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Gunpowder Falls Tailwater

Located in Baltimore County



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Physical/Habitat Description -

The scenic upper tailwater above Falls Road has a moderate gradient with deep boulder-filled pools and runs. The remaining catch and return section has a low gradient with deep pools, long runs and swift cobble and gravel filled riffles.






From Blue Mount Road

downstream to Corbett Road, the tailwater becomes wider with deep pools and gravel riffles. Some sand can also be found in the substrate. The lower put-and-take section is characterized as wide and slow with sand and gravel runs and scattered deep sandy pools containing logs and woody debris. The tailwater averages 30 to 70 feet in width.

Fish Species - The upper Gunpowder Falls tailwater consists of 97% brown trout with rainbow and brook trout comprising the remaining three percent. The rainbow trout are found mostly in the 1.2 miles of river between the dam and Falls Road. Brook trout can be caught throughout the tailwater in areas where tributaries populated with brook trout enter the Gunpowder. Wild

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brown trout can be caught throughout the entire tailwater, however, the highest numbers of wild trout exist upstream of the put-and-take section. Although some of the adult brown trout reach 12-15 inches in total length, most are in the 8-11 inch range. Results of a tagging study conducted by the department's biologists found very little movement of tagged wild brown trout and found growth rates to be average in trout between 9 and 10 inches and very slow for larger trout. Trout reach 11 to 12 inches in approximately five years. Rainbow trout exhibit much faster growth and attain sizes in excess of 12 inches in far less time. Poor natural reproduction of rainbow trout appears to be the reason for limited numbers of rainbow trout above Falls Road. In response to this limitation, the department's biologists have begun to re-establish the rainbow trout population by stocking marked fingerlings in the 1.2 miles immediately below Prettyboy Dam. The objective is to improve rainbow trout density and standing crop to within historical capacity while maintaining the wild brown trout fishery. The trout fishery will be monitored annually to assess effectiveness. This stream section has successfully held up to 250 pounds of trout/acre, which has been evenly split between brown and rainbow trout.

Restrictions - Gunpowder Falls tailwater is managed under catch-and-return, statewide wild trout and put-and-take regulations. Please consult the [Maryland Guide to Fishing and Crabbing](#) for details. The first 0.4 miles of the Gunpowder Falls tailwater from Prettyboy dam downstream flows through Baltimore City watershed property. Gunpowder Falls State Park - Hereford Area surrounds the next 6.6 miles of river. Much of the remaining tailwater flows through private property. Although most of the tailwater is accessible through the private property, please be aware of all private property signs and do not trespass where it is posted. Hiking trails parallel the tailwater from Prettyboy dam downstream to Big Falls Road. The Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail parallels most of the tailwater from Blue Mount Road downstream to Phoenix.

History - In 1986, the Maryland Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Department of Natural Resources negotiated an agreement with the City of Baltimore for a minimum flow release of cold water from Prettyboy Reservoir. Prettyboy Reservoir has gates at 10, 55 and 100 feet from which water can be released from the reservoir. With the exception of drought years, most of the cold water released from Prettyboy Reservoir comes from the 55-foot gates.

After fisheries biologists planted thousands of fertilized brown and rainbow trout eggs in the gravel and stocked thousands of fingerling and adult brown and rainbow trout, the Gunpowder tailwaters' potential as a self-sustaining, naturally reproducing wild trout fishery was realized. The first natural reproduction of stream bred brown trout occurred in 1989. Rainbow trout

Snakehead

natural reproduction was first documented in 1991 and has only been successful in the upper 1.2 miles of tailwater above Falls Road. With the implementation of special trout management regulations, the wild trout population took off and the Gunpowder tailwater can truly be classified as a blue-ribbon trout river.

Presently, 7.2 miles of the Gunpowder Falls between Prettyboy dam and Blue Mount Road are managed for wild trout under catch-and-return, flies and artificial lures only regulations. Statewide wild trout regulations (2 trout/day, no size or bait restrictions) apply from Blue Mount Road downstream 4.2 miles to Corbett Road. The remaining 6.1 miles from Corbett Road downstream to one mile below Phoenix Road are stocked with hatchery rainbow trout. This stream section is stocked in the spring and fall and provides a popular put-and-take fishery with a five trout/day limit and no bait restrictions. There are closed periods during the spring to allow for stocking.

Contact Us - Comments and questions regarding the Gunpowder Falls trout fishery can be directed to:

Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Fishing and Boating Services
customerservice.dnr@maryland.gov

Gunpowder Falls State Park information can be found by contacting:
Gunpowder Falls State Park: 410-592-2897

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