

NOTE: the DRUC assumes NO responsibility, direct or implied, for the safety of diving at this site using this information.€ The information in this report presents general information on conditions and certain known hazards, but conditions are variable and other hazards may exist from time to time.€ It is every diver's own/personal responsibility to ensure that the conditions are adequately safe with respect to his/her training and experience – THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT YOUR OWN RISK!

## Dive Report – McSourley Lake (Stonecliffe Area)

McSourley Lake rates as a “fair” site - worth visiting once, but you might not want to return. Access is fair (4WD is necessary, and only one vehicle can fit in the small parking area next to the lake), the hazards are minimal, and the underwater conditions are fair to good. The main limitations with this site are the limited visibility below the thermocline (suspended solids and darkness), and there's a lengthy swim to get the where the underwater scenery is good – overall, I'd rank this site 6 of 10, but some might give it a 7.

**NOTE** - we visited this lake in mid-August, so details below concerning VIS and temperature may vary during other times of the year.

### Attractions

Clean/clear water, rocky shoreline (cliffs, overhangs), deep water, limited silt.

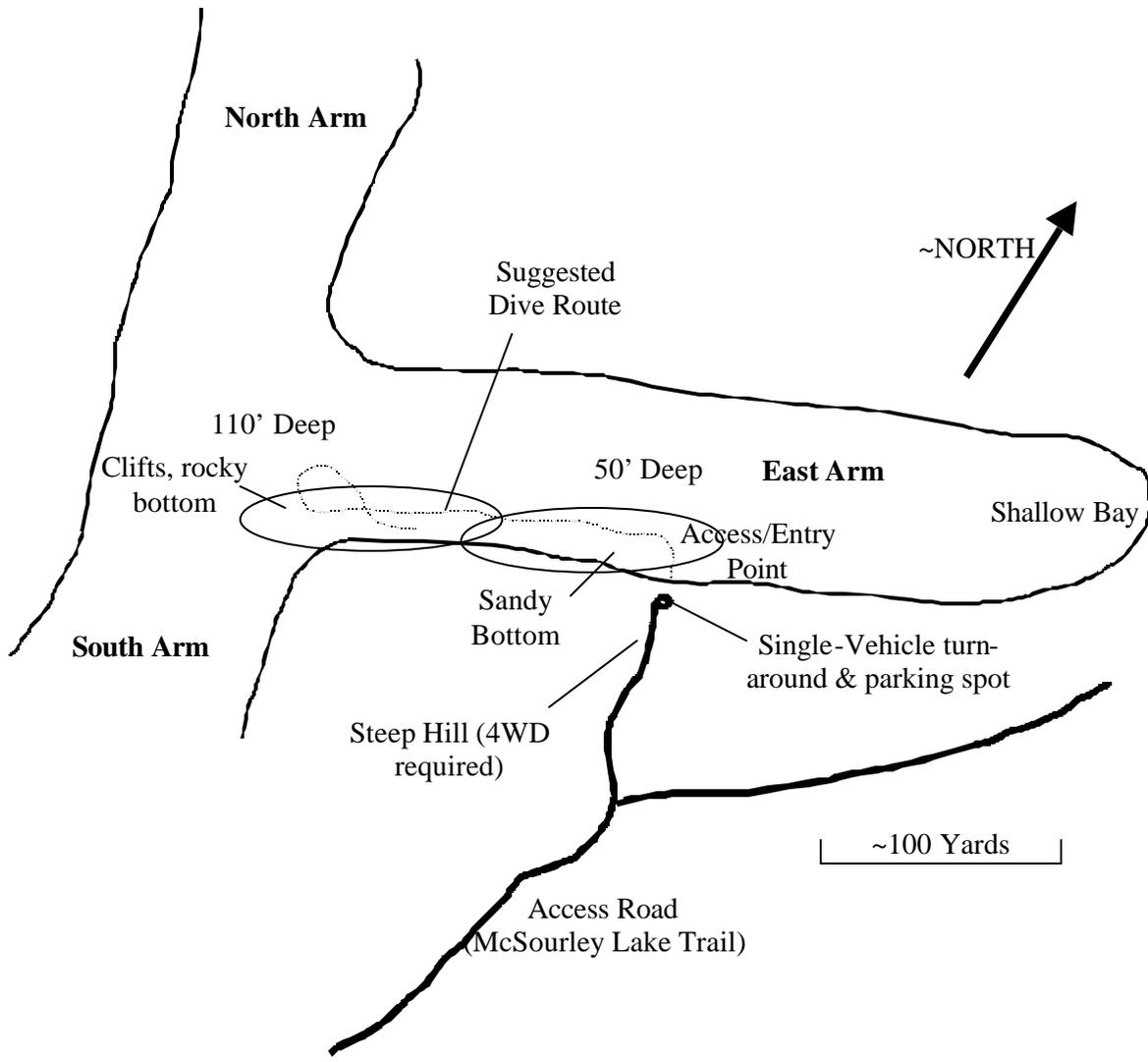
### Site Overview

This lake is a small, scenic, deep (up to 110'), T-shaped lake with most of the shoreline characterized as ravine-like. At the access point to the lake (east arm), the ravine and the lake bed are sandy (fine white silica sand), with a maximum depth of about 50'. Most other areas of the lake (north arm and south arm) are rocky, with cliffs or sloping bedrock that continue into the water and continue to bottom depths of 80 to 110'. These other arms are far more interesting areas to explore, but a boat is needed to access them. Without a boat, the best dive plan is to descend to 15' then swim along the sandy bottom towards the intersection of the arms (head left from the put-in). Along the way (~150 yds), the bottom becomes rocky, and the drop-off steeper. By the about 200 yds, the scenery is excellent – cliffs, overhangs, submerged trees. But by the time you get to this point, however, its probably almost time to turn around and head back to the put-in.

The VIS was dependent on depth. The top 12' had excellent VIS - between 25 and 30' (horizontal). Below this depth (which marks the first thermocline), the water was somewhat cloudy, and the VIS was more like 12' to 15. With additional depth, the darkness added to the VIS reduction. At 30' depth the VIS was 10' or so. We didn't go any deeper to test the VIS at further depth. On other trips to this lake the VIS below the thermocline was even less (pea soup cloudiness), so there is a seasonal variability in VIS.

There may be several thermoclines in this lake – the first one was seen at around 12' depth (ghostly silt surface). A second thermocline (less sharp) occurred at around 20' depth – this second one with a noticeable difference in water temperature.

Marine life was, unfortunately, somewhat absent – we saw small rock bass next to shore and a few polywogs. But the underwater landscape scenery more-than makes up for this (once you get to the rocky area).



**Dive Site Sketch – McSourley Lake East Arm**

Access

35 minute travel time from Deep River to the shore of the lake (at reasonable highway speed). Access is simple - drive 25 minutes down Hwy 17 towards North Bay, then just past Stonecliffe and Grant's Creek, turn right (~north) onto McSourley Lake Trail, which is a rough logging road (cart track really), then drive ~3 km down McSourley Lake Trail to the lake. There's one intersection along the road – keep left (even though the left branch appears less traveled). The road runs fairly level, until the final approach to the lake. At this point there's a very steep descent to the lake. The road at this point is narrow, slightly rutted (from washouts) and covered with pine needles. All of these factors make 4WD an *absolute necessity* (that is, if you want to get out after the dive). The road ends at a small turn-around next to the lake. The turn-around is so small that you'll need to do a 3 or 4 point turn to end up aimed up the hill. There's room for one vehicle to park at the turn around, but be sure to park to one side in case a second vehicle

comes down the hill while you're diving (I'd really not want to attempt to back up the hill). In mid-August the bugs weren't bad, but earlier in the year this spot would be very bad for mosquitoes.

### Hazards

**Depth** - make sure your dive plan accounts for any decompression stops needed.

**Distance** – care must be taken to turn around and start swimming back to the entry point half-way through the dive.

### Recommendations

1. **Its worth checking out this lake for yourself, but do all the better local dives first:** suggest swimming out from shore and descending to 15', then swim along the sandy bottom towards the intersection of the arms (head left from the put-in). Along the way (~150 yds), the bottom becomes rocky, and the drop-off steeper. By the about 200 yds, the scenery is excellent – cliffs, overhangs, submerged trees. But by the time you get to this point, however, its probably almost time to turn around and head back to the put-in.
2. **Dive in a small group** – only one vehicle can fit in the parking (turn-around) spot next to the lake shore.
3. **Bring lights** – if you plan to attempt a deep dive, lights are probably a necessity.
4. **Dress warm** – the shallow thermocline means that you'll probably be swimming in 50 degr water - wear a 7 mm suit with hood, gloves, etc., and maybe a liner if you have one (to boost the thermal rating of the suit).
5. Bring a canoe to enjoy the spectacular surface scenery – watch for moose.
6. Dive other areas of the lake (south and north arms) using a canoe for access.