WISCONSIN

READ THE LAKE GUIDE

Depth maps, structure, wind and seasons

Find the fish before you launch the boat.



WISCONSIN

READ THE LAKE

Guide

Depth maps, structure, wind and seasons



Read the Lake Guide
First edition, October 2026

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Read this first. Fishing rules change every year and differ by lake. Everything about seasons, sizes and bag limits in this book is for the 2026–27 season, checked 2026-10-08. Always check the current Wisconsin DNR rules and your lake's own rules before you fish. Depth maps are not for navigation. Ice is never guaranteed safe. You are responsible for your own safety and for following the law.

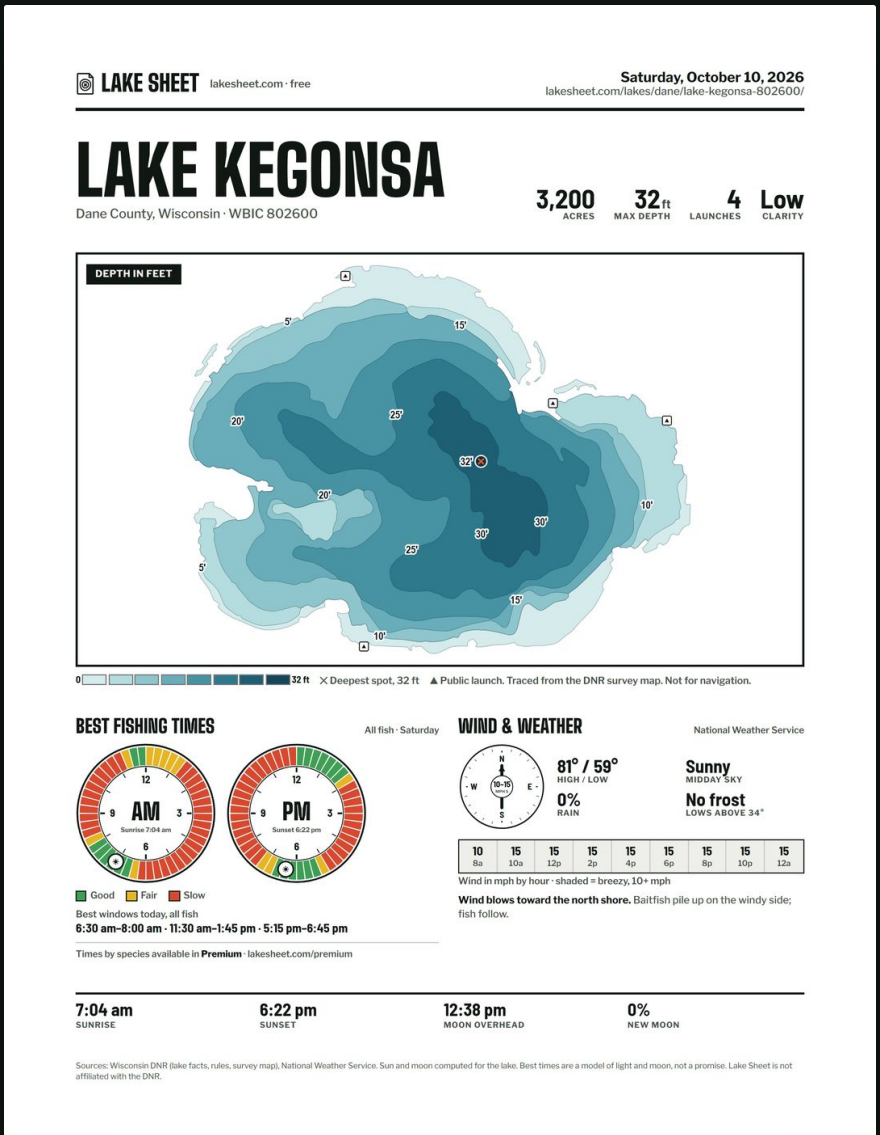
Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Lake facts come from DNR survey and stocking records as published by Lake Sheet; see the sources at the back of the book.

lakesheet.com

FREE WITH THIS BOOK

YOUR FREE LAKE SHEET

Free for more than 4,600 Wisconsin lakes: two printable pages, made for the boat. This is the real sheet for Lake Kegonsa.



LAKE SHEET lakesheet.com · free

Saturday, October 10, 2026
lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

LAKE KEGONSA

Dane County, Wisconsin · WBIC 802600

3,200	32 ft	4	Low
ACRES	MAX DEPTH	LAUNCHES	CLARITY

DEPTH IN FEET

5' 15' 20' 25' 32' 20' 10' 30' 30' 25' 5' 15' 10'

0 32 ft · ✕ Deepest spot, 32 ft · ▲ Public launch. Traced from the DNR survey map. Not for navigation.

BEST FISHING TIMES

All fish · Saturday

AM — Sunrise 7:04 am

PM — Sunset 6:22 pm

Good · Fair · Slow

Best windows today, all fish
6:30 am–8:00 am · 11:30 am–1:45 pm · 5:15 pm–6:45 pm

Times by species available in **Premium** · lakesheet.com/premium

WIND & WEATHER

National Weather Service

81° / 59°
HIGH / LOW

0%
RAIN

Sunny
MIDDAY SKY

No frost
LOWS ABOVE 34°

10	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
8a	10a	12p	2p	4p	6p	8p	10p	12a

Wind in mph by hour · shaded = breezy, 10+ mph

Wind blows toward the north shore. Baitfish pile up on the windy side; fish follow.

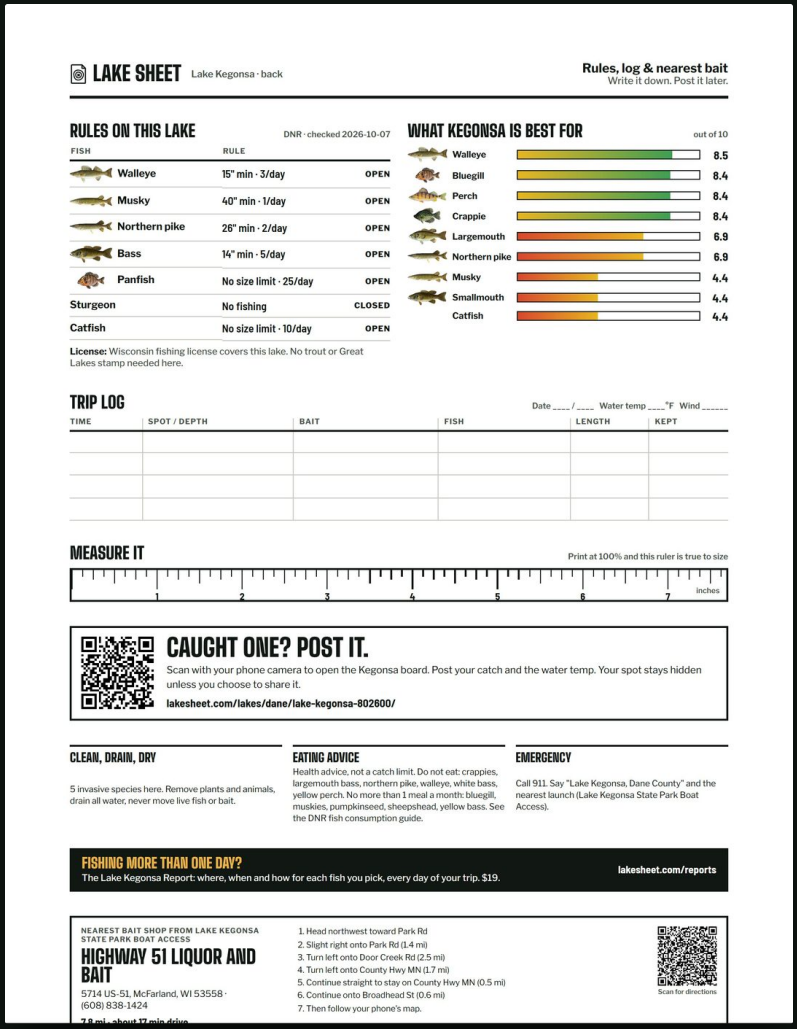
7:04 am	6:22 pm	12:38 pm	0%
SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON OVERHEAD	NEW MOON

Sources: Wisconsin DNR (lake facts, rules, survey map), National Weather Service. Sun and moon computed for the lake. Best times are a model of light and moon, not a promise. Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the DNR.

1. **Depth map** traced from the DNR survey, deepest spot marked (traced lakes)
2. **Lake facts:** acres, max depth, launches, clarity
3. **Best times** from the sun and moon on AM and PM dials
4. **Wind and weather** by the hour, and which shore the wind hits
5. **Sun and moon** times for the lake
6. **Sources and date** on every fact

THE BACK OF THE SHEET

RULES, LOG & NEAREST BAIT



LAKE SHEET Lake Kegonsa · back

Rules, log & nearest bait
Write it down. Post it later.

RULES ON THIS LAKE

DNR · checked 2026-10-07

FISH	RULE	
Walleye	15" min · 3/day	OPEN
Musky	40" min · 1/day	OPEN
Northern pike	26" min · 2/day	OPEN
Bass	14" min · 5/day	OPEN
Panfish	No size limit · 25/day	OPEN
Sturgeon	No fishing	CLOSED
Catfish	No size limit · 10/day	OPEN

License: Wisconsin fishing license covers this lake. No trout or Great Lakes stamp needed here.

WHAT KEGONSA IS BEST FOR

out of 10

Walleye	8.5
Bluegill	8.4
Perch	8.4
Crappie	8.4
Largemouth	6.9
Northern pike	6.9
Musky	4.4
Smallmouth	4.4
Catfish	4.4

TRIP LOG

Date ____ / ____ Water temp ____°F Wind _____

TIME	SPOT / DEPTH	BAIT	FISH	LENGTH	KEPT

MEASURE IT

Print at 100% and this ruler is true to size

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 inches

CAUGHT ONE? POST IT.

Scan with your phone camera to open the Kegonsa board. Post your catch and the water temp. Your spot stays hidden unless you choose to share it.

lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY

5 invasive species here. Remove plants and animals, drain all water, never move live fish or bait.

EATING ADVICE

Health advice, not a catch limit. Do not eat: crappies, largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, white bass, yellow perch. No more than 1 meal a month: bluegill, muskies, pumpkinseed, sheepshead, yellow bass. See the DNR fish consumption guide.

EMERGENCY

Call 911. Say "Lake Kegonsa, Dane County" and the nearest launch (Lake Kegonsa State Park Boat Access).

FISHING MORE THAN ONE DAY?
The Lake Kegonsa Report: where, when and how for each fish you pick, every day of your trip. $19.
lakesheet.com/reports

NEAREST BAIT SHOP FROM LAKE KEGONSA STATE PARK BOAT ACCESS

HIGHWAY 51 LIQUOR AND BAIT

5714 US-51, McFarland, WI 53558 · (608) 838-1424

7.8 mi · about 17 min drive

1. Head northwest toward Park Rd
2. Slight right onto Park Rd (1.4 mi)
3. Turn left onto Door Creek Rd (2.5 mi)
4. Turn left onto County Hwy MN (1.7 mi)
5. Continue straight to stay on County Hwy MN (0.5 mi)
6. Continue onto Broadhead St (0.6 mi)
7. Then follow your phone's map.

Scan for directions

1. **This lake's rules** for every fish, from the DNR
2. **What the lake is best for,** rated by fish
3. **Trip log** and a true-size **ruler**
4. **Invasive species** and eating advice
5. **Nearest bait shop** we know of, with turn-by-turn directions
6. Scan to post your catch

lakesheet.com

Find your lake, print it, take it in the boat

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Fish are not spread evenly through a lake. On any given day most of them are on a few kinds of spots, at one depth range, feeding in short windows. Anglers who catch fish on a new lake are not lucky. They read the lake before they get there: the depth map, the water, the bottom, the season, the wind and the light. This book teaches you to do the same thing, on real Wisconsin lakes.

Every map in this book is a real Lake Sheet depth map, traced from a Wisconsin DNR lake survey map. Every lake fact (acres, depth, clarity, bottom, fish, stocking, rules, eating advice) comes from that lake's Lake Sheet, which is built from DNR records. Every lake has a QR code. Scan it, and you can practice on the same map on your phone, then print the free sheet and take it in the boat.

IF YOU HAVE ONE EVENING

1. Read Chapter 1, the map lesson. It is the heart of the book.
2. Skim Chapter 2 to see what your free Lake Sheet tells you.
3. Pick a worked example in Chapter 9 that looks like your lake.
4. Run the checklist in Chapter 10 before your next trip.

IF YOU WANT THE WHOLE SKILL

1. Chapters 1–4: the lake itself (shape, type, bottom).
2. Chapters 5–6: what changes (season, weather, light).
3. Chapter 7: checking it all on the water with sonar.
4. Chapters 8–10: putting it together, fish by fish and lake by lake, then the checklist.

A note on the maps. Lake Sheet maps are traced from DNR survey maps. Many of those surveys are decades old, made with the tools of their day, and water levels change. They are good for finding structure. They are **not for navigation**. Watch for rocks, shallow bars and stumps, and go slow in water you don't know.

The rules. Seasons, sizes and bag limits change every April 1, and many lakes have their own. Rules in this book are for the 2026–27 season. Before you keep a fish, check the current rules. The fastest way is the rules box on your lake's Lake Sheet.



CHAPTER 1

HOW TO READ A DEPTH MAP

A depth map is a picture of the lake with the water taken away. Once you can read one, you can look at a lake you have never seen and pick the five or six spots most likely to hold fish before you leave the driveway. This chapter teaches the skill on six real Lake Sheet maps, from a 10-foot farm-country lake to a 79-foot northern basin.

1.1 Where the maps come from · **1.2** The rules of depth lines · **1.3** Spacing means steepness · **1.4** Breaks · **1.5** Points and islands · **1.6** Humps and bars · **1.7** Basins, holes and saddles · **1.8** Flats · **1.9** Weed edges · **1.10** A drill for any map

1.1

WHERE THE MAPS COME FROM

Lake Sheet depth maps are traced from Wisconsin DNR lake survey maps, many made by the Wisconsin Conservation Department (the DNR's forerunner) in the 1950s and 1960s. Lake Sheet fills each depth band with color: **pale is shallow, dark is deep**. Each line is labeled in feet, the deepest spot is marked ✕, and north is at the top.

In October 2026, more than 4,600 Wisconsin lakes had a published Lake Sheet, with more added each week. Thousands of them have a DNR survey map, and more than 200 had been traced into full-color maps. For the rest, the sheet shows the DNR's scanned map, or the shoreline and launches. Everything in this chapter works on a DNR scan too.

The DNR surveys behind these maps are mostly decades old, with lines every 5 feet (every 10 on some lakes). They are the best free way to plan a day: where the breaks, humps and basins are, and how deep. On the water, a GPS chart app or a sonar unit with modern 1-foot contours (Navionics, LakeMaster on Humminbird, Garmin LakeVü, or a map you record yourself with Humminbird AutoChart or Garmin Quickdraw) shows the small rises, turns and weed lines an old survey misses, and puts you on them. If you fish a lake often, they are worth the money. Use the Lake Sheet to decide where to go; use the chart and sonar to fish it.

OPEN THE DNR MAP TOO

Under the map on a lake's page at lakesheet.com is a link: **DNR survey map (PDF)**. Many old DNR maps mark the bottom (sand, gravel, rock, muck), weed beds and the depth on top of each hump, plus the date of the survey. Grindstone Lake was mapped in June 1964 with recording sonar; Pearl Lake on August 8, 1958, when it was about 4.5 feet below its normal level. Read every depth as "about," and remember that rock piles, wood and today's weeds don't show on any survey.

1.2
THE RULES OF DEPTH LINES

1. **Every point on a line is the same depth.** The 15′ line is the edge of all the water 15 feet deep.
2. **Lines never cross.** Where a wall drops straight down, they can touch or nearly merge.
3. **Every line closes on itself:** around the lake, a hump or a hole.
4. **A closed ring is a hump or a hole.** Shallower inside than outside: a hump. Deeper: a hole.
5. **Close lines mean steep. Far-apart lines mean gentle.** The most important rule for fishing.
6. **Lines bulge toward deep water off a point, and toward shore in a bay or cut.**
7. **The interval changes from map to map.** Lake Emily's lines are every 2 feet; Geneva Lake's every 10. Read the numbers before you judge a slope.

1.3
SPACING MEANS STEEPNESS

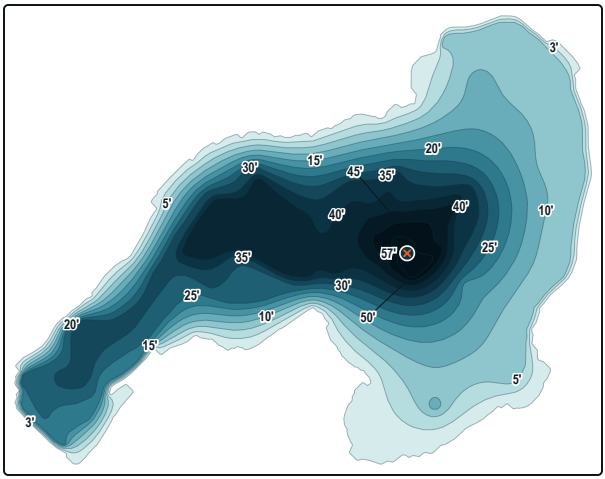

FIG 1.1 Big Stone Lake, Oneida County. 607 acres, 57 feet deep. On the north shore the 5′, 15′ and 30′ lines crowd together: a steep drop. The southeast bay is a wide, pale shelf of 5 to 10 feet. Not for navigation.

On Big Stone's north shore, in the width of a fingernail on the map, the bottom falls from 5 feet to 30 and on toward 45. In the southeast bay, the pale colors stretch far from shore. Same lake, two kinds of water.

	LINES CLOSE (NORTH SHORE)	LINES FAR APART (SOUTHEAST BAY)
Fish use it for	Moving fast between shallow food and deep rest	Feeding over a big area: weeds, spawning, night
Best season	Summer and winter	Spring, fall and low light
How to fish it	Hold on the edge; work the depth where fish show on sonar	Cover water: drift, troll or cast

THE FINGERNAIL TEST

The spot where the most lines fit under your fingernail is the steepest drop on the lake. On most lakes, that's your first summer spot.

1.4 BREAKS

A **break** (drop-off) is where the bottom suddenly gets steeper. The **first break** is the edge of the shallow shelf; the **second break** is the next drop

below it. In summer, walleye and bass often feed on the top of a break and rest at its base.

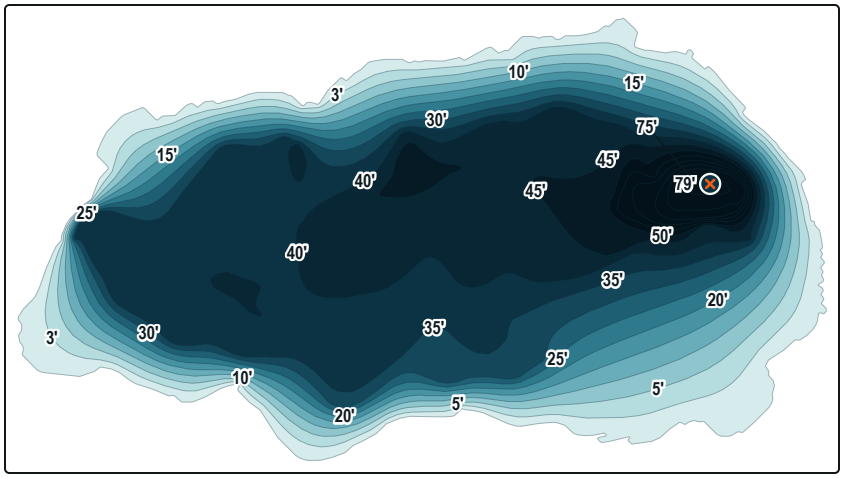

FIG 1.2 Metonga Lake, Forest County. 2,038 acres, 79 feet deep. On the north shore the lines from 3′ to 30′ are packed tight. At the east end the bottom falls into the 79-foot hole. On the south side the lines spread out over a wider shelf. Not for navigation.

The steep north shore. The first break is almost at the bank, with fish able to hold in 15 to 30 feet right below the shallows.

The gentler south side. The shelf runs farther out. Fish feed on it in spring, then slide to the edge where the lines bunch as the water warms.

The east end. The deepest hole sits against a steep shore: a winter and late-summer spot for fish that want cold water.

The bottom. The DNR records Metonga as 45% sand and 45% gravel, clear and cool: walleye and smallmouth water.

1.5 POINTS AND ISLANDS

A **point** is land or a shallow shelf reaching out into deeper water; the lines bulge out with it. Fish moving along shore run into points, wind pushes bait-fish around the tip, and the tip drops into deep water on three sides.

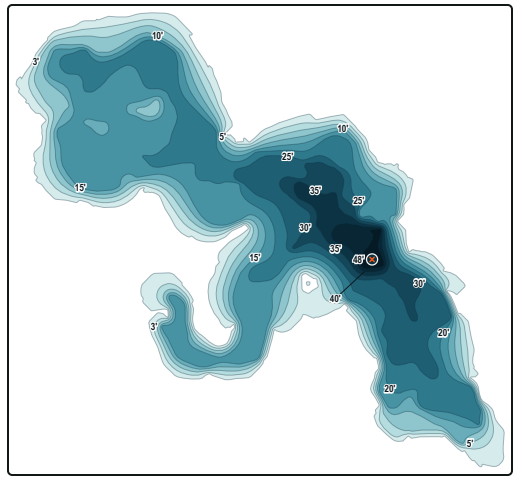

FIG 1.3 Sissabagama Lake, Sawyer County. 805 acres, 48 feet deep. A point pinches the lake near the middle, with the 48-foot hole not far off it. To the southwest, a long hook-shaped bay. An island (the pale patch near the 40′ label) and shallow rises in the northwest basin are closed rings. Not for navigation.

- **The center point** drops toward the deepest water in the lake: a spot for every season.
- **The island** is a point with water all around it. Its steep side faces the deep water.
- **The northwest rises** are gathering spots in the middle of a flat.
- **The hook bay** is shallow and protected: an early spring spot.

Sissabagama Lake: walleye **abundant** and musky **common** in the DNR survey; bottom 50% sand, 20% rock, 25% muck. Scan for its Lake Sheet.

1.6 HUMPS AND BARS

A **hump** (reef, sunken island, rock pile) is a shallow spot surrounded by deeper water: a small, pale closed ring. A **bar** is a long, narrow hump, often running off a point or between islands.

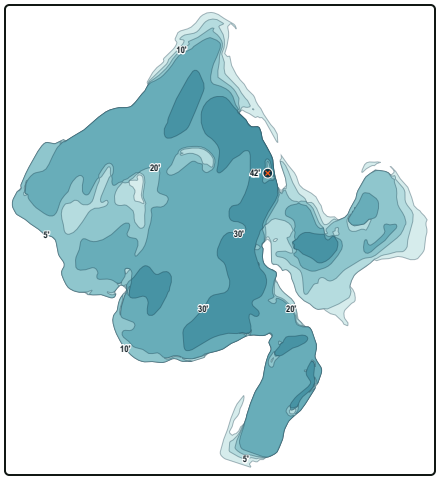

FIG 1.4 Butternut Lake, Forest County. 1,246 acres, 42 feet deep. The west half is a maze of humps and bars: pale patches and fingers inside the 20′ and 30′ water. The eastern lobe is mostly 5 to 20 feet; the 42′ hole sits close to the main basin's east shore. Lines here are every 10 feet (5, 10, 20, 30, 42), so the hump tops have no number of their own. Not for navigation.

Humps are summer spots: the top collects food, the sides give a quick drop, and many anglers never find them. Butternut's DNR survey lists smallmouth and walleye as **abundant**, on a bottom of 40% sand, 40% gravel and 10% rock. Start on the western humps in July.

FISH A HUMP

- Find the shallowest point on the map, then confirm it on sonar. On maps with lines every 10 feet, open the DNR survey map (PDF link on the lake's page): many old surveys write the depth on top of each hump. Pencil it onto your sheet.
- Work the edge where the top meets the drop, then the base.
- Start on the side the wind blows into.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Anchoring on top and spooking the fish below.
- Fishing only the top in bright sun.
- Racing over it. Some tops are only a few feet deep.

1.7
BASINS, HOLES AND SADDLES

The **basin** is the deep, flat-bottomed middle of a lake, and many lakes have more than one. A **hole** is a deeper spot inside shallower water. A **saddle** is the shallower strip between two deep areas: a travel lane from one basin to the next.

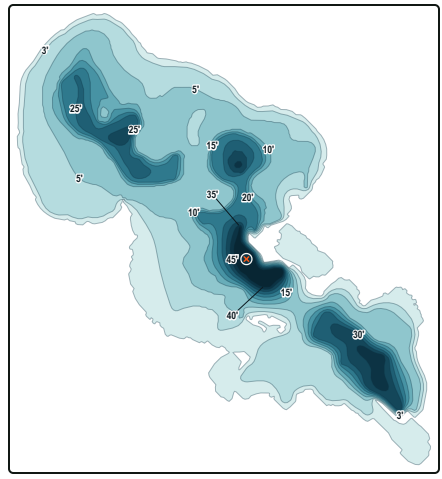

FIG 1.5 **Lac La Belle, Waukesha County.** 1,154 acres, 45 feet deep. Four deep areas: a 25-foot trough in the northwest, a small hole north of center, the 45-foot hole in the middle and a 30-foot trough to the southeast. Between them, saddles of 5 to 15 feet and several islands. Not for navigation.

Lac La Belle is 45 feet deep at one spot, but the DNR lists its average depth as 11 feet. In summer, fish that want deep water sit in or near the four pockets. At dawn and dusk they cross the saddles to feed; the edge where a saddle drops into a pocket is a crossing point. The bottom is 80% gravel. Its own rules for 2026–27 are strict: walleye 28-inch minimum and 1 a day, pike 32 inches and 1 a day, musky 50 inches.

1.8
FLATS

A **flat** is a wide area of nearly even depth: a big patch of one color. Flats grow much of a lake's food, and they are feeding areas in spring, fall and at

night.

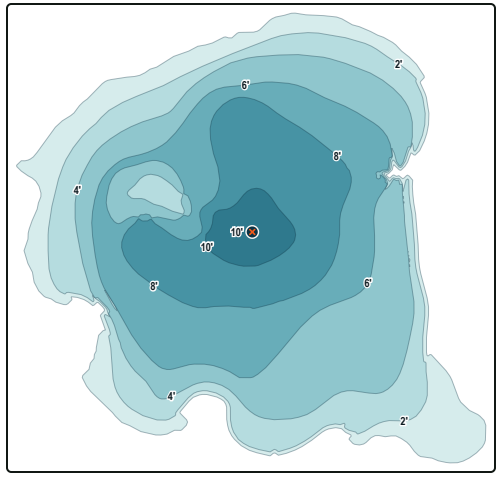

FIG 1.6 Lake Emily, Dodge County. 268 acres, 10 feet deep, with lines every 2 feet. A bowl of flats stepping from 2 to 10 feet, with a shallower bar (the pale patch west of center) rising inside the 8-foot water. Not for navigation.

On a shallow lake, every foot counts: a 2-foot rise in 8 feet of water matters as much as a 20-foot hump on a deep lake. Read Lake Emily by the bar, the edges where 6 feet drops to 8, and the weeds, which can grow almost everywhere when light reaches the bottom. Wind mixes the whole lake, so start on the side it blows into. The DNR lists largemouth as **abundant**, on a bottom of 40% gravel, 35% rock and 25% muck.

1.9 WEED EDGES

Maps don't show weeds, but the depth lines tell you where the weed edge will be. Rooted plants grow only as deep as enough light reaches: 15 to 20 feet in a clear lake, 5 or 6 feet in a stained or green one (Chapter 3).



FIG 1.7 A weedy bay from above. The pale weed beds reach out from shore and stop where the water turns dark: that line is the **outside edge**, where it gets too deep for weeds to grow.



FIG 1.8 Lily pads on a soft, shallow backwater, with a lane of open water between the beds and the wooded bank. Lanes like this between the pads and the shore are the **inside edge**.

EDGE	WHERE IT IS	WHO USES IT
Outside edge	Where weeds stop on the deep side, often near the first break	Walleye, bass, pike, crappie, perch
Inside edge	The open lane between weeds and shore	Bluegill, bass, pike, in spring and low light
Pockets	Open holes inside a weed bed	Bass, pike, bluegill
Weed points	Where the weed line bends out toward deep water	Everything that hunts

Find the outside edge with sonar (the weeds stop) or by letting your lure tick the tops. Write the depth down. On the same kind of bottom the edge sits at about the same depth, so that depth line on the map is a good first guess for the rest of the lake. Expect it shallower over soft muck and in stained bays, deeper on clean sand and gravel (Chapter 4).

1.10
A DRILL FOR ANY MAP

Five minutes with a pencil and a printed Lake Sheet:

1. Find the deepest spot (X) and the basin around it.
2. Mark the steepest drop (the fingernail test).
3. Circle every closed ring; label it hump or hole.
4. Mark every point and every saddle.
5. Shade the biggest flat.