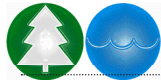


# W2's TOP TROUT WATERS

Where To Go  
When You  
Want The  
Best...

Above - Taking several moments to access stream and river conditions prior to making your first cast often makes the difference.



## TROUT FISHING SPECIAL

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

This is the one issue of the year W2 focuses on the great tradition of trout fishing.

While our region might not offer truly world class venues, it does have some notable destinations and fisheries. Some are remote and some are in the heart of the cities.

Finding good places to trout fish can be as simple as going online and visiting a DNR or VDGIF website to check where trout are being stocked. You choose your destination and prepare for your visit by purchasing the gear you think you'll need. Then the big day arrives and you head to the stream only to turn off the road and find you're not alone. There are as many trout anglers as there are trout sometimes!

W2 feels your frustration and has compiled a list of reputable destinations and guides you can consider when planning your next trout fishing trip. We've been personally to them all and can recommend each. Have a good trout season and try to visit as many as possible.

### South Branch Potomac River

Many trout anglers will probably groan when they read our first pick they don't want too much publicity on their honey hole. Luckily, the South Branch offers anglers over 90 miles of good, fishable water and amazing numbers of trout per mile in some special stretches. This scenic river flows through West Virginia's Pendleton, Grant and Hampshire Counties before reaching the Maryland state line, where it joins the main stem of the Potomac.

Perhaps the biggest trout in the mountain state fin in the South Branch. This is W2's pick of the region's top public trout fishery. Each year the South Branch produces more trophy trout than any other West Virginia river. The West Virginia state record brown trout of 16 pounds was pulled from the

### South Branch.

A quick look at West Virginia Gazetteer reveals the South Branch flows northeast between some serious mountains. The best section, known as the Smoke Hole, near the Town of Upper Tract on Route 220, is particularly noted as a trophy trout water. For anglers interested in special regulation areas, the Smoke Hole features a catch-and-release area, which starts at Eagle Rock and runs downstream one mile. From Smoke Hole to Big Bend is a great float.

Fish are stocked weekly starting in March. Holdovers from previous years, plus the new fish truly make the South Branch a public trout repository. Rainbows, brown and golden trout are stocked.

### North Fork of South Branch Potomac River

As far as outstanding public fishing waters, this river with way too long and confusing of a name, should just be called "trout wallow".

Yep, it's that good and that full of trout. And that's not just during certain times of the year, it's all the time.

Just over North Fork Mountain, Seneca Rocks and Spruce Knob, the North Fork of the South Branch might not hold trout as big as the nearby South Branch, but it still offers anglers plenty of fish. The main difference is that for much of its length, the North Fork has the accompaniment of Route 55/28, so fishing access and pressure is better/higher. The river flows about 22 miles from Seneca Rocks down to the Town of Cabins where it meets up with the South Branch.

### Lake Moomaw

At just over 2,530 acres and roughly seven miles long, Lake Moomaw has become a mountain trout powerhouse, annually producing more citation trout than anywhere else in Virginia



When fishing native brook trout streams you should always consider the element of stealth.

except a handful of privately-owned streams.

There are both brown and rainbow trout in the lake with a slight dominance by the browns. A strain of rainbow named McConaughy (similar to a steelhead) were stocked for many years in Moomaw by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The nature of these rainbows was to leave the lake and head way up Back Creek, a lower lake tributary. The result was low numbers remaining in the lake.

Currently the VDGIF is stocking a different kind of rainbow. During the winter and up until March both species are spread out because of cooler water temperatures. However, once the warming trend starts, the browns will rarely be found past the quarry region, (see Fishing Lake Moomaw video) preferring the deep water found down lake.

The rainbow trout seem more tolerant of shallower and slightly warmer water and are often caught mid-lake and far up in the coves.

Productive Moomaw trout lures are a 1/4 oz. gold blade boat, a 1/8 oz. chartreuse Mepps in-line spinner and a 1/2 oz. blue/chrome Crippled Herring. These offerings are simply cast far and retrieved back to the boat with a steady wind (no twitching).

As the year progresses and water warms, catching a trout using a lure becomes more difficult. The most productive method for catching trout in the lake at this point is to use at least six downlines and live bait. A downline consists of 10 lb. Trilene XT main line, threaded through a stream-lined 1/2 oz. egg style sinker,

small barrel swivel attached to 2.5' of 8 lb. Vanish fluorocarbon leader tied to a plain #6 Eagle claw hook.

The live bait is either large minnows or alewives (natural forage in the lake). Early in the year (until May) trout can be caught on freelines and downlines as shallow as 10'. This is prime time for lots of keeper fish (minimum 16", two fish per person). As the summer heat moves in, anglers should drop baits down to at least 20'. There will be lots of small 10" fish along with a few keepers..

Moomaw trout will usually feed best at sunrise until about 9:30 am and again an hour before sunset. Brown trout in the lake reach trophy size (5lbs./25") within three years, because of an abundance of forage in the lake. Citation rainbows are becoming more common and need to attain four pounds.

#### Deer Creek

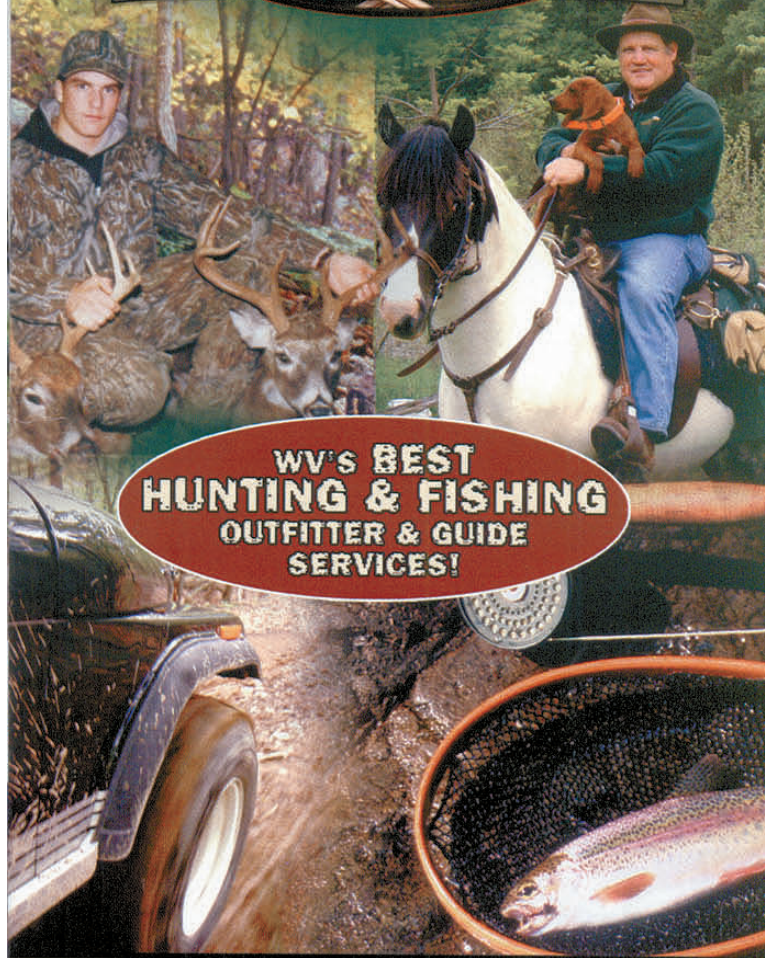
This small stream flowing through Harford County, Maryland is maintained by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and is stocked heavily each year. Approximately 10,000 trout will be stocked in Deer Creek this year. Stockings usually begin in early March when thousands of rainbows are released along a five-mile stretch beginning at the base of Eden Mill Dam and downstream to the southern end of Rocks State Park

Access to Deer Creek is via roadside park areas. Several picnic areas are also open to licensed anglers most of the spring and on weekdays after June.

| continued on page 14

# SMOKE HOLE

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## Top Trout Waters

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One tip; if you want to get one of these streamside parking spots, plan to be there before the sun rises because most of these spots are usually taken by 5:30 a.m.

Like all stocked streams, many of the trout are stocked at sites where hatchery trucks can get relatively close to the stream. Standbys include bridges, culverts and roadside pull-offs. Once uncerimoniously dumped, the fish will fan out into the stream. Many relocate in the deeper pools along Saint Clair Bridge Road and just below Eden Mill Dam.

Though Deer Creek is heavily fished during the first week or two after opening day, much of the fishing pressure abates by mid-April, yet the stream will still hold significant numbers of trout. On weekdays, anglers will find they have most of the stream's designated trout segment to themselves and will rarely encounter another angler at any location that requires a hike of more than a few hundred yards.

### Gunpowder River

The Gunpowder River is a highly maintained trout fishery that flows between Pretty Boy Reservoir and Lock Raven Reservoir, just northwest of Timonium, Maryland. Mandated, minimum flows coming from the Prettyboy Dam keep the water cold, rarely above 60 degrees and the trout happy.

Terrain here is that of a typical piedmont river valley gorge framed by a mature hardwood forest. Several scenic tributaries enter the river in this stretch and a rapids section along the river below Route 1 is nicknamed "Pot Rocks," due to deep potholes created in the river bedrock from water action/erosion.

Downstream of Prettyboy Dam the Gunpowder is designated as catch-and-release only fishery. Anglers wanting to try their luck, must stick only with artificial flies. There are large numbers of naturally reproducing trout ranging from 6-18" here. Anglers will mostly catch rainbows, but there are significant numbers of browns, and in the coldest pools, some native brook trout.

Thousands of rainbows will also be stocked downstream of the catch-and-release area into a put-and-take stretch that runs several miles from Corbett Road south to the hiker/biker trail a mile south of Phoenix Road. Much of the stream parallels this old railroad track trail, so angler access is great throughout much of its length

To reach this section of the Gunpowder, you will want to park at Bluemont Road, Sparks Road, Phoenix Road and Monkton Road from the Northern Central Railroad Trail. Bluemont Road is reached via I-83 exit 27 onto Route 37 east, right on York Road and left onto Monkton Road. The other roads are reached via York Road.



## TROUT FISHING SPECIAL



## Top Private Waters Guides And Outfitters By W2 Staff

Sometimes you have to "pay to play" as the saying goes.

The following destinations and guides do require fees, but the end result is often much more satisfying than if you would strike out on your own. Here are W2's top private trout waters and some guides/outfitters that can access them with you.

### Big Pine

Located some 25 miles northwest of Roanoke, nestled in the mountains of Craig County, Big Pine on Meadow Creek offers regional trout anglers a great opportunity to catch a Montana-sized trout. There's about a mile and quarter of Meadow Creek and a streamside trout rearing facility that is open to the public for the daily fee of \$45 per rod.

The lower section of the creek receives rainbow, golden and brook trout almost on a daily basis. But not just ordinary trout; six-pound fish are caught weekly. In this section, anglers can use live or artificial baits.

Be advised to bring some serious tackle. This part of Meadow Creek is characterized by some strong hydraulics, deep pools and fast moving riffles all under the cover of heavy and mature vegetation that makes just presenting to the trout challenging.

The upper section is the fly fishing only portion of the Big Pine operation. There are literally dozens of wild rainbow trout up to 10" here with a transplanted "steamer" or two lurking in most pools

There are only a limited number of anglers permitted on Meadow Creek at

one time so reservations are a must if you want to fish at Big Pine. In the lower stretch, you are allowed to keep five fish, if you are lucky enough to land them.

Big Pine also maintains two fully-equipped, streamside cottages that sleep four and seven, offers a blackberry picking field, turkey and deer hunts. For more information call 540/864.5555, visit [www.bigpinetroutfarm.com](http://www.bigpinetroutfarm.com) or email them at [bigpine@swva.net](mailto:bigpine@swva.net)

### Green Valley Hunter's Paradise

Bath County, VA offers some of the most beautiful mountain scenery and pristine trout water in the state. Owner, Lance Lyons offers guided stream fishing and has a spring fed pond stocked with brown, rainbow and brook trout.

The pond is an excellent place for the youngster to catch trout to be proud of. Lance also maintains excellent boats to accommodate fisherman on nearby Lake Moomaw. Accommodations are first class at Green Valley near Millboro Springs, and will accommodate families, and large groups. There are remote cabins to choose from. Contact Lance at (540) 996.4234.

### Mossy Creek Fly Fishing

This shop offers everything for the serious fly fisherman from the well-stocked, authorized Orvis dealership in Harrisonburg to guided fishing trips on the Shenandoah Valley's rivers and streams.

Mossy Creek Fly Fishing offers guided wade trips for trout; fly or spin fishing float trips on the James or Shenandoah Rivers;

Above - Josh Hedrick of Smoke Hole Outfitters can put you on some of the biggest trout in West Virginia.

beginner fly fishing classes and fly tying classes for beginner to expert. Their classes are taught by Orvis endorsed instructors and all equipment is provided. Full day trips include lunch and drinks. Contact Colby or Brian Trow at 540.434.2444

**Maple Tree Outdoors**

For the trout fisherman wanting to try his hand at some truly large brown and lake run rainbow trout, Mike Puffenbarger offers day trips on beautiful Lake Moomaw, 2,630 acres of a beautiful mountain lake 19 miles north of Covington, Virginia.

Mike's well-equipped boat will take you to areas of the lake inhabited by brown and rainbows up to 12 pounds. Camping is available nearby on National Forest Campgrounds. Mike will provide lunch and drinks as well as tackle for his fishing clients. Contact him at 540. 468.2682 or [www.mapletreeoutdoors.com](http://www.mapletreeoutdoors.com)

**Orndorff's Trout Pond And Stream Fishing**

Roger Orndorff loves raising trout. He has done so for the past 20 years at his family business near Maurertown, Virginia, about 25 miles southwest of Strasburg.

Make this beautiful drive and you'll find he maintains a trout pond for families with young children just getting into fishing. This is a very popular activity on weekends from mid-March through November so you must call for a reservation.

For more serious trout anglers, there is a private stretch of Cedar Creek flowing right behind the pond that Orndorff has stocked with rainbow, brook and golden trout. He only allows five anglers per day on his stream and fish up to six pounds have been landed in the inaugural fall season last year.

Lastly, if you want trout for your stream or pond, you can call Orndorff and he will either transport them to your location or allow you to use one of his aerated tanks so you can pick up and transport the fish yourself. For more information or to reserve your day call 540.436.3384.

**Smoke Hole Outfitters**

This family run business is part of the Smoke Hole Caverns and Cabins operation maintained by the Hedrick family. Head guide Josh Hedrick guides most of the clients that want to access some of the best trout fishing waters in eastern West Virginia. The main attraction to Hedrick's clients is the North Fork of the South Branch Potomac River, but there are a dozen other good trout fisheries nearby. The North Fork of the South Branch varies from a couple of hundred yard-wide riffles to 50-yard wide chutes and pools over 10' deep.

The best fishing times are May and June when the air is full of hatching aquatic insects. Public access is just about anywhere along state roads that are not posted.

Other stocked streams/waters you might want to check out nearby include Red Creek, Gandy Creek, Dry Fork and Spruce Knob

Lake. Stocking takes place once in January and twice in February. In March, April and May the streams are stocked weekly!

The Hedrick family owns over 20 log cabins along the North Fork of the South Branch, all with fireplaces and full kitchens. You can also choose to stay at Smoke Hole's Motel just across from the river at the cavern headquarters.

Smoke Hole's website is [www.smoke-hole.com](http://www.smoke-hole.com) and you can call them at 1800.828.8478.

Spending the money to use these guides and destinations ensures you are not wasting any time. In this age of few days off and hard-earned wages, why not maximize your time?



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