

GPFF - Middle Willamette, 11-15 August, 2022 (Thu-Mon) - Fishmaster Rich Miller, (email) rich@ski.org, (home phone) 510-525-8006. (Updated 5/25/2022).

RENDEZVOUS AND CAMPING

Tuesday night, [Blue Pool Campground \[1\]](#) (N43.70901°, W122.29865°), about 9 mi E of Oakridge, Oregon on OR-58, 7.5 hrs from Berkeley. To get to the campground, head north on I-5, exit at Weed and travel north on OR-97 through Klamath Falls. About 80 miles north of Klamath Falls take OR-58 toward Eugene. After passing Odell Lake on the left and going through Willamette Pass, drive downhill about 18 miles and look for the campground on the left. There are several good places to rest along the way, most notably the Upper Sacramento River in Dunsmuir, and the Williamson River in Oregon. Collier Logging State Park and a good roadside rest area are located on the Williamson.

Look for a GPFF NOTE at the campground payment area for further information. There are no reservations, so it is possible we will need to make other arrangements. Campground elev. 1940'. There are food stores, restaurants and accommodations in Oakridge. **GPFF strongly encourages carpooling.** Email rich@ski.org to coordinate rides.

Middle Fork Ranger Station - 46375 Highway 58, Westfir, OR 97492, 541-782-2283, Monday-Friday, 8:00-4:30, closed on federal holidays, email: r6_willamette_wwweb_frontdesk@fs.fed.us.

MAPS, BOOKS, ETC

You can view a [topo map \[2\]](#) of the area online. Use the buttons on the right side of the map viewer to change scale and move around. In particular, if you select the "4m per pixel" radio button, you will zoom in to the Blue Pool Campground. The "Middle Fork Willamette Ranger District" topo map from the National Forest Service covers the whole region and may be ordered in hard copy [here \[3\]](#). There are chapters on the Middle Willamette and the McKenzie in "Flyfisher's Guide to Oregon", John Huber, Wilderness Adventures Press. I find this book extensive, but not particularly satisfying.

REPORTS AND ONLINE GUIDES

Best Fishing American provides excellent capsules and links to longer descriptions of [Lane County fishing spots \[4\]](#). The companion page for [Linn County \[5\]](#) includes the Upper McKenzie along OR-126.

WATERS AND FLOWS

[SF McKenzie \(above Cougar Lake\)](#) ID=14159200, elev 1709', just below French Pete CG, Mile 10.5.

[Fall Creek \(2 mi above the inlet to Fall Creek Reservoir, at the confluence of the North Fork\)](#) ID=14150290, elev 870', height, temp only.

[MF Willamette \(inflow to Lookout Point Reservoir\)](#) ID=14148000 just above Black Canyon CG, elev 935', Mile 220.

[MF Willamette \(outflow from Hills Creek Reservoir\)](#) ID=14145500, elev 1208', Mile 231.5.

[Hills Creek Reservoir](#) (HCR03), inflow and outflow.

[MF Willamette \(inflow to Hills Creek Reservoir\)](#) ID=14144800, elev 1560', height, temp only.

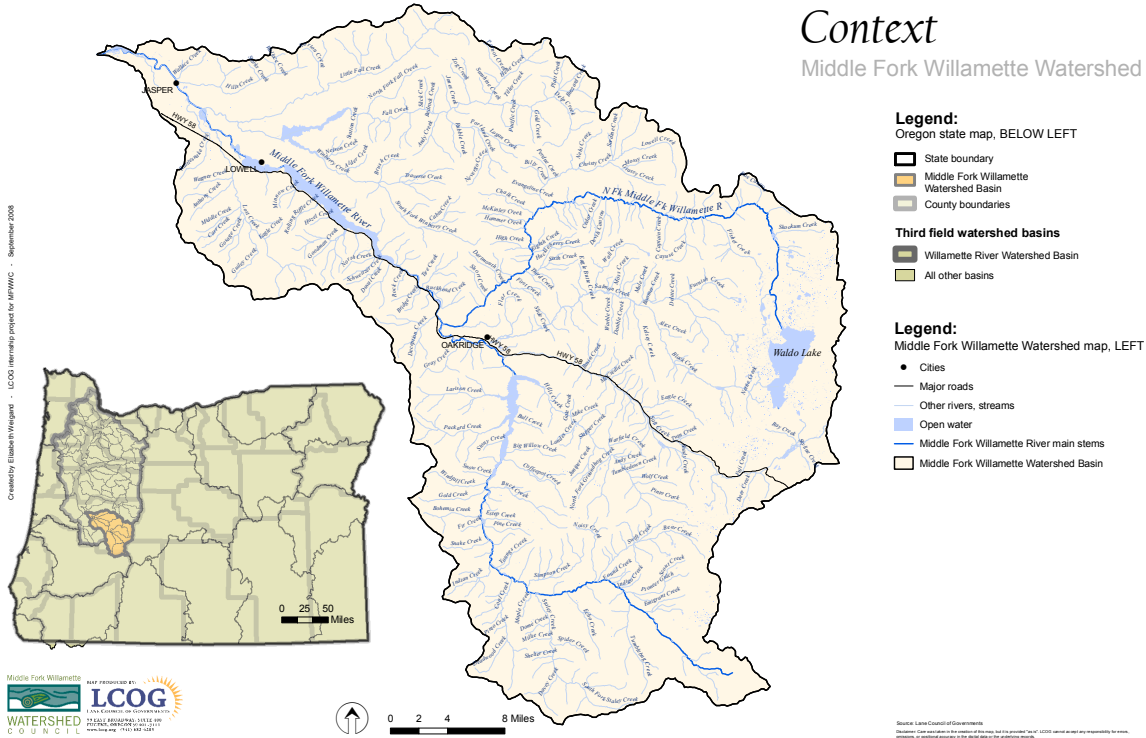
[North Fork Middle Fork Willamette](#) ID=14147500, elev 1030', just upstream of the Westfir downtown bridge, height, temp only.



[Hills Creek](#) ID=14144900, elev 1620', just above Kitson Hot Spring, Mile 4, height, temp only.

[Salmon Creek](#) The old topo maps show a gaging station (N43.76224°, W122.37213°) at the Salmon Creek Falls CG, mile 5.7. I can't find it in USGS. However, we can subtract the NFMF and Hills Cr Res outflow from the Lookout inflow to find sum of Salt and Salmon.

Salt and Hills Creeks, and the Middle Willamette above Hills Creek Reservoir are no longer stocked. Instead, the reservoir itself gets the hatchery fish. Salmon Creek is still stocked at and above the the USFS campground.



Detailed map of the Middle Willamette drainage, courtesy of the [Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) [6].

Middle Fork Willamette River

Between Hills Creek and Lookout Point Reservoirs, wild fish, wadeable at many points and accessible NW of Oakridge from OR-58 on the left bank and a dirt road of many names including NF-5821 on the right bank. Flatish, medium big water, with numerous riffles. Especially attractive riffles on the right where it enters Lookout Point Reservoir and at a run marked by a cable crossing a little above the railway trestle. Also accessible SE of Oakridge from OR-58 and Hills Creek Rd on the right and La Duke Rd, which becomes NF-21 on the left. There is a particularly fishable rich tailwater accessible from the bridge a half mile below the dam.

Above Hills Ck Reservoir, accessible for almost all its length from NF-21. Especially recommended in the fall when big fish move up from the lake and the summer fishers are mostly gone. The lower section is cobbled with rollable stones, and is about the size of Salt Creek by Blue Pool. Further up, the freestones are more stable, and there are some bedrock sections.

McKenzie River and Tributaries accessible from OR-126 east of Eugene, a big river, best fished by drift boat, little wading, but better in fall (lower), maybe more wadable above Blue River, or when very low. **HOWEVER, the headwaters of the South Fork**, above Cougar Reservoir are accessible from the SE via NF-19 which leaves the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the Willamette near its headwaters at Shale Ridge, a number of miles N of Waldo Lake. Near the reservoir, there is pocket water interspersed with a few lovely deep pools. Rainbows and (some huge) bull trout.

Fall Creek accessible from NF-18 running along the north side of the Fall Creek Reservoir, east of Eugene. Lots of campgrounds and streamside trails. Above the reservoir, stocked in numerous places in spring and early summer, but wild trout are available also, especially away from the obvious stocking sites.

North Fork of Middle Fork, fly fishing only, accessible for 30 miles from NF-19. Lovely medium-sized stream with all types of water: freestone riffles, glides, bedrock rapids, and willing fish. The uppermost several miles, dropping through the Waldo Lake Wilderness Area are accessible by trail.

Salmon Creek, a mid-sized mostly freestone stream accessible from NF-24 out of Oakridge. **Salt Creek**, smaller than Salmon Ck, accessible from OR-58. The hot springs (just above Blue Pool CG) and the spectacular falls (much further upstream) are features of interest. Above the falls, wild Brook trout are prevalent, and may be taken.

Hills Creek, a small steep stream holding wild Cutthroat and Rainbows, accessible from the eastern arm of Hills Creek Reservoir along NF-23.

HATCHES

There is a [hatch chart \[7\]](#) available online from Fly Shack. Printed charts for the Middle Willamette and McKenzie appear in Huber's guide book. This time of year, there will be Baetis hatches as well as various smaller caddis, and the special Mahogany Dun and October Caddis. On the McKenzie, Huber says there may be Gray Drakes. Perfect Fly advises keeping terrestrials and streamers in mind for the Upper Middle Fork.

BLUE-WINGED OLIVE (*Baetis*, swimmer mayfly, 3-12mm). In almost all trout streams, but especially in cold, unpolluted, alkaline waters. They inhabit almost every microhabitat in the stream except for silt beds; gravel and vegetation are especially suitable. Near constant availability, both as fast-swimming nymphs (**Pheasant Tail Nymph**) and as surface emergers (PTN as dropper, **Quigley Cripple, parachute dun, in olive, with blue-gray wings**). During emergence, nymphs may drift just under the surface for a while before breaking through. They have trouble escaping their shucks in the film, taking a long time and often becoming stuck in the process. Those which do escape may ride the water for quite a distance before taking flight. Dismal weather invites the best hatches of Baetis mayflies; look for them on overcast, rainy days, as long as the water temperature is above 40°F. Timing the return of these mayflies as spinners after they hatch is difficult; some may come back within a few hours, while others take a few days. *Baetis* females are among the only mayflies to lay their eggs underwater. The females land near the water after mating and crawl down to lay rows of eggs on the downstream side of rocks, sticks, and other objects. They may slip loose during the process or let go after they finish, and wet fly imitations (**dun winged, olive Soft-hackle**) are effective during this time.

MAHOGANY DUN (*Paraleptophlebia*, crawler mayfly, 7-11mm). Nymphs are 3-tailed, with fine, feathery 2-pronged black gills, tusk-bearing in some species, look like small, olive or brown *ephemera* (**brown or olive Hare's Ear, Birds Nest**). Like other Leptophlebiidae, early instars live in faster water, but mature ones inhabit and emerge in placid waters with leafy debris. However, *Paraleptophlebia* are more tolerant of faster water, and often found in pockets in riffles as well as moderate runs. Typically migrate to slow shallows to emerge, either by crawling onto the bank or through the film. Fish by swinging nymphs from slow water in to the bank, or with with long, dead-drifted dun imitations (**dark red-brown parachute or catskill**). Males emerge first, and mate as soon as the females come out. Females oviposit immediately, making repeated short dives to touch the surface. Imitate spent spinners with a **Rusty Spinner** pattern.

RESIDENT BUGS (If no hatch-related fishing is working, you can try imitating residents, or just exciting the trout.)

Big stoneflies have multiyear life cycles, so *pteronarcys* and *calineuria* nymphs in all sizes up to, and possibly including, terminal will be resident in the riffles (Pat's **Rubberlegs in dark brown or black, Montana Stone in black or yellow, Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear**).

The larvae of the hatching caddis families will be pupating or gone --don't bother with them

Swimmer mayflies are always available, and **crawlers** drift, sometimes inadvertently, and sometimes behaviorally in great numbers, especially in low light.

Don't forget the **midges** when all else fails.

Finally, keep the classical subsurface searching patterns in mind (**Prince, Zug Bug, Bird's Nest, and Pheasant Tail nymphs, olive**, dead-drifted under an indicator, **black Wooley Buggers**, swung).

Use streamers to imitate **baitfish, minnows, and sculpin**, especially in low light conditions.

OREGON FISHING LICENSE

Oregon state fishing licenses are available on line or at major retailers. The online method is preferred since there are no major towns along the way except Klamath Falls. The state license is the only document needed since there are no anadromous fish above Lookout Point Lake on the Willamette River. All of our planned fishing is above migration-limiting dams. Below them fishing for steelhead and salmon may be available. Additional license fees are required.

TROUT REGULATIONS (special regs override general ones)

All waters: CLOSED to Bull Trout; other trout, minimum length 8"; only 1 trout over 20 inches in length may be taken per day; **hatchery salmon, steelhead, and trout are marked by removing their adipose fin.** Daylight fishing only.

Willamette Zone General

Lakes open all year, 5 per day, 3 daily limits in possession.

Streams open May 22 - Oct 31, artificial flies and lures, catch and release only. Rainbow trout over 20" are considered Steelhead. NO LIMIT on size or number of Brook or Brown trout.

Special Regulations (Exceptions)

Willamette River from the Highway 20 bridge upstream to the Highway 99 bridge open all year, 2 trout per day, 8" minimum length, bait allowed.

Middle Fork Willamette River open all year, 5 hatchery trout per day, no min length.

Below Dexter Dam (which confines the afterbay of Lookout Point Dam), 2 wild trout per day, 8" min length, bait allowed.

Above Lookout Point Reservoir (including above Hills Ck Reservoir), all wild trout (including Brook trout) must be released.

McKenzie River and Tributaries open all year, all wild trout (including Brook) must be released, 5 hatchery trout per day, no min length; Apr 22 - Oct 31, bait allowed in the mainstem McKenzie River from Leaburg Dam upstream to Forest Glen Boat Ramp, in Leaburg Lake, and in Blue River below Blue River Reservoir. South Fork and Tributaries closed from Cougar Dam downstream 700' to concrete supports of the old adult fish trap (but otherwise zone regulations apply).

Fall Creek open all year, 2 wild trout per day, 8" min length, 5 hatchery trout per day, no min length, Apr 22 - Oct 31, bait allowed. Closed within 200' of the entrance to the Fall Ck fish ladder.

North Fork of Middle Fork and Tributaries open all year, 2 wild trout per day, 8" min length, **fly fishing only,** barbless hooks.

Salmon Creek and Tributaries open all year, 2 wild trout per day, 8" min length, 5 hatchery trout per day, no min length, Apr 22 - Oct 31, bait allowed.

Salt Creek and Tributaries open all year, 2 wild trout per day, 8" min length, Apr 22 - Oct 31, bait allowed. Closed from Gold Lake boat ramp downstream 100 yards.

Hills Creek Reservoir open all year, all wild trout must be released, 5 hatchery trout per day, no min length. Hatchery salmon less than 24 inches in length are considered trout.

Hills Creek and Tributaries open all year, 2 wild trout per day, 8" min length, Apr 22 - Oct 31, bait allowed.

BULL TROUT IDENTIFICATION

Bull trout, one of Oregon's native species, is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Harvest of bull trout is severely restricted in Oregon as part of conservation efforts to recover this species and rebuild the fishery. Many anglers have difficulty distinguishing between the native Bull trout and Brook trout, an introduced species in Oregon. Both Brook and Bull trout have light spots on a dark grey or olive-green background. However, Brook trout are distinguished by light colored worm-like markings on their back, dark wavy lines on the dorsal fin, and red on the paired fins. In general, Bull trout have a clear dorsal fin, although in some fish light marks may be seen, and no red on the paired fins.

[1] <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/willamette/recreation/recarea/?recid=4491>

[2] [https://www.topoquest.com/map.php?](https://www.topoquest.com/map.php?lat=43.70901&lon=-122.29865&datum=nad83&zoom=32&map=auto&coord=d&mode=pan&size=m)

[lat=43.70901&lon=-122.29865&datum=nad83&zoom=32&map=auto&coord=d&mode=pan&size=m](https://www.topoquest.com/map.php?lat=43.70901&lon=-122.29865&datum=nad83&zoom=32&map=auto&coord=d&mode=pan&size=m)

[3] <https://store.usgs.gov/product/530572>

[4] <http://www.bestfishinginamerica.com/OR-oregon-county-lane-east-fishing-near-eugene-springfield-oakridge.html>

[5] <http://www.bestfishinginamerica.com/or-oregon-county-linn-fishing-near-albany-lebanon-sweet-home.html>

USGS Oregon Index: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/current/?type=flow>

[6] <https://www.middleforkwillamette.org/learn/maps-and-resources/>

[7] <http://www.flyshack.com/HatchChart.aspx?RiverID=3002>

