



## Fisheries Research Fact Sheet

# Mountain Trout Fishing: Understanding Landowners' Views

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Photo by: Jennifer Rowe

High-quality public access to North Carolina's trout resources is important to anglers and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (Commission). In 2014, the Commission sought to determine western North Carolina landowners' views of the Commission's Public Mountain Trout Waters program and views toward allowing angler access to trout waters that run through their properties. Three groups of landowners were surveyed to gather this information. Landowner groups included those whose land was adjacent to or contained waters that were 1) in the program, 2) removed from the program, and 3) not in the program but potentially could be added.

### Results:

- Approval of recreational fishing is high among all groups (91–93% of landowners in the survey approve)
- Almost half of respondents allowed access on their land for fishing
- The majority of landowners have not experienced problems with anglers on their lands, but 26% of those no longer in the program experienced problems over the past 5 years
- When asked if they ever experienced any problems, landowners noted littering, trespassing, vandalism, poor stewardship of the resource, and loss of privacy
- Litter was the top factor in a landowner's decision to allow public access or not
- Landowners indicated that continued development of information from the Commission relative to angling access would be helpful for themselves and anglers



In some cases anglers may have to access a stream through a gate or using a private driveway and it may not always be clear if public access is allowed in these situations. In these cases Commission employees post "Public Access for Fishing Only" signs to let anglers know that it's OK to access the property for the purpose of fishing. (Photo: Kin Hodges)



A significant amount of trout fishing activity in the N.C. mountains takes place on privately owned land. While an entire stream may be designated as Public Mountain Trout Waters, in some cases only certain sections of the stream are actually stocked and accessible to the angling public. Since it is not always obvious which sections of a stream are open to fishing, Commission staff attempt to keep regulation signs posted at areas where trout fishing is allowed to help anglers find permissible areas to fish. To find maps of trout waters and information about stocking and regulations, anglers can visit the Commission's trout fishing page at [www.ncwildlife.org/trout](http://www.ncwildlife.org/trout). (Photo: Kin Hodges)



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Access to a large portion of Public Mountain Trout Waters depends upon the generosity of private landowners, and as this survey demonstrated, it is critical for anglers to respect them and their property. Here are a few simple things that anglers can do to assist landowners and the Commission.

- Know the rules and regulations before you get to the water (including boundary designations and regulatory signage)
- Ensure that you have permission to access the water
- Ask the landowner if you are unsure about access on private property
- Landowners may post their properties against trespass and still allow access for angling, but anglers must have written permission from these landowners or observe one of the Commission's Public Access for Fishing Only signs
- Do not block gates or driveways
- Do not litter
- Be courteous and always respect landowners and their property

For more information, visit: [www.ncwildlife.org/trout](http://www.ncwildlife.org/trout)



In some cases, land is posted to prevent hunting or general trespassing but the property owner wishes to continue to allow access for fishing. In these cases, seeing a "Public Access for Fishing Only" sign next to a "No Trespassing" sign (or purple paint displayed in accordance with the [Landowner Protection Act of 2011](#)) says that it is still OK to access the property to fish despite the land being posted against general trespass. (Photo: Kin Hodges)



"Public Access for Fishing Only" signs indicate that any licensed angler and accompanying youths may cross private property to access public waters for the purpose of fishing. Anglers using these areas are prohibited from entering before 7 a.m. or remaining on the property after 9 p.m., building fires, littering, swimming, launching or retrieving boats, and camping unless otherwise posted by the landowner. (Photo: Kin Hodges)



## How You Can Help

Your purchase of fishing tackle, fishing licenses and motorboat fuel helps support fisheries work conducted by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission fisheries biologists through the Sport Fish Restoration Program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

