



Tony Yngve and John Shogren with walleye in early 1970s when Horseshoe Lake was at a highwater mark. -submitted photo

featured lake

HORSESHOE LAKE

BY PETE MOHS - LAKE COUNTRY ECHO & PINE RIVER JOURNAL PUBLISHER

Some lakes don't change much over the course of time. But Horseshoe Lake, located east of the larger Pelican Lake between Merrifield and Crosslake, is an exception.

The lake has survived a name change, a shoreline restructure and the focus of its popularity over the past century. Yet it remains popular as a clean body of water that mixes recreational boating and fishing for residents and visitors of the lake.

The name of Horseshoe Lake pretty much evolved over time and the shoreline of the lake has changed, according to Dave Shogren.

"It was originally called Sandbar Lake," said Shogren, whose family lived around the lake more than 80 years. "It was two separate lakes, an east and west lake, during the dry years of the depression in the 1930s. The water was low enough that my parents had a garden between the lakes."

The two lakes were divided by a north to south combination of land and weeds. As the water level eventually climbed the lake formed a horseshoe figure and became one of four lakes in Crow Wing County named Horseshoe. The focus of the lake also changed over the past half-century, according to

Shogren. Horseshoe became a fishing destination as a lake that was "heavily stocked" with walleye from 1950-1970. Because of the popularity of the fishing, there were once five resorts around the lake - Gene's Place (south end of the east lake), Pine Cove (north end of the east lake), Horseshoe Haven (west end of the east lake), and Ro Be Doe and Anglers Edge (west side of the west lake).

"There was a lot of open shoreline when I grew up on the east side of the lake," Shogren said, looking back to the 1960s. "I would ride my bike around the lake to all the resorts. I remember getting candy and pop at each resort. My mom, Gerie, played in a three- or four-piece band at Anglers Edge up until about 1970."

Today, Ro Be Doe is the only resort remaining. Meanwhile, the shoreline was built up with cabins in the 1970s, and a lot of the building supplies came from the



Area guide Gary Roach, left, took a customer fishing on Horseshoe lake in the late 1960s. -submitted photo

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-Dave Shogren
longtime resident

nearby Shogren's Sawmill, owned by Dave's dad, John.

"The resorts started closing, and people were building homes in the 1980s," Shogren said.

The focus of the lake also began to change -- from fishing to more recreational use, according to Shogren.

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"There were a lot of bull rushes around the lake when I was growing up," he said. "There used to be lots of the wooden fishing boats. It was a good lake for northern, walleye, bass and panfish. There were a lot of guides (on Horseshoe) on a daily basis. Now, the walleye are few and far between."

One of those guides on Horseshoe Lake in the 1960s was Gary Roach. His success on Horseshoe helped build his reputation as Mr. Walleye.

"I would rent a boat for \$3 a day and bring my motor," recalled Roach, who lived just south of Horseshoe Lake. "We charged \$25 a day for guide service. I used one of the first green boxes, and it was neat to see the depths."

Roach said he was starting to use night crawlers and leeches, and often catching the limit of walleye in 45 minutes on the east shore.

"In the old days, we fished for walleye using red-tail chubs with cane poles along the weed beds," Roach said. "We also caught lots of largemouth bass using frogs."

Many of the fishing boats were eventually replaced by recreational watercraft as water skiing and wakeboarding were ideal for the lake's sandy shoreline.

"Now, it's a very good lake for recreation," Shogren said. "It's shallow along the shoreline, and it's also a clean lake." The nearby Mission Park is also ideal for recreational activities. □



Public access at Horseshoe Lake.

-Pete Mohs

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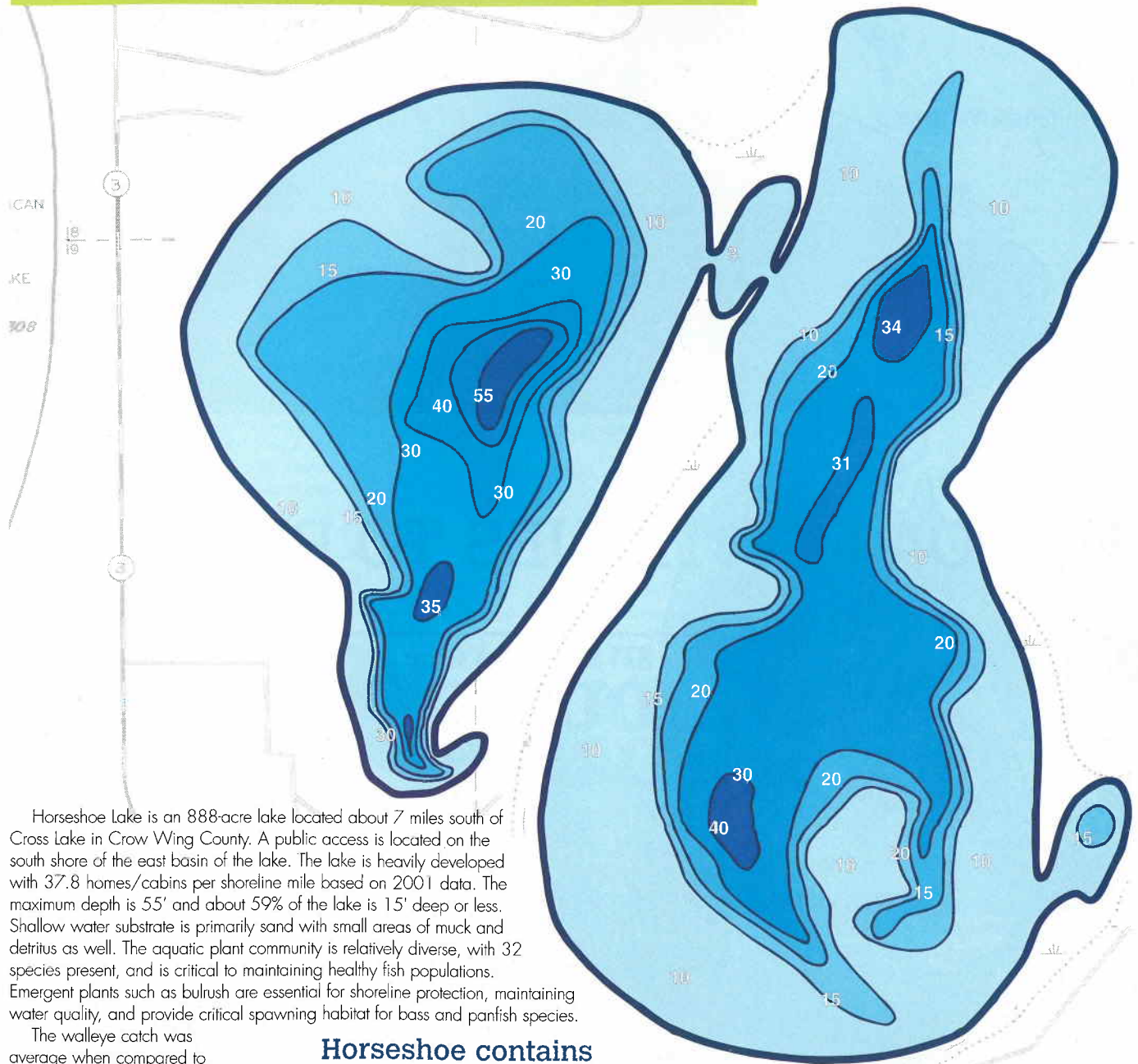


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Horseshoe

VITAL STATISTICS



Horseshoe Lake is an 888-acre lake located about 7 miles south of Cross Lake in Crow Wing County. A public access is located on the south shore of the east basin of the lake. The lake is heavily developed with 37.8 homes/cabins per shoreline mile based on 2001 data. The maximum depth is 55' and about 59% of the lake is 15' deep or less. Shallow water substrate is primarily sand with small areas of muck and detritus as well. The aquatic plant community is relatively diverse, with 32 species present, and is critical to maintaining healthy fish populations. Emergent plants such as bulrush are essential for shoreline protection, maintaining water quality, and provide critical spawning habitat for bass and panfish species.

The walleye catch was average when compared to similar lakes. The walleye population continues to be old, with all fish being at least 9 years old and 68% of the fish being from the 1984 year class. Average length and weight were similar to 2001 at 23.4" and 4.5 lbs and growth was slow.

Northern pike were caught in relatively high numbers in 2004 at 8.3/gill net. This is the highest catch to date. Average length and weight increased from 18.1" and 1.4 lbs in 2001 to 20.0" and 1.8 lbs in 2004. Growth was average with 12% of these fish measuring at least 24" compared to 7% in 2001.

Bluegill abundance in general has been declining, but with a catch rate of 27.4/trap net is still average when compared to similar lakes. Black crappies were present in low numbers in trap nets and average numbers in gill nets (0.6/trap net and 1.9/gill net).

Horseshoe contains relatively high numbers of pike according to MN DNR sampling.

