



Recreational Fishing



Overview

Shenandoah National Park contains over 70 mountain streams and their minor tributaries that serve as high quality sources for three of Virginia's ten major drainages: the Potomac, Rappahannock, and James. Shenandoah streams support diverse aquatic resources including 40 fish species and over 220 taxa of aquatic insects. Monitoring and protecting water

quality and aquatic life is an essential part of the Park's stewardship mission. Visitors who enjoy recreational fishing are also an important part of that mission. The following regulations serve to protect the Park's aquatic resources and provide recreational opportunities so that future generations can enjoy the challenge of fishing in Shenandoah National Park.

Fishery Management

The Park's Fishery Management Plan has two objectives: (1) to preserve and perpetuate native brook trout as a key component of the Park's aquatic ecosystems; and (2) to allow for recreational fishing on those Park streams that

consistently produce adequate numbers of gamefish for maintaining population stability. Regulations and Park policies are designed to carry out these objectives.

Regulations

License Exceptions

- Resident, active-duty members of the armed forces while on official leave. When trout fishing they must have copy of leave papers in their possession.
- Legally blind persons.
- Any Indian who "habitually" resides on an Indian reservation or a member of the Virginia-recognized tribes who resides in the Commonwealth is not required to have a freshwater license; however, such Indian must have on his person an identification card or paper signed by the chief of his tribe, a valid tribal identification card, written confirmation through a central tribal registry, or certificate from a tribal office. However, a saltwater fishing license is required.
- Minimize wading in streams between October and March when brook trout eggs are present in gravel.
- Any person not fishing but aiding a disabled license holder.

1. Waters Open to Fishing

All streams within Shenandoah National Park, including all tributaries, are open to catch-and-release recreational fishing. A subset of these streams is also open to harvest; they are listed below.

2. Season

There are no seasonal fishing restrictions.

3. License

All Virginia residents 16 years and older fishing within the Park must have a valid Virginia state fishing license in possession. A Virginia trout license is not required. Residents and non-residents under the age of 16 do not need a fishing license.

4. Size Limit

No brook trout under 9 inches in length may be kept. Undersized brook trout must be immediately and carefully returned to the water. Size limits on other species of game fishes, with the exception of brown trout (see *Special Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout Regulations*), are those established by applicable state law.

5. Creel Limits

Six (6) brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, or a combination of these such that the combined harvest does not exceed six trout per day. Creel limits on other species of game

fishes are those established by applicable state law.

6. Lures

Only manufactured or handmade flies or lures with a single hook may be used. Single hook shall mean single point (no multiple point hooks). A multiple number of single hook lures (such as dropper flies) fished in a series is permitted.

7. Bait

All streams and waters are closed to the possession or use of organic bait including but not limited to corn, cheese, dough compounds, worms, insects, live or dead minnows, amphibians, preserved or non-preserved fish eggs, and synthetic or chemical compounds including pheromones, other liquid scents, and powerbait.

8. Commercial Fishing Guides:

Anyone who serves as a fishing guide or instructor for compensation must obtain a Commercial Use Authorization from the Park Superintendent prior to guiding in the Park.

Park Streams Designated as Open for Harvest

The following streams, including their tributaries within the Park, are open for harvest fishing in accordance with regulations published

in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the Virginia State Fishing Regulations. Note: Stream designations are subject to change.

Streams	County	PATC Map
Piney River	Rappahannock	# 9
Thornton River, South Fork	Rappahannock	# 9
Hughes River	Madison	#10
Brokenback Run	Madison	#10
Whiteoak Canyon Run	Madison	#10
Cedar Run	Madison	#10
Rose River	Madison	#10
Conway River	Madison/Greene	#10
South River	Greene	#10
Ivy Creek	Greene	#11
Doyles River	Albemarle	#11
Jeremys Run	Page	# 9
Hawksbill Creek, East	Page	#10
Hawksbill Creek, Little	Page	#10
Naked Creek, East Branch	Page	#10
Naked Creek, West Branch	Page	#10
Big Run	Rockingham	#11

**Special brown trout regulations apply (see below).*

Special Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout Regulations

Specific regulations have been established for brown trout and rainbow trout as part of the Park's continuing effort to control non-native trout populations to limit impacts on native brook trout.

In addition to regulations specified in the *Regulations* section, the following apply to brown trout and rainbow trout:

- The minimum size for brown trout and rainbow trout as part of any daily creel or otherwise in possession is 7 inches.
- The release of any captured brown trout or rainbow trout back into any Park stream is prohibited. Undersized brown trout or rainbow trout, those caught in streams closed to harvest, and those exceeding the possession limit must be disposed of away from the stream and away from Park roads and trails.

Recreational Fishing Guidelines

Anglers who wish to continue recreational fishing at its finest are encouraged to consider the following ethical fishing techniques for hooked fish:

- All fish that are to be released must be carefully handled and immediately returned to the stream. Try to release fish without removing them from the water.

- Maintain control of fish with wet hands and only a slightly firm grip.
- Most importantly, avoid contact or damage to sensitive gills. The use of barbless hooks minimizes handling of the fish and any related stress.
- Never leave litter, hooks, or spent fishing line in the Park—pack it out.

Identifying Trout Species in Shenandoah



Brook Trout

Color can be variable, depending on fish size, sex, and time of year. Brook trout can be distinguished from others of the trout family by the dark, wavy, worm-like pattern on the back and the white leading edges of the fins, including the tail.



Brown Trout

Color is usually light brown or tawny (upper) transitioning to yellow or yellow/white (lower) with black spots on the back, sides, and head. Spots are often surrounded with a light-colored halo, along with reddish spots on the sides.



Rainbow Trout

Color can be highly variable depending on size. Large numbers of relatively small black spots occur over the whole body. Rainbow trout are often recognized by a vague pink to prominent red band, which extends from the cheek to the base of the caudal fin.