

Southeast Regional Forecast

Sheboygan County

Great news for trout fans! A new stream has been added to the classified trout waters in Sheboygan County, and three formerly classified trout streams have been upgraded from Class II to Class I trout waters. Class I trout waters are the highest quality trout streams in Wisconsin. Willow Creek is a tributary to the Sheboygan River and, ultimately, Lake Michigan. Recent fish community surveys revealed that Willow Creek supports YOY rainbow trout, coho salmon and Chinook salmon. All had distinct parr marks, which suggest that these species naturally reproduce in the creek. If so, Willow Creek may be only the second place in Wisconsin with reproducing Chinook salmon, the only Wisconsin tributary to Lake Michigan with reproducing coho, and only the second Wisconsin tributary to Lake Michigan with reproducing steelhead (rainbow) trout. Willow Creek also supports both brook and brown trout.

Along with this “new” trout stream, three Sheboygan County trout streams, all within the Onion River system, were upgraded from Class II to Class I. The newly reclassified streams include 2.2 miles of Mill Creek, 5.2 miles of the Onion River, and 6 miles of the headwaters of the Onion River known as Ben Nutt Creek. Recent surveys of the Onion River and Ben Nutt Creek yielded brown trout from 2 to 18 inches. Catch rates up to 1,041 trout per mile were recorded in parts of the Onion River, representing an increase of over 1,300 percent since 1997. Mill Creek has similar numbers of brown trout, along with a substantial brook trout population. – *Susan Beyler, fisheries supervisor, Waukesha*