

Larger Trout Creeks of the Northwest Region

A lot of anglers prefer to fish larger creeks or rivers. Fishing larger trout creeks or rivers has both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is more room for casting, but reading the water for likely trout lies can be much more difficult. More advantages and disadvantages could be listed, but it matters little. The variety in creek sizes provides options, not limitations.

Tionesta Creek

We begin with Tionesta Creek, which drains the heart of the Allegheny National Forest. Its valley is a mix of beautiful rural and wild scenery. You will not even see a traffic light in Forest County.

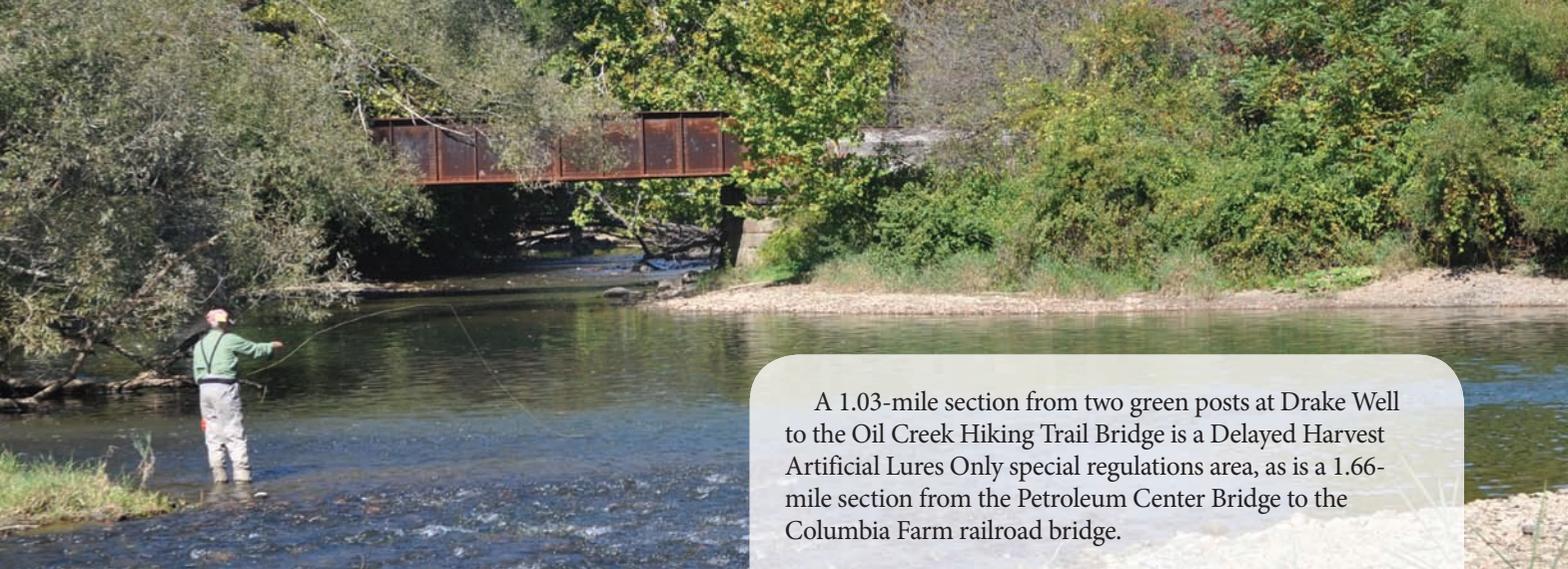
Except for Tionesta Creek, this is an area of small streams fed by springs. Several tributaries of Tionesta Creek are home to wild Brook Trout. Some tributaries are stocked with trout. Tionesta Creek and its main branches—the East Branch, the South Branch and the West Branch—are well stocked.

At Barnes, in the southeast corner of Warren County, the main branches of Tionesta Creek come together. From there, it flows south and then west into Tionesta Lake, a United States Army Corps of Engineers flood control reservoir near the town of Tionesta, in western Forest County. Trout can be caught throughout its length. However, it gets quite warm by summer, and trout fishing declines downstream from the bridge at Lynch.

Stocking is completed from the junction with the South Branch downstream to the Kellettsville Bridge. A few trout may hold over in Tionesta Creek, but this is not a trophy trout fishery. Hint: fish salmon eggs, worms, grubs or other bait under a small float in long runs with fairly uniform depth.

West Branch Tionesta Creek is the largest branch and stands on its own as one of the larger trout creeks in the region. Although it is entirely within the Allegheny National

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A 1.03-mile section from two green posts at Drake Well to the Oil Creek Hiking Trail Bridge is a Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only special regulations area, as is a 1.66-mile section from the Petroleum Center Bridge to the Columbia Farm railroad bridge.

Forest border, much of the land it flows through is privately owned. The major public land portion is upstream from Chapman Dam where it is not a larger creek. Yet, there is some good access.

The West Branch is stocked from its headwaters to the South Branch.

Access includes below Chapman Dam and downstream from Sheffield. It is typically possible to float fish by canoe or kayak from an access on the West Branch at Sheffield downstream to Tionesta Lake from the opening day of trout season through May. Normal summer flow is not adequate for practical floating because of long, shallow riffles.

Brokenstraw Creek

Brokenstraw Creek, Warren County, has a history as a good trout creek. Extensive posting has greatly reduced the water open to the public. There is some access near Spring Creek, where it flows through State Game Lands No. 143 near Garland and at several places from Pittsfield to Youngsville.

A stretch that flows through Buckaloons Recreation Area from Irvine to the confluence with the Allegheny River has good access. This lightly fished stretch holds a few large trout. Hint: try night fishing with tiny poppers or large dry flies.

Oil Creek

Oil Creek, Crawford and Venango counties, draws many fly anglers to the section flowing through Oil Creek State Park. This is a great reclamation story. Flowing through the world's original oil field, the creek was used to transport oil. Oil Creek caught fire at least one time. Today, it is a fine stocked trout creek. The stretch from Drake Well Museum, Titusville, to Petroleum Center is particularly beautiful. Much of this is accessible only by a bike trail. Hint: there are good hatches during May and June.

Stocking is done from the confluence of Mosey Run to the State Route 0008 bridge at Rynd Farm. By midsummer, the water gets warm, and trout fishing declines. Some trout still may be found at the mouths of cool tributaries or in the tributaries.

Neshannock Creek

Neshannock Creek draws anglers from Pittsburgh to Erie. It forms at Mercer with the joining of Otter Creek and Cool Springs Creek, then flows south to the Shenango River, New Castle. It is well stocked through its entire length. Some of the most popular water for fly anglers is the Volant area, near the Mercer County and Lawrence County border. Hatches have been improving, and there is ample parking and good access. Hint: a #14 black beadhead nymph can be dynamite.

This large creek holds some trout in the 18-inch to 22-inch size bracket.

A Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only special regulations area extends from the base of the mill dam at Volant to a covered bridge. Land through this area is privately owned, yet access is good to most of the shoreline.

Allegheny River

The Allegheny River from Kinzua Dam to the mouth of Conewango Creek, Warren, is listed under Miscellaneous Special Regulations. Trout fishing is allowed year-round. From 8:00 a.m. on the opening day of the regular trout season to Labor Day, the creel limit is two trout with a minimum size of 14 inches. But, 14-inch trout are considered small here. During the remainder of the year, no trout may be killed or had in possession.

This is the finest trophy trout fishery in the Northwest Region. Supported by fingerling stocking, trout are virtually wild. Trout in the 3-pound to 6-pound class are not uncommon. A few trout reach 8 to 10 pounds. The best time for big Brown Trout is late winter to early spring. Hint: fish streamers that look like shiners to lure large Brown Trout.

This is big trout water. It can be float fished any time. However, boating can be especially hazardous when outflow from the Kinzua Dam is more than 5,000 cubic feet per second. Phone 814-726-0164 for a Kinzua Dam report. Canoes, kayaks and shallow draft boats can be launched at the Big Bend Recreation Area, just below Kinzua Dam off Route 59, then pulled out at Betts Park, off Routes 6 and 62 at the downriver end of Warren. Canoe rentals are available.

You may want to use a longer rod on these larger creeks for longer casting and for keeping line off the water for more natural drifts. ☐