching them, and the first consideration is what type of rod to use. Most anglers prefer a spinning rod, while some anglers prefer a fly rod. Bait and technique combinations are endless. From a fly-fishing perspective some of the best methods are using underhand pitches and bow-and-arrow type casting precisely into tight places with lots of cover. Local stream trout fly anglers say that the go-to flies include stone fly nymphs and caddisfly larva nymphs in spring/summer and terrestrial patterns in the fall. With regards to using spinning tackle, perhaps a simple worm on a hook with a splitshot has accounted for more brook trout than any spoon, spinner, and fly combined. Another tried and true method is a #0 in-line spinner or small spoon. Polarized sunglasses and the lightest possible line (6lb or less) will improve your success considerably.

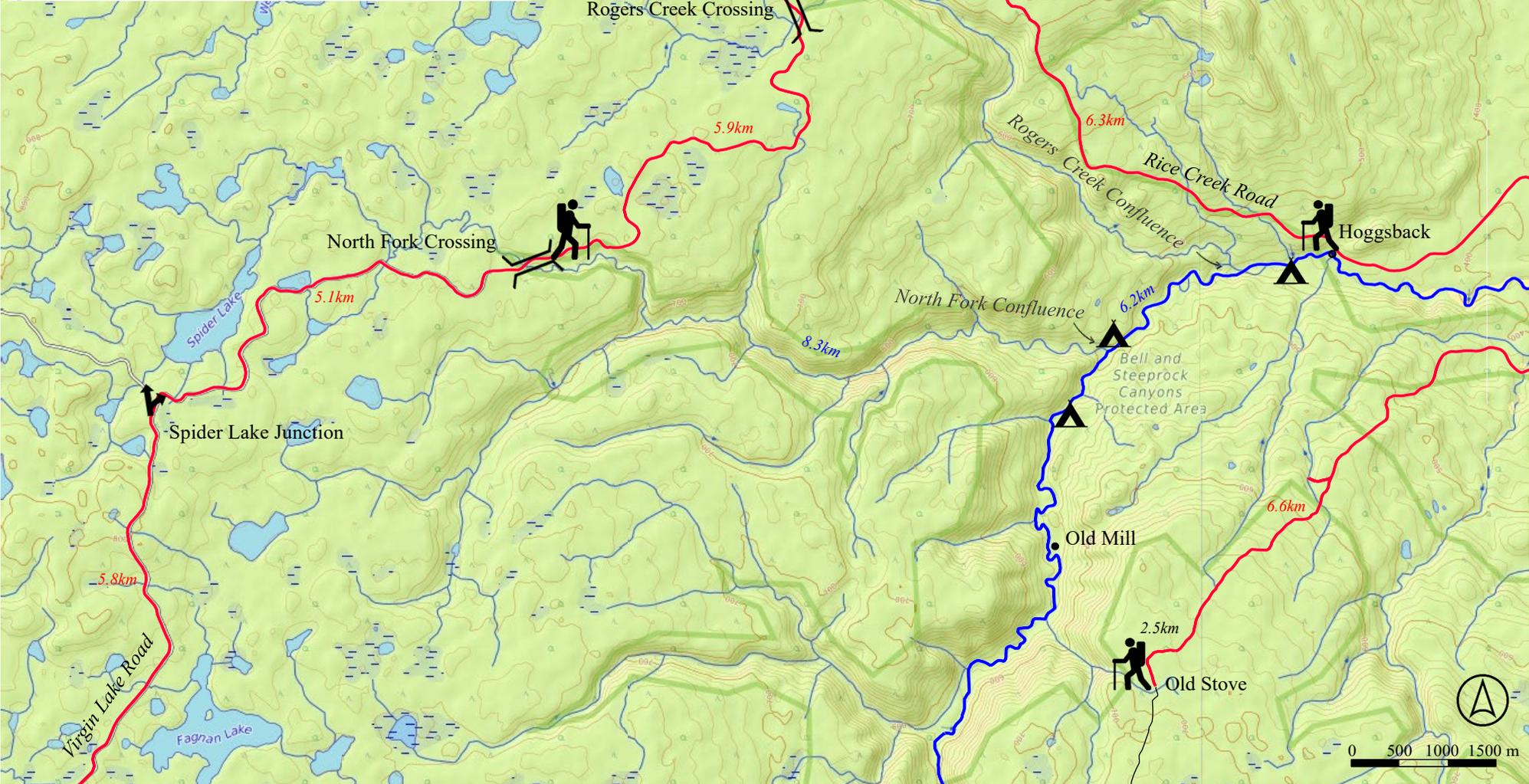
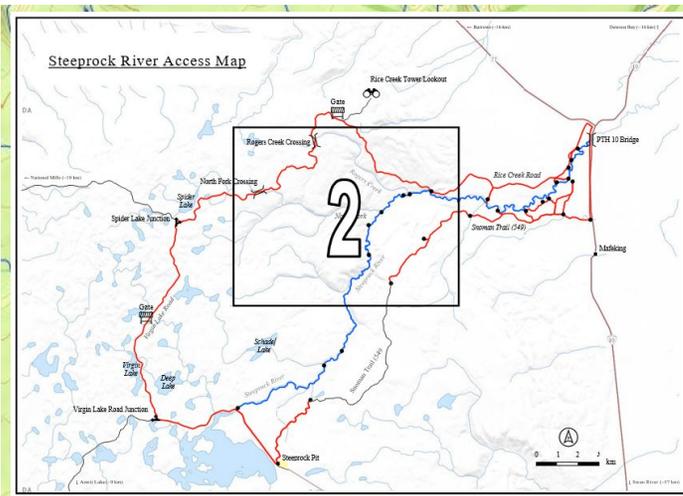
Technique is arguably more important than lure selection. A common misconception is that stream trout are easy to catch; this could not be further from the truth. Approaching a potential fishing location should be done with care. After spotting a pool be as quiet as possible and avoid casting your shadow into the pool at all costs. Approaching from downstream often minimizes the risk of being spotted because fish are usually facing upstream ready to ambush incoming prey items. Try and precisely cast as close to the cover as possible. There have been endless times when anglers have stung a trout on the first cast because of an imperfect retrieve, and sent the fish into hiding. If you accidentally spook a pool, it could take at least a half-hour before the fish will consider biting again.

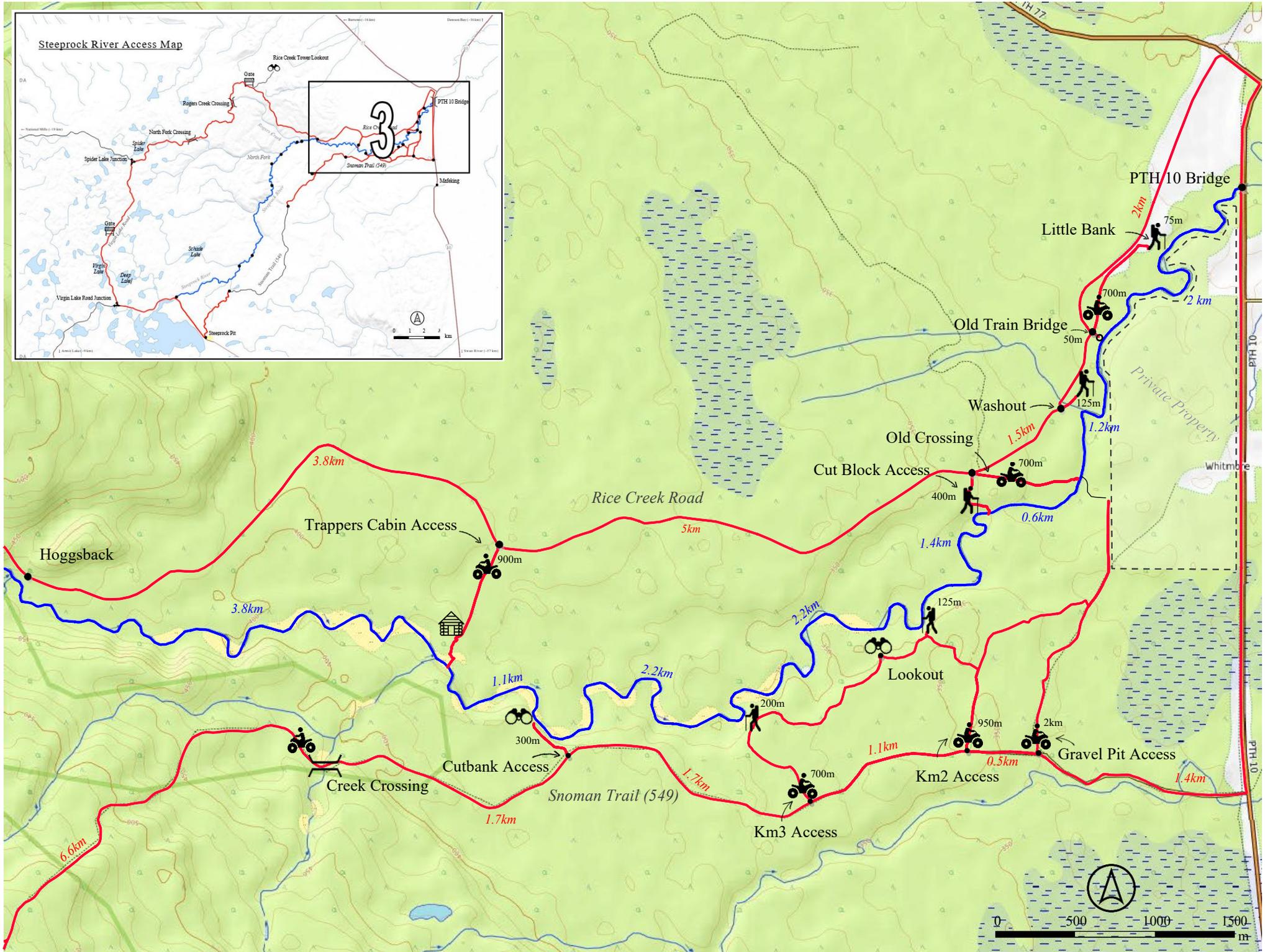
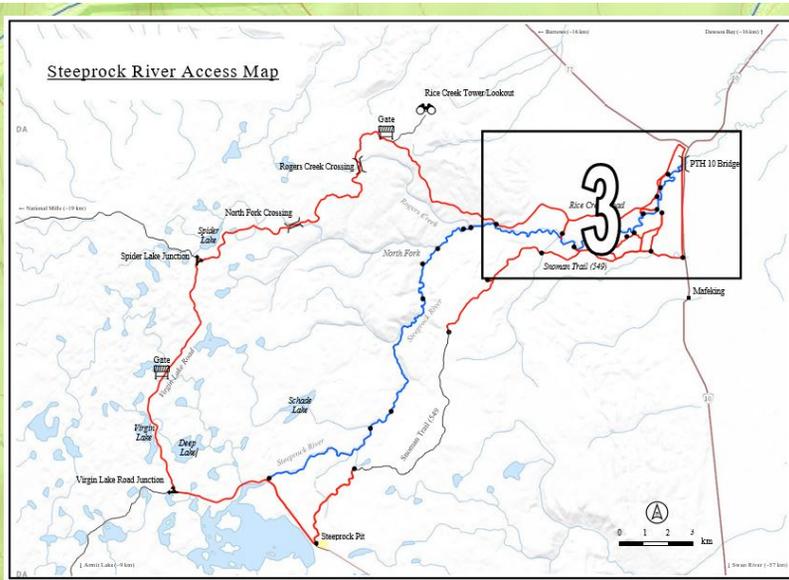


Steeprock River Access Map









DISTANCE RUNDOWN

RIVER DISTANCES

North Steeprock Lake	The Swamp Access	~4.5km
The Swamp Access	Old Stove Access	~8.0km
Old Stove Access	Old Mill Site	~1.0km
Old Mill Site	Hogsback	~6.2km
Hogsback	Trappers Cabin	~3.8km
Trappers Cabin	Cutbank Access	~1.1km
Cutbank Access	Km3 Access	~2.2km
Km3 Access	Km2 Access	~2.2km
Km2	Old Cut Access	~1.4km
Old Cut Access	Old Crossing	~0.6km
Old Crossing	Old Train Bridge	~1.2km
Old Train Bridge	PTH 10 Bridge	~2.0km

ROAD DISTANCES:

Steeprock Lake - Rice Creek Tower Road

North Steeprock Lake	Virgin Lake Road	~4.3km
Virgin Lake Road	Hoodoo Lake Gate	~5.2km
Hoodoo Lake Gate	Spider Lake Corner	~5.8km
Spider Lake Corner	North Fork Crossing	~5.1km
North Fork Crossing	Rogers Creek Crossing	~5.9km
Rogers Creek Crossing	Rice Creek Gate	~2.7km
Rice Creek Gate	Hogsback	~6.3km
Hogsback	Trappers Cabin	~3.6km
Trappers Cabin Landing	Old Crossing Landing	~3.2km
Old Crossing Landing	Old Train Bridge	~1.5km
Old Train Bridge	Highway 77	~2km

Snoman Trail #549

PTH 10	Gravel Pit	~1.4km
Gravel Pit	Km2 Access	~500m
Km2 Access	Km3 Access	~1.1km
Km3 Access	Cutbank Access	~1.7km
Cutbank Access	Creek Crossing	~1.7km
Creek Crossing	Old Stove Access	~6.6km

TRIP OPTIONS

The Steeprock River provides many opportunities for multiday and shorter day trips. Create your own trip using the maps provided or choose from the following. There are many opportunities to complete short day trips in the lower reaches, while the upper reaches are more frequently explored through multi-day trips.

1. THE WHOLE SHEBANG

(North Steeprock Lake to PTH 10)

Distance: Approx. 34.2 km

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 3-5 days

Summary: This is the quintessential backpacking trip to explore the Steeprock River. Have somebody drop you off at North Steeprock Lake and pick you up at PTH 10. Avoid going early spring when water levels are high or mid-summer when bugs are in full force. If you want to avoid a good portion of “The Swamp” bypass by taking the Snoman Trail 549 through the Steeprock Pit (~4.4km trail-walking/ATV & ~1km bushwhack).



2. THE UNCHARTED TRIBUTARY

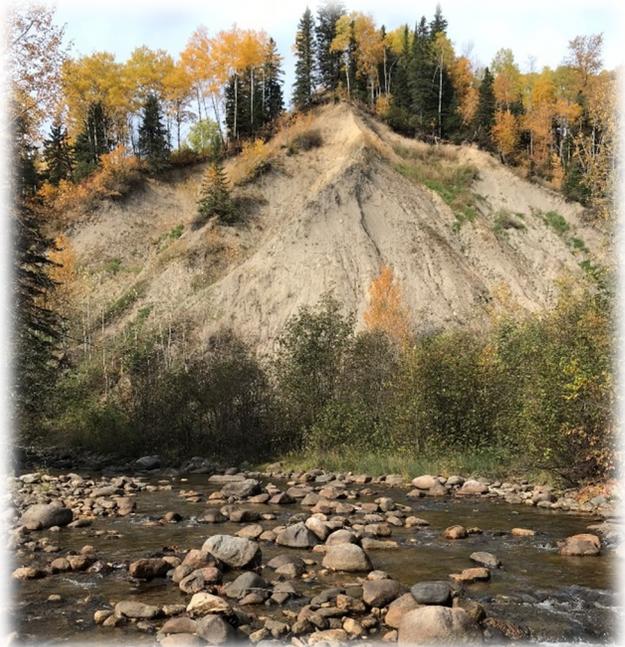
(North Fork to Hogsback)

Distance: Approx. 11.5 km

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 2-3 days

Summary: This is a seldom travelled route with little angling pressure. Brook trout of catchable sizes have been found throughout this stream from the access at the logging bridge to the confluence with the Steeprock River. Stash a vehicle at the hogsback and have a friend or hire a local outfitter to drop you off at the starting point with an ATV. This unnamed creek, referred to by the locals as the North Fork provides great brook trout opportunities throughout.



3. THE FISHERMAN'S ROUTE

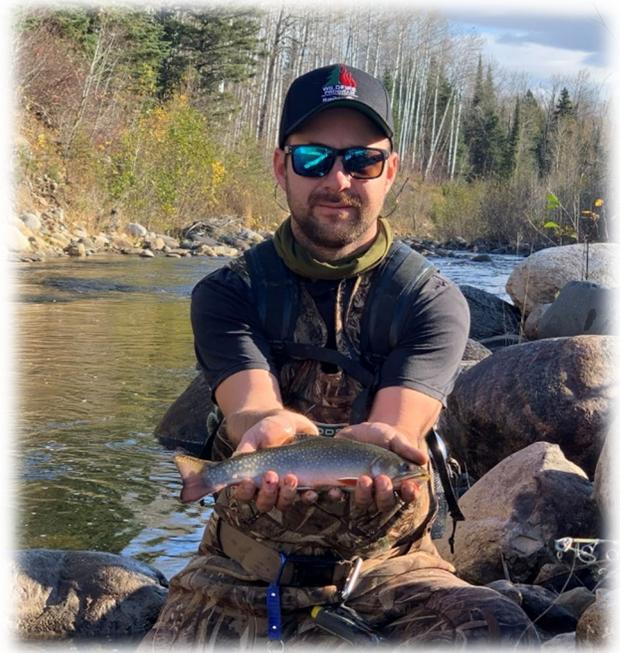
(Old Mill area to PTH 10)

Distance: Approx. 21.2 km

Difficulty: Strenuous

Time: 2-4 days

Summary: This route will bring you through sections of the river with the best angling opportunities. The route starts with a ~2.5 km bushwhack to a stretch of river slightly upstream from the Old Mill Site. It was found that the easiest hiking is to follow various game trails along the north side of the feeder tributary to access the river. From here travel downstream angling the various pools until you reach your out location. Have a friend or local outfitter courier you to the Old Stove Access Point, and hike/camp your way downstream to your out location.



4. THE LESS TRAVELLED DAYTRIP

(Trappers Cabin to Hogsback)

Distance: Approx. 8.4 km (total loop)

Difficulty: Moderate

Time: 1 day

Summary: This section is perhaps the daytrip that receives the lowest angling pressure of the daytrips. Park your vehicle at the landing to the Trappers Cabin and travel approximately 900m along the old trail to access the river. From here travel upstream angling the various pools until the out point at the Hogsback (~3.7km of river). If you choose not to stash a vehicle at the Hogsback, you will then have to walk down the Rice Creek Tower Road approximately 4.7 km back to your vehicle. Total distance is ~8.4 km which could make for a long day so be sure to start early.



5. SOUTH BANK DAYTRIP:

km2 access to km3 access

Distance: 3.9 km (total loop)

Difficulty: Easy-Moderate

Time: 1 day

Summary: From the Snoman trail #549 near Mafeking take the km2 access point to where you will have to scale down a steep cut-bank to access the river. Travel upstream approximately 2.2 km of river angling pools as you please. To access the km3 access you will have to climb yet another steep cut-bank. From there follow the old ridge trail (1.7km) back to your vehicle. The ridge trail provides scenic views over the old riverbed with multiple lookouts along the trail.



6. THE NORTH BANK LOOP:

Old Crossing to Trapper's Cabin

Distance: 12.1 km (total loop)

Difficulty: Moderate

Time: 1-2 days

Summary: This route is a popular one which brings the average angler through some of the most productive stretches of the Steeprock River. Begin at the Old Crossing and travel upstream along the sandbars fishing the pools until the exit point near the old Trapper's Cabin (7.3 km). This route brings you past the large cut-banks along the south shore that are not only stunning but also have some of the best pools the river has to offer. This route would be a good one to stash a second vehicle or hire a courier/outfitter to accomplish in 1 day as the distance down the Rice Creek Tower Road is another ~4.8 km back to the Old Crossing.



7. THE BEGINNER'S TRIP:

Old Train Bridge to Cut Block Access

Distance: Approx. 3.5 km (total loop)

Difficulty: Easy

Time: 0.5-1 Day

Summary: This is perhaps the best route to take youth or to explore the Steeprock River for the first time. Begin at the Old Train Bridge where there are multiple good pools, and travel upstream to the Cut Block Access (~1.8 km) where you can exit the river. The exit is along a walking path straight up to the cut block where you will find the ATV trail which leads back to the Rice Creek Tower Road. If fishing is good and you still have time, continue upstream a little further where there are some great pools and double back before ending your trip. It is ~1.7 km walk down the Rice Creek Tower Road to the Old Train Bridge.



8. THE SWAMP (UPPER REACHES)

Distance: (Out and Back)

Difficulty: Difficult

Time: 1-2 days

Description: From North Steeprock Lake, launch a small paddle-craft near the backcountry campsite. Not far downstream from here there is a hole where large brook trout have been found in the past. Further beyond this point travel gets very difficult through the fallen trees and black spruce bog. This area is generally unfrequented because the river and bush are difficult to navigate. Deeper pools do exist which provide great opportunities for anglers to try if they are up for the challenge. Remember, the province stocks the upper reaches so if you find pools/overwintering habitat, there will be likely brook trout in the area.



DISCLOSURE

The travel times in the package are estimates for folks with peak physical ability and good health. Anglers should be aware that a river kilometer is much different than a trail kilometer in terms of the effort/time required to travel it. It is highly recommended that before venturing out on any Steeprock River excursion, that you are well prepared and equipped with the proper gear to backcountry camp for multiple days.

It is important to remember that the roads and trails advertised in this package are used by many different land users and stakeholders. These include outfitters, trappers, logging operations, snowmobile user groups, and anglers alike. Travelling logging roads during times of active logging can be extremely dangerous. In these circumstances travel should not occur without the use of a radio to communicate with logging equipment and trucks. Local outfitters also have active bear baits in the area. In Manitoba (Zone B), there are two bear seasons – late April – late June, and late August – early November. During these times it is strongly advised to refrain from travelling down unmarked side trails as they may lead to active bear baits. Trail etiquette is extremely important as well. This includes refraining from travelling down unmarked side trails, avoiding wet areas/rutting at all costs, packing out whatever litter you pack in, and respecting permitted structures on the land including warm-up shacks and trapper's cabins. If you come across a downed tree restricting travel, take time to remove and clean up the barrier - the other trail users will appreciate it.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For up-to-date information on trail conditions, logging operations, and weather reports:

Swan River District Government Office

+1 (204) 734 3429

For dated information on the fishery:

Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc.

swanvalleysportfish@gmail.com

For courier services:

Steeprock River Outfitters -Wayne Bass

+1 (204) 281 1500

This promotional package was created by SVSFE in 2020 as an effort to provide anglers with the information required to help plan trips and explore the fishery that is the Steeprock River. Access information, trail conditions, and trail barriers are subject to change over time. Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc. will not be held liable for any damages or injuries that may occur from anglers using the promotional information.