

# **The First Semi-Annual Mid-West Swing**



## **Grayling, Michigan**

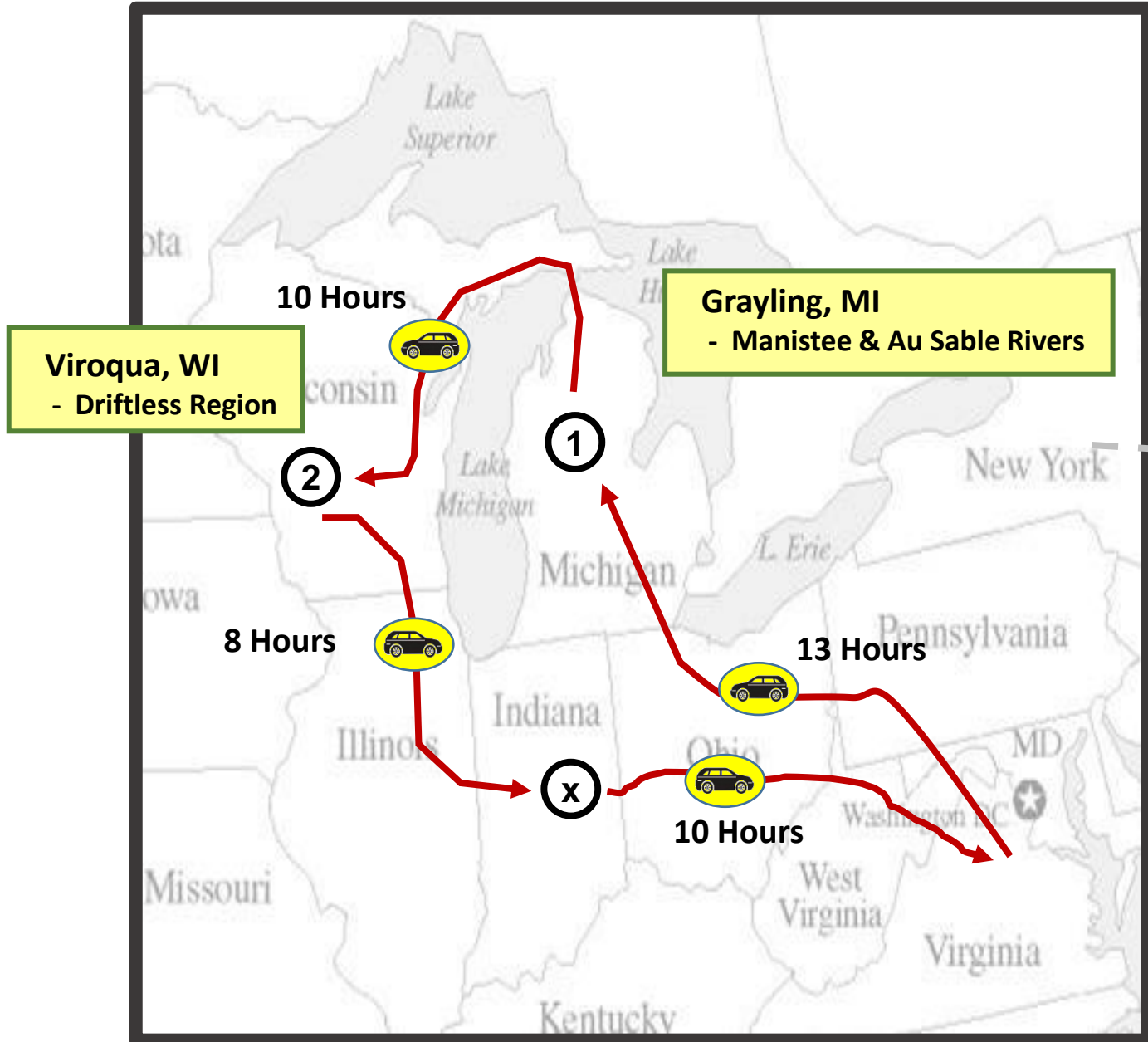
**Manistee River – Day Float  
Au Sable River – Night Mouser**



## **Driftless Region, Wisconsin**

**Near Viroqua  
Walk & Wade Trips**

# Mid-West Swing – Summer 2020 Version



- Planned Stop-Over for cancelled Quetico Trip in April
- Deposits & reservations in-place
- 1 week (Sunday-to-Sunday)  
- Included 1 day non-fishing related lay-over
- Grayling, Michigan  
- Manistee River ½ day float  
- Au Sable River night mouser
- Viroqua, Wisconsin  
- 29<sup>th</sup> – a.m. unguided, p.m. guided  
- 30<sup>th</sup> – dawn & dusk guided



# Grayling, Michigan – The Au Sable River

- Historic ... Birthplace of TU, The “Au Sable” Boat
- Known for Hex Hatch and Night Mousers
  - Advertising size & fight of their Brown Trout
- No Grayling left (efforts to reintroduce)



# **The Au Sable (and Manistee) River**

- **Primarily narrow, shallow, and slow**
- **Brook, Brown, and (occasional) Rainbow**
- **Small fish during the day; big browns feed at night**
- **Two primary shops: Old Au Sable and Gates Lodge**
  - **½ day = \$300, full day = \$425, night mouser = \$350**



# Grayling, Michigan



Browns



Rainbows



Brooks

## Manistee River – morning float

Hot Patterns: Hoppers, Wet Skunk



90%



10%

Numbers: ~15 fish in the 6-10” range, 1 around 14”

Comments: Used an Au Sable boat – fun and relaxing fishing

## Au Sable – night “mouser”

Hot Patterns: None . . .

We used gurgler type flies



© Alaska Fly Fishing Goods

Numbers: None . . . Two attacks, no hook-ups

Comments: Drift boat, some questionable calls by guide (launch & take-out points, no dual fishing / shared rod, fly non-selection) resulted in ~ 90 minutes of rod time on 4 hour float & no fish

# Grayling, Michigan

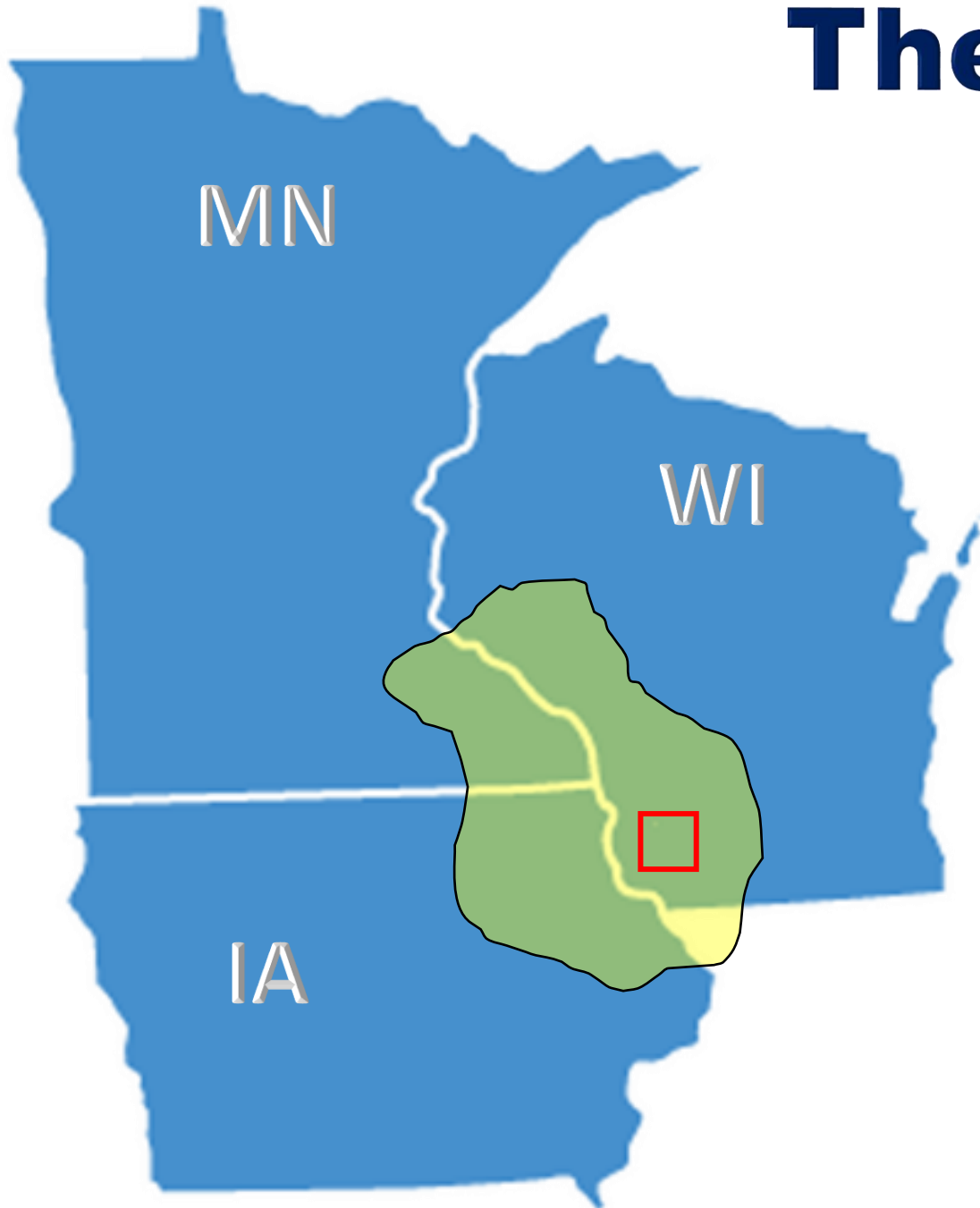
Manistee River – morning float   Au Sable River – night mouser

***2019 Assessment: Good stop-over spot, but not a destination***

***2020 Assessment:***

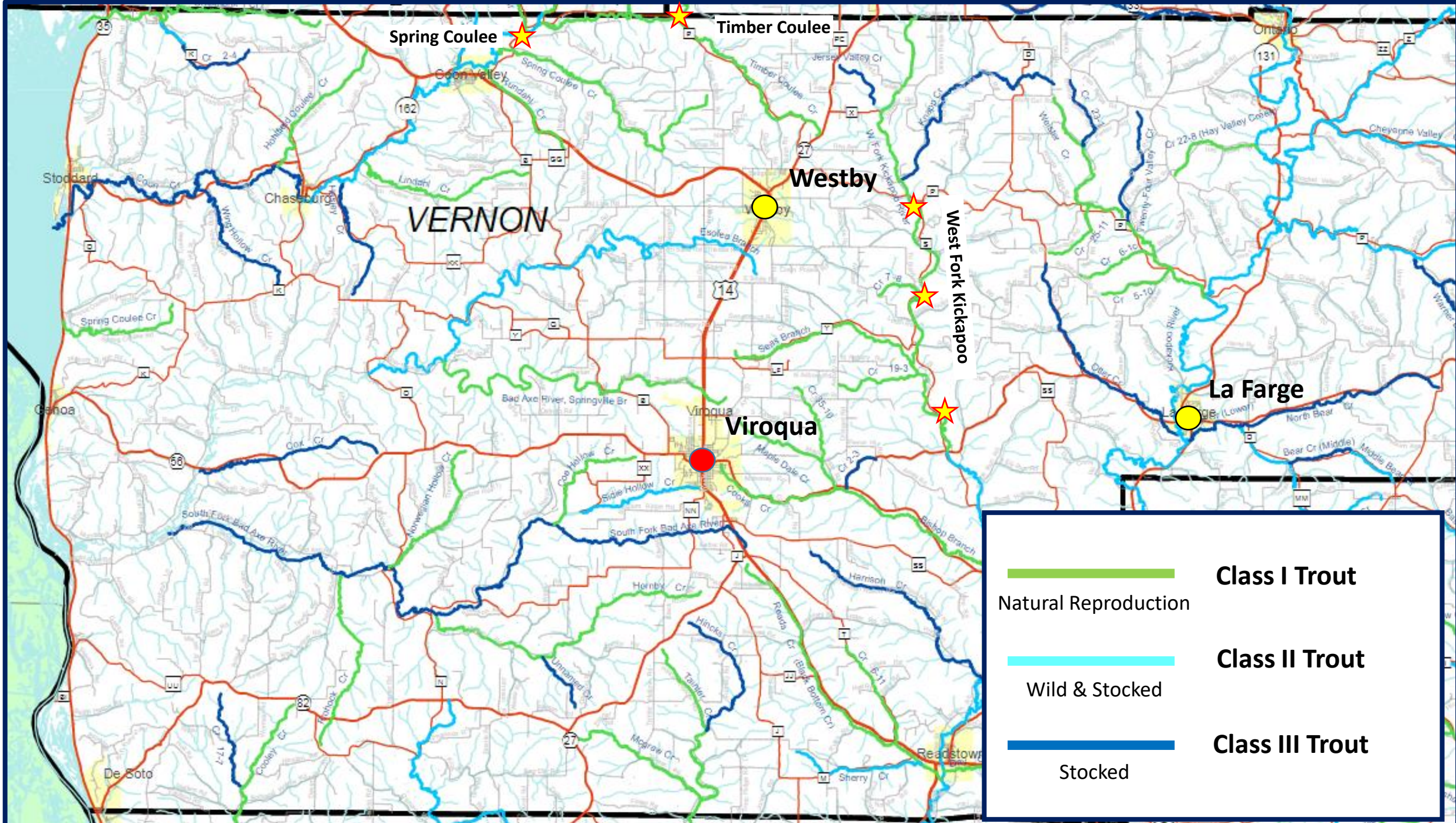
- ***Neat history (TU Birthplace)***
- ***Au Sable Boats + Slow Water + Scenery = Nice, Relaxing Fishing***
- ***Hex Hatch & “Mouser” windows touted for intensity & size***
  - - ***Otherwise modest numbers and small fish***
- ***Other than the boat ride, not worth the time & expense***

# The Driftless



- **Parts of WI, MN, IA**
- **24k square miles**
- **Lack of Glacial Deposits (drift)**
- **Spring fed streams**
  
- **SW Wisconsin (Viroqua)**
  - **250 miles of trout water**
  - **63 spring creeks**





Spring Coulee

Timber Coulee

Westby

VERNON

Viroqua

La Farge

West Fork Kickapoo

	<b>Class I Trout</b>
	<b>Class II Trout</b>
	<b>Class III Trout</b>
	Natural Reproduction
	Wild & Stocked
	Stocked



# The Driftless (Viroqua, WI)

- Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE)
- Groups provide stream / land restoration
- Farmers grant easements to anglers
- Small annual stipends



# The Driftless (Viroqua, WI)

- **Wild Browns and Brooks**



9-12" w/ a few to 15"



7-10"

- **Hot Flies**

70% Top / 30% Nymph



Para-Adams



Para-BWO



Hippy Stomper



Pink Squirrel

- **Small Water, Remarkably Diverse Streams**

- **Stream Access: From car door easy to “Dude, you alive?”**



# Small Water, Remarkably Diverse Streams

Fast Run Riffles



Rock Quarry Pools



Slow Meadow



Deep Cuts in Woodland



# The Driftless – Angler Comments

- **Challenging, Exciting Fishing**
  - Lightning fast, slashing strikes
    - - Tight line, attention after cast essential
  - Tricky currents & light (glare) management
- **Stream Density & Diversity**
  - Miles of Trout Water in every direction
  - Meadow Stream Browns to Pocket Stream Brooks – minutes apart





# The Driftless – Angler Comments

- **Water Temperature a Key Factor**
  - 64 degrees or higher . . . Move On
- **Low Angler Density**
  - Saw no other anglers 85% of the time
- **Stream Side Lodging Options**
  - Farmer operated BNB, VRBO cabins & cottages



# The Driftless – Angler Comments

- **Interesting Area**
  - Scandinavian (Norwegian) and Amish
- **Down Sides . . .**
  - Location: 1.5 days from Fredericksburg & Ennis
  - Fish size?
- **Remarkable Value / Great Bang-for-the-Buck**
  - See Guide Review





# Guide Services



- 1 Full Service Shop (Viroqua)
- Several Independents



- Mike Warren / Trout Buddy Driftless Guides
  - “Gun-Bearer” Technique
  - ½ Day - \$195 / \$225      Full Day - \$295 / \$325
  - Unique “Split Day” Option (0700-1200 / 1600-2100)
  - Licensed in All 3 States
  - **Great Guide / Absolutely Remarkable Value**



# Mid-West Swing Summary



- **Au Sable / Mainstee (Grayling, MI)**
  - Pleasant Au Sable boat ride . . . but marginal fishing
  - May be great during peak Hex & Mouser windows (night fishing)
  - But otherwise, not worth the time, effort, & cost



- **The Driftless (Viroqua, WI)**
  - Great small water fishing . . . stream access, diversity, fish
  - Best value around
  - Absolutely a Way-Point during future Rockies' trips
    - - And a good stand-alone Destination Location