

## Where To Fish: Local And Not So Local Streams



Bill Lucia, President  
Thomas Jefferson Chapter of Trout Unlimited

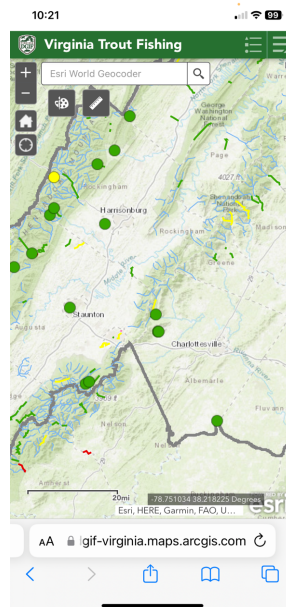
### Our Region

Central Virginia and the Highlands of the western mountains offer an abundance of fly fishing streams, rivers and lakes.

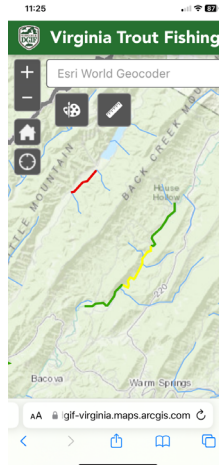
Within a two hour drive of Charlottesville are literally dozens of opportunities for catching four species of trout.

With a few exceptions, I will primarily cover streams in Albemarle, Madison, Nelson and Bath Counties. A search of the Virginia Fishing website link will add many more.

There are also many special regs area that require a permit, some of which are free, all available on the Virginia DWR fishing license pages. Mossy Creek, Buffalo Creek and South River. Additional fee permits for the National Forests, State forests and some day use fees, like Douthat State Park.



## Upper Jackson River



## 3 Areas of The upper Jackson

- Hidden valley
- Special Regulations
- Poor Farm



### Hidden Valley

From Warm Springs at the Jefferson pools (a great place to soak off those aches and pains after fishing all day) take Rt. 39 west to 621 (Watch for the signs and turn right on McGuffin Rd). Next is a left turn onto Hidden Valley Rd. After passing the Hidden Valley campground turnoff you will come to the parking area. There are two miles of wade fishing upstream and more downstream. That house you see across the causeway is the rustic Hidden Valley bed and breakfast. A nice place to park your weary bones and a good breakfast. (its not an early one though) Dinners will have to be in Warm Springs or Hot Springs. Do your research because restaurants have staggered closing days.

2 miles upstream from the parking lot is the next Jackson gem.



### Jackson River Special Regulations

Once you are in that Hidden Valley parking lot the special regs area is a two mile hike on level ground to the swinging bridge. I recommend you carry boots and waders in a pack, put them on when you get there and hide the pack in the bushes until you return to the bridge. Upstream are over 3 miles of catch and release trout waters. See the posting for dates and limits.

There are plenty of runs and holes with trout in them. This stretch eventually connects with the Poor Farm piece and can be reached by hiking downstream from the end of the road at Poor Farm.



## Poor Farm

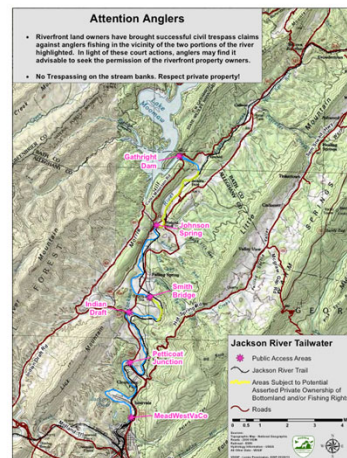
Starting again at the Jefferson Pools (I really can't recommend them enough) drive north on 220, the Sam Snead Hwy (yes that Sam Snead). Turn left on 623, Poor Farm Road. This road eventually turns to gravel and can be rough in places. The river is on your left and can be accessed in the camping area, at the cul de sac with the pit toilet and from the trail all the way back to Hidden Valley.

The stone wall at the cul de sac has a very deep and fast run that hides large browns and rainbow in its depths. Wading across upstream a bit gives better places to stand and reel them in. The campground area is slower water but after stocking can be productive.



## Jackson River Tailwater

- **Five Great Places to Fish** On the VDGIF website you will find this map with the Anglers Warning. Close inspection will inform you of the five sites where fishing is allowed. Other parts are the Kings Grant segments where the adjacent landowner claims ownership of not just the banks of the river but also the land beneath the water and the fish in the column above it. "How can this be?" you might ask. When the Declaration of Independence and the resulting Virginia Commonwealth Laws were written, lands conveyed to colonists through grants by the King of England were conveyed into law.
- The Commonwealth took possession of all "Navigable waters" for the benefit of it's citizens and the argument of what is navigable began. At this point in time the Virginia Supreme Court has sided with landowners and has not addressed the issue of "navigable". Arrests for fishing resulted.
- SO, DON'T FISH ON THOSE PARTS OF THE RIVER



## Five Lower Jackson Fishing Spots

- **Second Warning** for fishing - The Army Corps of Engineers controls the amount of water released from Lake Moomaw at Gaithright Dam. See [nao-wc.usace.army.mil](http://nao-wc.usace.army.mil) for dates, times and quantities. At staggered intervals during the summer PULSES are released from the Lake in quantities nearing 3,500cfs. The river downstream can rise from three (3) to four and a half (4-1/2) feet. If you are downstream you cannot hear the warning horn. The pulse is done to prevent the proliferation of invasive diddymo weed and algae downstream to and past Covington (at Rt. 64). Fishing after the pulse subsides and for several days afterwards is terrible.
- **Gaithright Dam Tailwater** – ¼ mile from the spillway downstream of the dam is the tailwater. At times of normal flow, 200-300 cfs, some of the largest Browns and Rainbows will be holding and feeding from the outflow of the spillway. Wading is possible with caution. Catching a 20 -36" trout is possible even if a rare occurrence.
- From Covington go north on 220 and left onto 687, Jackson River Road. Left on 641 Indian Draft Road and then right on 666, E Morris Hill Road. Right on 605, Coles Mountain Road, and right again on Stilling Basin Road. The drive is about 14-15 miles total and takes about 25 minutes from Covington.

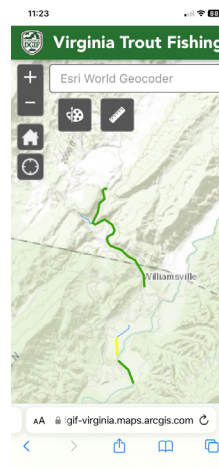
**Indian Draft Boat Ramp** – A mere 6-7 miles from Covington is the Indian Draft boat ramp. At the intersection of 641 STAY on 687. The driveway to the launch is a short distance farther on your right. Park here and walk to the river from the right side of the lot to a trail that parallels the river. A short ways downstream you reach Indiandraft Creek and an island splitting the river. By wading across here or a little farther downstream two great pieces of river can be accessed. To the right is a shallower section of easily wadeable water with a population of wild browns and rainbow trout. The left side is much deeper and usually faster moving water but the chance of bigger trout is the tradeoff. Less than a ¼ mile downstream the channels rejoin making the river a wide, shallow, easily fished stretch down to and past a swinging bridge. There are several deeper runs through this section that sometimes hold large browns. A variety of nymphs, streamers, dries and terrestrials in their seasons are effective. My recommendation is to stay on the right side of the island and fish both down and back up.

**Johnson Spring, Smith Bridge and Petticoat Junction** are the three other access points. All are boat ramps and have access to fishing. By using your Maps AP you can get precise directions to each of them (I have NO personal knowledge of these areas but VDGIF lists them as good fishing). Petticoat Junction is closest to Covington and has a mix of cold and warm water species. It also has an odor problem from the mill in Covington when the wind is wrong.



## Bath County – Williamsville Area

- **Bullpasture River**
  - Williamsville
  - Swinging bridge
  - The Gorge
- **Cowpasture River**
  - Access Road
  - Blue Hole
  - Scotchtown
- **Spring Run**





## Bullpasture River in Williamsville

- General directions for all 7 areas
- From Charlottesville the drive is approximately 2 hours. From I-64 west take the Staunton 262 bypass. At the 250 exit take 250 west toward Churchville. At the West Augusta store turn left onto 629, the Deerfield Valley Road. Pass through Deerfield and enjoy the long rural country drive. At Scotchtown Draft Road turn right. This Forest Service road turns to gravel but is a good road. The Cowpasture is the river you cross just before the next turn. At the stop sign turn right onto 678 - Indian draft Road. Williamsville is a few miles up the road. At the bridge in Williamsville you can park either left of the bridge or take the right turn onto Junction Road. Park either below or above the bridge road and wade into the Bullpasture.
- On the way you will pass turnoffs for the Cowpasture River, Blue hole, Coursey Springs Fish Cultural Station and Spring Run



## Bullpasture



- Following 678 through "downtown" Williamsville you will pass by private properties where permission is needed to access the river but in a few miles you will come to the Mill Run access. The Forest service sign marking this right turn is frequently missing or damaged, however it drops down to the river at a large parking area with river access on both sides via a swinging bridge. There are lots of runs holes and riffles to fish here. When the river is clear and high and recently stocked the fishing is great. The tiny Mill Run drops into the Bullpasture just downstream from the bridge. Walk to it from the parking lot and follow it up stream where brook trout wait in the pools.
- Continuing up 678 the river swings in up to the road. This is the upper end of the Gorge. Access is by scrambling down the large rocks put in place to keep the road from washing away. Runs can be very deep and are full of rainbow and browns



## Coursey Springs and Spring Run



- The often legendary Spring Run is a ¼ mile blue ribbon catch and release only stream. It is a natural spring with flows of 3,000 gallons/minute but often as high as 15,000 gpm. Water temperature ranges from 47 to 57. Always clear and cold it attracts very large trout of all types.
- A Virginia Slam is a real possibility here on any given day. Browns and rainbow in the 22'-30" range are common. Brook and Tiger trout frequently make an appearance. The water never freezes so year around fly fishing is possible. Midges and scuds abound especially in warmer months. Small hooks in the 18-24 range with Fluorocarbon droppers in size 5x-6x can be successfully fished. Flies must be presented deep and with the flow. Takes are subtle and easily missed. An indicator fly that remains visible can be your only clue, when it hesitates, set the hook.
- The "hatchery" is open to the public for self guided tours. Check with the website for hours and restrictions.



## Cowpasture Access

- **Wallace Tract**
  - Follow the directions for Coursey Springs. After turning right off of Scotchtown Draft road look for a beat up sign on your right "Cowpasture River Access", Forest Rd. 282. In about ½ mile you will reach a gate. If open drive to the river, park and fish. If closed walk the extra ¼ mile to the river. This stretch is stocked and is wadeable both up and down stream for several miles. Other than the Scotchtown Draft bridge there is not another easy access point in the stretch from Williamsville to the bridge .
- **Blue Hole**
  - About ¼ mile after turning onto Forest road 282 the track makes a 90 degree turn to the right. It is at this spot you will see an open camping area at the top of the hill with a dirt "road" going up into it. On the left is a drainage with a footpath down to the river. Not an easy path but if you are able it will take you to the Blue Hole.
  - At the bottom hug the bank going downstream to access the shoreline under the bluff. The water here can be as much as 16 feet deep and the surrounding shallows and channels hold plenty of browns, rainbow, large fallfish and the occasional bass. Upstream you can see the inlet of Spring Run, downstream leads you to where 282 meets the river. The channels, riffles and holes in this stretch give you the opportunity to try lots of fly options from worms to nymphs and streamers. This is a put and take stretch up and down river, but not in Spring Run.

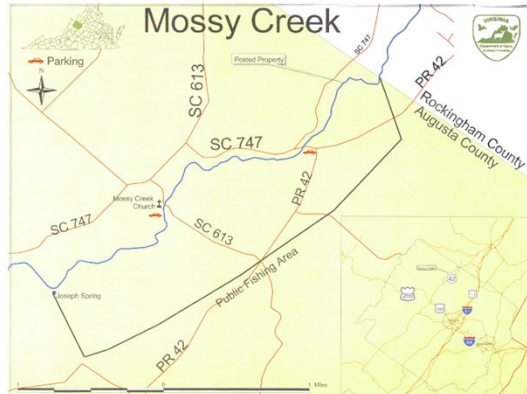


## Mossy Creek

Mossy creek is a private property special permit fishing area. The free permit is available online on the Virginia fishing licences pages. Pay close attention to the posted regulations.

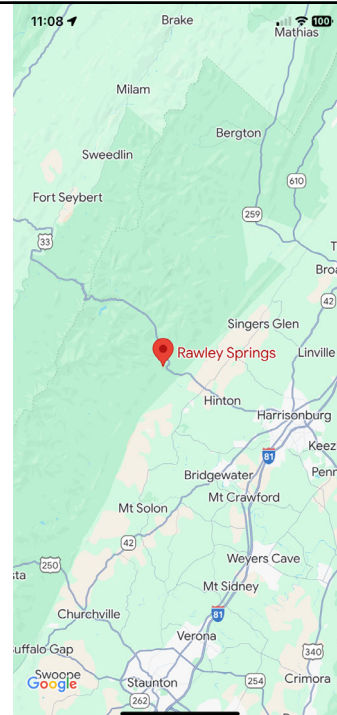
From Bridgewater take Rt 42 South to a right turn onto 613, Kyles Mill Rd. Just after the bridge over Mossy Creek is a small parking area with a large sign detailing the area to fish and the regulations.

Fishing is both upstream and downstream. This cold spring fed stream is usually full of weeds and demands careful casting in most stretches. Brown trout are the sought after quarry. Fish exceeding 20 " are possible for the successful angler. The easiest area to fish is the stretch downstream of the bridge.



## Dry River

- The Dry River is located in the George Washington National Forest west of Harrisonburg via Rt. 33. Often proclaimed both the best and longest Brook trout stream in Virginia it is also one of the most accessible. From Harrisonburg a 13 mile drive will bring you to the river. Upstream of the community of Rawley Springs is 17 miles of brook habitat, and that's just what is below Switzer Reservoir/Lake. Above the lake are several more miles of densely populated stream.
- From the point where the river comes near the road there will be pullouts for parking all along this stretch of 33. Spring is dry fly season on the Dry. Starting with sulfurs and progressing to Green Drakes and caddis as warmer days arrive, finally moving on to ants, beetles and nymphs before the river "dries" in summer. In wet years fishing will be excellent through the summer and into the Fall rains. The Skidmore Fork to the reservoir is also brook habitat but demands a bit more hiking.
- If you are really feeling energetic hike around the reservoir to the inlet in late summer and fall where the brooks will be congregating for spawning, particularly when the upper Dry is still flowing.



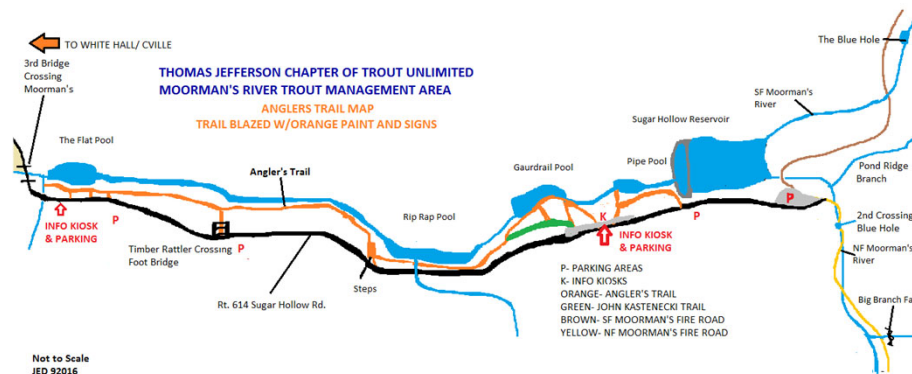


# The Moormans River

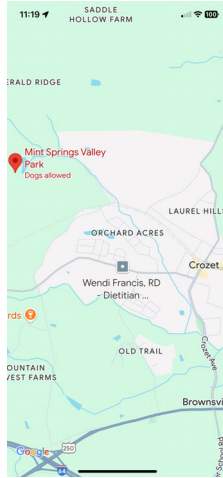
- **North Fork** - 4-5 miles of native brook trout habitat. Hiking involved. Above the third crossing is the best and roughest area for fishing. This is in the park and is catch and release, single hook only. Very high fish per mile counts.
- **South Fork** - Walk downstream from the parking lot a short distance and cross the river onto the old jeep trail. A ½ mile hike uphill brings you to the first South Fork crossing. Uphill are many plunge pools and holes with stocked brook and maybe rainbow and brown if stories are to be believed. Downstream the river passes through a jumble of downed trees and log jams to the reservoir. Trout hide under al those jams and very few people fish this stretch. Lots of bushwacking.
- **Tailwater** – Our very own managed trout waters with over 1000 fish/mile.
- **Lower Moormans**- Limited access from Sugar Hollow to the Rivanna Reservoir with trout, bass , sunnies, chub and catfish in the mix.
- **Directions:** From Charlottesville take Barracks/Garth road to Whitehall where a slight left at the Whitehall store will put you on Sugar Hollow Road. After crossing the third bridge it is ½ mile to the start of the TJTU tail water or a 1-3/4 mile drive to the North Fork parking area.



# The Moormans River



## Mint Springs Valley Park



- Mint Springs is the perfect place for fly fishing for many species. Browns, rainbow, bream, sunnies, bass and more. Two platforms give easy access to the middle lake for everyone. The upper lake with it's remnant dock hides a lot of fish both under the pilings and in the deeper parts reachable from spots around the lake. It's a perfect place to teach back casting on the grass and roll casting on the water at the foot of the earthen dam. Both lakes are stocked with trout periodically. Trout up to 24" have been caught there in the past. Fee entry may apply.
- From Crozet take Railroad Ave. to Mint Springs Road. At the park road turn left and park either at the lower lake or the lot next to the beach.

## Tye River

### How to get there

- From Charlottesville
- 29 south to Colleen, then west on 56. Right on 151/56 and left onto the Crabtree Falls Hwy.
- From a point ½ mile below Campbell Mountain Rd. (814) and 1.5 miles upstream is the state put and take fishing, browns and rainbow.
- Fly fishing for Native Brook trout can be accessed at the Crabtree Falls Parking lot. A parking fee applies. Brook trout can be found from ½ mile downstream to ¾ mile upstream of the parking lot



## Piney River - Nelson County



### Piney River at the Blue Ridge Rail Trail

The stretch of the Blue Ridge Rail Trail from the Piney River rail Station to Roses Mill follows the Piney River for most of this stretch. Along this easy to walk trail there are many points at which to access the river. The state stocks this area several times throughout the fishing season. Bank fishing and wade fishing are both possible in normal conditions. Brown and rainbow both hold in the deeper runs and holes in this bedrock stream. Streamers, nymphs and dries can all be used as the seasons change. I recommend parking at the Mill end.

To reach Roses mill from Charlottesville go South on Rt 29 to Colleen. Turn right onto Rt 56. Next take a left onto Rt 674, Roses Mill Rd. Cross the river and pull in to the Blue Ridge Trail parking area.



## Madison County

- Madison County has many good trout streams. Among them are
- The Conway
- The Rapidan



## Conway River

- Known for it's brooks in the upper river and browns up to 20" in the lower.
- 29 north to west 230 to Wolfstown. Right onto 662, Graves Mill Rd. at the store. Next bear left onto Bluff Mountain Road, 615 at Graves Mill, continue on until you reach the river. Watch for the VDGIF signs and National Park boundary signs. The road becomes the Conway River Rd.(Fire rd) and winds in and out of private and Park land. It becomes a rough 4wd road at some point so be careful. When it peters out you have reached the head waters. In warmer months terrestrials are great with or without a short, small dropper nymph.



## Rapidan River – Lower Section

- Another Shenandoah Park River with lots of brook trout. Summer fishing can be fun with an ant pattern.
- Once again from 29 take 230 to the Wolfstown store and take that right onto 662, the Graves Mill Road. Follow it all the way to the end and park at the cul de sac. The trail from there goes up into the Park. Park regulations apply at all times. Check ahead for drought and heat restrictions. Catch and release at all times.



## Whitetop-Laurel

- Farther afield than the others is a Virginia legend, the Whitetop Laurel. Located in Washington County it boasts 5 miles of Special Regulation Water in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. An additional 7 miles of stocked trout waters winding through both public and private lands lie between the top of the Creeper trail and Damascus. (The Creeper trail continues another 16 miles to Abingdon.) Brook, brown and rainbow all reside in the stream, many of them wild.
- Take I-81 south to the Glade Spring Rt. 91 exit. Go East to Damascus. From here Rt 58 east follows the stream and parallels the Creeper trail. Signs will direct you to the parking areas and the Creeper Trail. Hiking or biking the Creeper Trail will give you access to more of the stream as it crosses the stream 47 times.
- Unfortunately the upper section has sustained a great deal of damage from Helene. Many trestles and portions of the trail have been destroyed and await repair or replacement. The town of Damascus also sustained a lot of damage.





## More Places to fish

- **Rapidan Wildlife Management Area and Shenandoah National Park** – The Rapidan River drainage area is located in and adjacent to Madison County and Shenandoah National Park, literally dozens of small streams and rivers to explore and fish, including the Rose river, the Hughes River, Big Run, Cedar Run and White oak Canyon. Inside the park almost every stream flowing down both the East and West slopes of SNP and the more southern Blue Ridge Parkway has native brook trout. Its easy downhill fishing with the promise of a strenuous uphill hike to return to your vehicle. The famous Camp Hoover in SNP can be accessed from the Skyline Drive or from the upper Rapidan access outside the park.
- **George Washington National Forest** - In addition to containing the Dry River this sprawling National Forest takes in much of the western part of the state and contains many more trout streams. Ramsey's Draft both within the Wilderness area and downstream of it is a great stream. Within the wilderness area there are 7 miles of freestone stream, some easily accessed and more up the Draft trail. Other streams in GWNF include Quarry Run, Piney River, Shoe Creek and so many more.
- **The southwestern part of the state** is another great fishing destination. Due to its more rural character the mountains have dozens if not hundreds of streams along the roads leading into the western slope of the Appalachian Chain and the Eastern slopes of the Virginia Highlands. Consulting a fly shop and doing your research will pay off in the long run.
- Other resources should include the Virginia Department of Wildlife website. Here you will find everything from Where to Fish to maps and directions, Special and regular licenses and permits, a lifetime license and the application for a Virginia Trout Slam.
- No fly fisherman should be without a good Guide Book or several. Ask at your local fly shop for their recommendation for a current and up to date book. Library sales and online used book sites often have some gems that may be a valuable resource for places, flies and directions.



## Guides and Guide Books

- When in doubt on where to go or what is best, the services of a guide are frequently indispensable. Whether it's here at home, in another state or another country, local knowledge is always beneficial.
- A local fly shop can often steer you in the right direction when all you need is a little advice. Most shops have or can get you a guide service when that is the best option. If you are comfortable with the area and all you need is a recommendation or directions to a stream a good guide book can also be very helpful.
- A currently out of print book that is excellent here in Virginia is Dave Hart's "Flyfishers Guide to Virginia". No matter where you want to go there will undoubtedly be a guide book for the region or state. Some books will be specific like guides to streams in a National Park or just generalized for an entire region. Directions to the authors favorite access point and what fly when charts are sometimes included. A good search of book stores where you can actually look at the book before buying it can pay off. Once again ask at the local fly shop, in person, by phone or in an email. Do your research for a successful trip.

