

Forest access roads affect walleye populations in northern Ontario lakes

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Forestry access roads can have undesirable outcomes on fish populations living in remote lakes due to increased access, reveals research written by Len Hunt and Nigel Lester of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, recently published in the journal *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*.

The presence, location, and extent of forestry roads have important effects on access point development on remote lakes in northern Ontario. Due to the popularity of walleye in northern Ontario, access points were found to be closely associated with lakes that contain the species. According to the research, lakes containing walleye require more protection to prevent access point development than lakes containing species such as [lake](#) trout and brook trout, two other popular species in northern Ontario. However, cases of lake trout [population decline](#) have been associated with new road access as well.

The research concluded that a lake's location and fishing quality are directly affected by new access points from forestry roads. Lakes with the greatest risk from development are those found near human settlements and that are isolated from other lakes. The researchers found that the impact of forestry roads is lessened by cost, fishing quality, and context variables. Consequently, management of a lake for remoteness must not only consider the extent of forestry operations but also consider the cost of accessing the lake, the attractiveness of the lake (e.g., fishing quality), and the context of the lake.

The study also found that individuals develop access points over a long time when fish communities, forest management and operations, populations, and environmental values among anglers and other residents may have differed. It was also found that these accessed lakes could also revert from accessible to non-accessible states through deterioration of roads or overexploitation of popular [fish species](#).

More information: Hunt, L.M., Lester, N., 'The effect of forestry roads on access to remote fishing lakes in northern Ontario, Canada,' The North American Journal of Fisheries Management. Volume 29, Issue 3 (June 2009) pp. 586-597 [doi:10.1577/M08-022.1](https://doi.org/10.1577/M08-022.1)

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