

Editor's Note: This article was originally written to partially fulfill the requirements of the Fall 2004 & 2005 Intermediate Fly-fishing & Tying course offered at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The piece was compiled by the students below and edited for publication.

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Willow Creek is located about 280 miles south of Fairbanks along Parks Highway right smack in the middle of a very productive sport fishing area extending from Wasilla to Talkeetna. This medium-size stream is popular among locals and tourists alike.

The creek bottom is mostly small rocks but there are lots of logs and log jams where trees have stacked up over the years. It is a creek with usually clear water. Each turn in the river contains a sand bar on the inside bend with a steep bank on the outside. Willow Creek is wooded on its banks, and in many places, trees hang over the water. The water runs pretty quick in general. Many of the straight stretches are shallow. The best fishing is found in the deep outside bends. Willow Creek Can be waded using chest waders in most spots.

The upper portion (upstream of Parks Highway bridge) holds pinks, chums, silvers and rainbows. Silvers show up around the second week in August and stay until mid-October. The best silver fishing though occurs up to the third week in September when they are relative fresh and put up a great fight. The better king salmon fishing is found downstream of the Parks Highway Bridge between June 20 and July 15, but sometimes the fishing can be slow. Grayling and rainbow fishing is fairly consistent spring through fall.

Anglers should rig heavy for kings (8 to 10-weight rod). A reel with a good drag is a must using a 15 to 20-pound tippet. For silvers a 7-weight rod with a 10 to 12-pound tippet works well. If anglers are only after pinks, grayling and/or rainbows, then a 4 to 6-weight rod with 4 to 6-pound tippet will suffice.

Favorite flies are the Egg-sucking Leech, egg patterns, Woolly Buggers, Flash Fly, and Bunny Fly for salmon. A green smolt pattern with hourglass bead eyes has caught chums as well as weighted Pollywogs, and the RJ Woolly lands many silvers. For grayling and rainbows, egg patterns, Egg-sucking Leeches, bead-head nymphs and mosquito patterns are reportedly effective.

Alaska sport fishing regulations allow retention of three salmons other than kings over 16 inches, of which only two may be silvers. This is a trophy rainbow trout water as on one rainbow under 16 may be kept. Upstream of the Parks Highway Bridge on single unbaited hooks are allowed. Please note that no trout or grayling can be kept downstream of the Parks Highway Bridge. Anglers should also note that regulations on this water often change from one year to another, and the creek may be subject to emergency regulations.