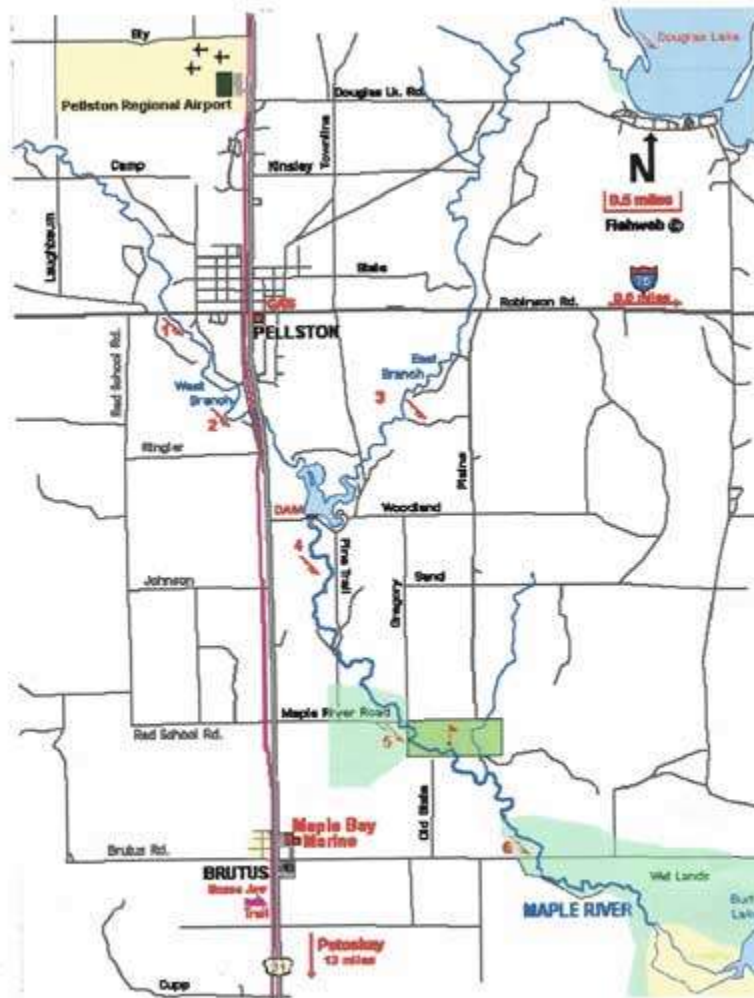


SO HOW MANY MAPLE RIVERS ARE THERE, ALREADY?

Quite a few, so it seems, if you count the one you find along the way while traveling down Riggsville Road/Robinson Road towards Pellston or across US 31 N as you continue down what becomes Mill Street/Robinson Road. And, of course, there's the one that you find flowing beneath US 31 N if you turn left and proceed towards Petoskey. And should you turn off US 31 to enjoy a chicken dinner at the Dam Site Inn, there's always the REALLY IMPRESSIVE ONE created as water flows through the gates of what once was the hydroelectric dam that brought electricity to Pellston back near the turn of the twentieth century.



Trout fishermen are quick to tell you that there are TWO branches of the Maple River: the West Branch and the East Branch. The West Branch, about 16 miles long, drains a land area in excess of 90 square miles. Its headwaters originate in the

Pleasant View Swamp, which consists of between 6,000 and 7,000 acres of coniferous swamp. At its point of origin, the gradient (the change in ground elevation) is relatively slight, leading to slow-moving streams flowing into one another. Additional groundwater further adds to its volume, as do two creeks: Brush Creek (an outlet from Larks Lake) and Cold Creek. The West Branch winds its way south and east until finally reaching its ultimate destination, the small “lake” that was formed behind the hydroelectric dam. It is the West Branch that you would be observing while traveling south on US 31N shortly after passing by the Pellston General Store/BP gas station. You can locate a much prettier view of the West Branch, however, by driving west on Pleasant View Road just outside of Pellston. Look to your left shortly after leaving Pellston. There is a sandy pull-off at that location and a small trail that allows you to walk down next to the stream. Nearby was one of three saw mills that once drove the economy of Pellston. It was situated right next to the river. Be sure to take a quick look at the street sign as you begin your drive on Pleasant View Road and you will see the road’s early local name: West Mill Street, referencing the saw mill that was once built there.

The second branch, called the East Branch of the Maple River, is much shorter, probably only about seven miles in length. Its origin is much more familiar, however, since it serves as an outlet for waters flowing away from Douglas Lake and towards Burt Lake. And it is this second branch with which Douglas Lakers typically have greater contact since some of us get to pass over it at least twice on our way to Pellston when traveling from the south side of the lake. While traveling down the Douglas Lake Road as you are moving away from the lake, you will note a very obvious crossing, with a good view of the river to your left. Shortly before reaching the riverbed, there is a seasonal road which allows parking for fishermen or for visitors wishing to take in the views. Or, if you choose to drive via Riggsville Road, your second opportunity arises as you approach Pellston. Side trails allow you to access the East Branch along this avenue, as well. A second Pellston saw mill was located near here. [A third mill operation, this one a planing mill, was located in downtown Pellston.]

Shortly after crossing under Riggsville Road, the East Branch of the Maple River makes its way to the shallow lake bed that was formed behind the Pellston dam, which is on Woodland Road. There it is joined by the emerging West Branch of the same river shortly after its own passage underneath US 31 N. The small lake is best viewed while eating a chicken dinner in the Coral Dining Room of the Dam Site Inn. And the name of that lake? Kathleen Lake. It was lovingly so named by Ken McLaughlin, then owner, along with his wife Kathy, of the Dam Site Inn.

At that point, the coursing water becomes simply THE Maple River. Its volume having been substantially increased by the inflow of the two component branches plus several downstream tributaries and its speed enhanced by the dropping gradient, it is along this stretch that the river is at its most impressive. A dinner at the Hidden River Golf and Casting Club offers some beautiful views of the Maple River in a picturesque setting. After traveling past the Club, the Maple River makes its way under Brutus Road while traversing adjacent wetlands before finally reaching its ultimate destination at the mouth of Maple Bay in Burt Lake.

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