

Black River, Michigan

1. Region surrounding the River

a. The Black River is located in the extreme western portion of the upper peninsula of Michigan and lies within Gogebic County. Topography varies from low lying marshy areas to hilly and mountainous terrain with rock outcroppings. The area is mostly forested with second growth, conifers being predominant. One major highway (combined U. S. 2 and State Highway 28) crosses the river near Bessemer, Michigan. County Road 513 parallels most of the river. However, this road lies an average of one-half mile to the west of the river. A major portion of the river flows through the proclamation boundary of the Ottawa National Forest. Most of the area is undeveloped within the watershed except along the major highways. Approximate size of the watershed is 257 square miles.

b. The 1970 population of an area within 50 miles was estimated at 62,378 most of which lies in or around the communities of Ironwood, Bessemer, Ramsey, Wakefield, Michigan; and Ashland and Hurley, Wisconsin.

c. Numerous public and private recreation facilities exist within the region, including federal, state, county, township, and municipal facilities. Acreage figures are unavailable at the present time. Within 50 miles of this river there are numerous large lakes and free-flowing streams.

2. River

a. The river covers approximately 35 miles and the depth varies from one to six feet. The bottom material consists of mud, sand, and rock. The average discharge over 13 years of record is 227 cfs.

b. Stream is canoeable from its headwaters at Black River Lake downstream to Ramsey Dam. Below Ramsey, the river is considered a second quality trout river. The main stream has 11 falls and rapids areas from its source to its mouth. It is considered as one of Michigan's wildest rivers. A steelhead run exists below the lowest falls in spring and fall.

c. Stream is of high water quality with brook and brown trout being the predominant game fish species.

d. There is one small dam at Ramsey, Michigan. There is no known water resources development recommended for the river.

e. The river has some calm stretches, but mostly fast water. North of U. S. Route 2 there are falls and rocky chasms.

f. Land ownership upstream from Ramsey is entirely private except at Black River Lake where State ownership surrounds the lake. Downstream from Ramsey the U. S. Forest Service owns a significant amount of frontage. The stream has little or no development for its entire length except in and around the village of Ramsey where heavy development occurs.

g. Specific data are not available.

h. See map 1:250,000 Ashland quadrangle.

3. Chief attributes of the river include its high water quality, relatively low level of development, scenic qualities, and canoeability over most of its upper half above Ramsey. A chief disadvantage or limitation to use is the large amount of private ownership over much of the highest quality fishing and canoeing areas.

4. The source of the material used for gathering the above information was: State of Michigan's Fish Division Files, Stream Inventory, Michigan Canoe Trails, and Department of Natural Resources maps.