

Upper Black River Access Site Information

River and fishery descriptions provided by Tim Cwalinski, MDNR Fisheries

(Click on Google Earth Hyperlink here, [Google Earth](#), to view all sites - requires Google Earth).

MB-010 - Black River Road Bridge

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 20.247'N 84° 16.109'W

Most of the best fishing here is in the spring, since this reach of river can be warmer in July and August in hot years. Large fish are occasionally caught within miles of this location.

Don't be surprised to catch an occasional small northern pike, rock bass, or smallmouth bass. Keep in mind there is no size limit on pike in this reach. Be respectful of private landowner rights.

Directions to site: From M-68/M-33 west of Onaway, head south on S. Black River Road for 1.2 miles.

MB-020 - 638/Errat Road Bridge

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 19.511'N 84° 14.886'W

See MB-010 & MB-045 comments

Directions to site: From M-33, 2.0 miles south of Onaway, turn west on CR-638/Errat Road and continue for 0.7 mile.

MB-030 - Wigglesworth Road

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 17.583'N 84° 15.549'W

See MB-010 & MB-045 comments

Directions to site: From M-33, 5.2 miles south of Onaway, turn west on Milligan Hwy. and continue 2 miles until its end at S. Black River Road. Turn right (north) and continue 1.1 miles to Wigglesworth Rd. Turn right (east) to road end.

MB-040 - Milligan Bridge

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 16.676'N 84° 14.617'W

This reach of river is capable of holding some large brook trout, although densities are thin due to increasing water temperatures downstream. This water is best floated, especially in spring or fall. Bottom is sand, silt, and cobble. Don't be surprised to catch an occasional small northern pike, rock bass, or smallmouth bass. Keep in mind there is no size limit on pike in this reach. Be respectful of private landowner rights.

Directions to site: 5.2 miles south of Onaway, turn west on Milligan Hwy and continue 0.8 mile to bridge.

MB-045 - Crockett Rapids Bridge

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 15.793'N 84° 16.013'W

This reach is aesthetic and popular and gets heavier use from local anglers. The river gains velocity a few miles upstream of this bridge (Black River Road South) after flowing through a slow stretch of river miles. This water is easily waded for the most part and offers quality angling for all tackle types. Most of the best fishing here is in the spring, since this reach of river can be warmer in July and August in hot years. Large fish are occasionally caught within miles of this location. Just downstream, Canada Creek enters the river on private land, thus helping to cool it down a bit. This reach is best floated to see it in its entirety.

Directions to site: From M-33, 5.2 miles south of Onaway, turn west on Milligan Hwy. and continue 2 miles until its end at S. Black River Road. Turn left (south) and continue 1.0 mile to bridge.

CC-010 - CR-634 Access

Stream: Canada Creek

Position: 45° 14.501'N 84° 13.732'W

This smaller stream offers quality brook trout opportunity in this reach but the river is typically smaller than the Black system. Fish up to 10 inches are common, larger fish are more rare. Substrate here is primarily sand, with some gravel and cobble present.

Directions to site: From M-33, 8.2 miles south of Onaway, turn right (west) on CR-634 (45° 14.508'N/ 84° 12.667'W) and continue approximately 1.0 mile to site). The turnoff on CR-634 is approximately 17.5 miles north of Atlanta.

CC-020 - DNR Stairs

Stream: Canada Creek

Position: 45° 13.762'N 84° 13.117'W

This reach of the creek is popular among local campers. The stream is narrow and fairly deep at times and the substrate is predominantly sand. **Regulations on the Canada are liberal or Type 1 regulations and anglers should refer to their fishing guide.**

Directions to site: This site is best reached from a forest road located at coordinates 45° 13.648'N/ 84° 12.649'W, which is located approximately 2.5 miles north of the main entrance to Canada Creek Ranch. Turn west and bear right on trail road for approximately 0.3 mile until it turns from north to west. Continue on road for 0.3 mile to access site.

CC-030 - DNR Sandpits

Stream: Canada Creek

Position: 45° 13.726'N 84° 13.217'W

The MDNR operated a sand trap on the Canada Creek at this location at one time. This reach of the creek is popular among local campers. The stream is narrow and fairly deep at times and the substrate is predominantly sand. **Regulations on the Canada are liberal or Type 1 regulations and anglers should refer to their fishing guide.**

Directions to site: From trail road immediately north of site CC-020, continue 0.1 mile southwest until position coordinates are reached.

CC-040 - Canada Creek Highway Access

Stream: Canada Creek

Position: 45° 13.106'N 84° 12.820'W

This smaller stream offers quality brook trout opportunity in this reach but the river is typically smaller than the Black system. Substrate here is primarily sand, with some gravel and cobble present.

Directions to site: From M-33, turn west on Bear Den Rd. (45° 13.232'N/ 84° 12.581'W) and continue 0.2 mile to turnoff on right which is immediately north of road/stream crossing. Continue 0.1 mile to site and parking area.

MB-050 - Clark Bridge

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 13.459'N 84° 19.863'W

The mainstem and East Branch have now joined forces and the river is starting a transition. Gradient at this bridge has been reduced significantly. The river flows through a lowland hardwood swamp with a wide floodplain and looks more like a Florida swamp river. Don't let it fool you, though. Anglers often put their boats in at this location early in the season and motor upriver in the slower and deeper current to fish less-shy brook trout. Big fish can be found here because it is better wintering water for brookies. Don't forget your bug spray in this reach.

Directions to site: Clark Bridge Road may be reached either by Black River Rd. from the north (via Milligan Hwy.) or from the south via East Branch Rd. as it extends to CR-622. This intersection can be found near coordinates 45° 13.217'N/ 84° 17.543'W. From this point continue west on Clark Bridge Rd. approximately 2.0 miles to Clark Bridge.

CC-050 - M-33/County Line Access

Stream: Canada Creek

Position: 45° 11.922'N 84° 12.125'W

Anglers should try “The Canada” creek for a nice change of pace. It, too, is a brook trout only system, just like the watershed it enters. Since it enters the lower Black River, it can be a thermal refuge for brook trout that need to escape the lower Black River in the summer months. The creek does not become good trout water until about the confluence of Montague Creek which is entirely within the privately-owned Canada Creek Ranch. This access site is about the first location an angler can fish it downstream of the ranch. Be aware of private riparian rights if fishing upstream. Brook trout in this reach will tend to be under 10 inches, but larger fish are occasionally caught. Fly fishing is possible here, as it is in the entire Canada Creek. There is a small, fenced electric sub-station at this turn-off with a No Trespassing sign, but don't be deterred. The two-track is public and will take you back to the parking area and a terraced area leading down to the creek.

Directions to site: From M-33 near the county boundaries of Montmorency and Presque Isle (45° 11.922'N/ 84° 12.029'W) turn west on access road which extends past the electrical substation facility. Although marked as “No Trespassing,” this two-track trail road is public and will take you back to the parking area and a long stairway leading to creek.

EB-010 - Barber Bridge

Stream: East Branch Black River

Position: 45° 9.150'N 84° 17.779'W

There is plenty of quality holding water here, but be aware of private riparian rights. Stay in the river unless you absolutely have to get out. Some of the larger brook trout that have been caught in the East Branch over the decades have been caught in this area.

Directions to site: From M-33, turn west on CR-622 (45° 7.205'N/84° 10.239'W) which is approximately 8.5 miles north of Atlanta. Follow 3.9 miles to turn on right (northwest) which is East Branch Rd (45° 6.765'N/84° 14.546'W). Continue on E. Branch Rd. 4.0± miles to Blue Lakes Rd. and then turn left (west). Barber Bridge is approximately 0.4 mile from this intersection.

EB-020 - Highbanks 3

Stream: East Branch Black River

Position: 45° 8.436'N 84° 17.661'W

East Branch Black River Road parallels (at a distance) the East Branch for a small number of miles, but the oil and gas activity in the region allows for multiple access sites. The East Branch is a good river, and probably even a better river for larger brook trout compared to the mainstem. It is harder to fish than the mainstem, and lacks the accessibility of the other river. Add some of that up, and it equates to better solitude and sometimes better catches. Fishing regulations are, however, much more liberal on this branch and always have been. In the Highbanks 1-3 region, the river is somewhat narrow at times and often lined with tag alders and lowland brush. Fly fishing at times can be tough for novices. This river runs a little deeper and narrower, and has a quality amount of fish structure in the river. Brook trout over 10 inches here are not uncommon.

Directions to site: From M-33, turn west on CR-622 (45° 7.205'N/84° 10.239'W) which is approximately 8.5 miles north of Atlanta. Follow 3.9 miles to turn on right (northwest) which is East Branch Rd (45° 6.765'N/84° 14.546'W). Continue on E. Branch Rd. to 2-track trial Rd. (45° 8.412'N/ 84° 17.257'W) which is approximately 3.0 miles from CR-622, or 0.9 mile south of Blue Lakes Rd.

EB-030 - Highbanks 2

Stream: East Branch Black River

Position: 45 8.0730 84° 17.164'W

See Highbanks 3 comments

Directions to site: From M-33, turn west on CR-622 (45° 7.205'N/84° 10.239'W) which is approximately 8.5 miles north of Atlanta. Follow 3.9 miles to turn on right (northwest) which is East Branch Rd (45° 6.765'N/84° 14.546'W). Continue on E. Branch Rd. 2.5 miles to 2-track trial (45° 8.095'N/ 84° 16.809'W). Turn left (west) and follow road 0.3 mile to site.

EB-040 - Highbanks 1

Stream: East Branch Black River

Position: 45° 7.718'N 84° 16.559'W

See Highbanks 3 comments

Directions to site: From M-33, turn west on CR-622 (45° 7.205'N/84° 10.239'W) which is approximately 8.5 miles north of Atlanta. Follow 3.9 miles to turn on right (northwest) which is East Branch Rd (45° 6.765'N/84° 14.546'W). Continue on E. Branch Rd. 2.0 miles to 2-track trail on left with visible gas well facility (45° 7.829'N/84° 16.269'W). Turn left (SW) and follow to site.

MB-060 - King's Bridge

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 9.145'N 84° 19.406'W

(a/k/a Main Bridge)

This is another popular location for many anglers on the Black River. Downstream of the bridge the river enters the privately-owned Black River Ranch and all of its mystique. This reach is best floated downstream to Clark Bridge, but be aware of private landowner rights and the popular "river spreads." The same goes for the river upstream where some smaller clubs prevail. All this can be fished, but stay in the river. Some big fish are found in this reach on occasion. In past DNR surveys, the few brown trout that inhabit this system (rare!) were often netted in this area of river, including a 28 incher that was collected in view of the bridge. This reach is popular with fly anglers, but is attractive with all anglers. Bottom is a mixture of sand and gravel, with some cobble present. Keep any eye out for elk or listen for them bugling come fall. This reach of river warms as the summer hangs on, so sometimes summer catches could be reduced. Believe it or not, small burbot may also be found in the area.

Directions to site: From M-33, turn west on CR-622 (45° 7.205'N/84° 10.239'W) which is approximately 8.5 miles north of Atlanta. Follow 3.9 miles to turn on right (northwest) which is East Branch Rd (45° 6.765'N/84° 14.546'W). Continue on E. Branch Rd. 4.0± miles to Blue Lakes Rd. and then turn left (west). The Main Branch bridge (King's) is approximately 1.8 miles.

MB-070 - Blue Lakes Access (parking area)

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 8.980'N 84° 20.670'W

This is another way to fish the beautiful Blue Lakes reach of the Black River. Access is from the north off Blue Lakes Road and eventually the trail would lead you to the same water as the Hardwood Creek Crossing site.

Directions to site: From M-33, turn west on CR-622 (45° 7.205'N/84° 10.239'W) which is approximately 8.5 miles north of Atlanta. Follow 3.9 miles to turn on right (northwest) which is East Branch Rd (45° 6.765'N/84° 14.546'W). Continue on E. Branch Rd. 4.0± miles to Blue Lakes Rd. and then turn left (west). Follow 3.0 miles at which point road turns north. Turn left here and follow trail road to parking sites. River extends SW'ly and may be accessed at several points.

EB-050 - Slingerland Bend

Stream: East Branch Black River

Position: 45° 5.339'N 84° 17.032'W

This was the former home site of Bud Slingerland, who was the founding father of the Upper Black River Council. Today the access site is not marked, but it is public land. This man cared about the river deeply and his friendly spirit will be there alongside you if you fish here. The East Branch here is narrow and has no shortage of debris in the river. Simply put, you will either love this stretch or hate it. It holds some quality brook trout and catching brook trout larger than 10 inches is not uncommon here. There are private reaches upstream and downstream of here, so be aware of riparian owner rights.

Directions to site: From M-33 north of Atlanta, turn west on Rouse Rd. and follow to its end at CR-622 some 5.4± miles from M-33. Turn left on CR-622 and follow 0.6 mile to Shingle Mill Rd. Turn right (north) on Shingle Mill and continue 1.9 miles to its end which is the former homestead area.

HW-010 - Hardwood Creek Crossing

Stream: Hardwood Creek

Position: 45° 7.977'N 84° 21.812'W

Chandler Dam Road becomes a north-south road in Montmorency County and crosses over tiny Hardwood Creek north of Town Corner Lake campground. On the northeast side of the crossing is a small two track road which ends a hundred yards into the woods. Taking this trail directly east and then north will take you to some of the nicest water on the Black River. This is the old Blue Lakes Ranch section which is now under public ownership as part of the Pigeon River Country State Forest. Some anglers find the “old fireplace” or “chimneys” near the power lines and camp here. Again, what a great spot for elk. This water is high gradient (especially upstream) and easy to wade. Gravel and cobble is common. Fish densities are high, but large fish (10 inches or more) are less common. This is a production area for brook trout.

MB-080 - Town Corner Access

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 6.781'N 84° 21.284'W

This is the boundary of the gear restrictions reach on the Black River. If you are fishing here, be aware that the “stairs” split the regulation types. Woody debris for adult and juvenile cover has been enhanced in this reach in recent years, and some examples should still be standing. The river is wide and open enough in most locations for fly fishing. Stream bottom is sand, with a fair gradient that allows for some gravel and cobble. Riparian zone alternates between lowland conifer and hardwoods, to tag alders. Brook trout in this reach offer a blend of young and moderate sized fish. A 12 inch or larger fish would be uncommon here, but there are some around.

MB-090 - Trail 94

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 6.329'N 84° 22.198'W

This small two track heads south off Chandler Dam Road at the very southern end of Elk Ridge. There is a small wildlife food plot nearby which offers a good view to the south valley. Take the two track to the end until you circle around on a small cul-de-sac. The river is a short distance away. The gradient is moderate again with plenty of sand, gravel, and cobble. Deep water is limited, but anglers using spinners and flies often enjoy it here. There are tag alders and lowland hardwoods lining the river banks, but there is also a good amount of meadow habitat which can be excellent for terrestrial-imitating flies. This is a good fishing location for the fall catch and release period. Listen for elk too!

Directions to site: Beginning at a point within the Pigeon River Country State Forest where Blue Lakes Rd. seemingly ends at its intersection with Hardwood Lake Rd. (45° 10.180'N/84° 22.058'W), turn south and follow what is still Blue Lakes Rd. to 2-track trail road on left (east side: 45° 8.053'N/84° 22.035'W). Turn east and follow road a few hundred yards to available parking areas. The Main Branch of the Black River can also be accessed by continuing east from this point.

Directions to site: Beginning at a point within the Pigeon River Country State Forest where Blue Lakes Rd. seemingly ends at its intersection with Hardwood Lake Rd. (45° 10.180'N/84° 22.058'W), turn south and follow what is still Blue Lakes Rd. Follow road south to 3.8 miles to campground access road on left (east side 6.935'N/84° 22.105'W). Turn left and follow meandering road and bear to the right past lake and follow to river access locations which lie SE of this area.

Directions to site: Continuing south past the turn to site MB-080 (Town Corner), Blue Lakes Rd. now becomes Chandler Dam Road. Follow road approximately 0.5 mile to 2-track trail road on left (south side: 45° 6.754'N/84° 22.473'W). Turn south and follow approximately 0.5 mile to right-of-way area and bear left (SE) to access location at end of trail.

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MB-100 - Chandler Dam Road Access

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 6.708'N 84° 22.962'W

Chandler Dam Road parallels the growing Black River in this area at the west flank of Elk Hill. This is a good road to drive along in fall colors and find a spot to fish in the river when catch and release only fishing is allowed. This is higher gradient water but easy to wade. Most of the water is 1-3 feet deep flowing over sand, gravel, and cobble. A typical brook trout in this stretch of river alongside the road would be 6-9 inches, although larger fish are commonly caught. There is plenty of access off this road, just be aware of the private lands in the area next to the Beaver Dam Club.

Directions to site: Continuing south past the turn to site MB-080 (Town Corner), Blue Lakes Rd. now becomes Chandler Dam Road. Follow road approximately 0.9 mile to its bend north. The 2-track trail road on the immediate left leads to access site.

MB-110 - The Rock

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 7.053'N 84° 23.142'W

This property is a recent addition to the state forest. A cabin and walk bridge once sat next to the river here, but the site has been restored. Stop by the "rock" which has an engraving on it as a tribute to the river. This is a camping location for some locals so please keep it clean and be aware of those using it. The river here is typical for this reach with some gradient and plenty of gravel and cobble in the river holding brook trout typically ranging from 6-9 inches.

Directions to site: Continue north from access trail for MB-100 approximately 0.4 mile to trail road on left (west side: 45° 7.023'N/84° 23.073'W). Turn on trail and follow to access site.

MB-120 - Old Chandler Dam Site

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 7.733'N 84° 24.045'W

This is the site of an old sill dam and cabin that the state purchased which have since been removed and the site renovated. This is an aesthetic reach for fishing with a fair amount of gradient and holding water for young and older fish. Bottom here is mostly gravel, with some sand and cobble. Look for spawning fish in the fall, **but be aware that catch and release is the rule come October.** Fishing pressure in this reach in the spring and summer is higher than in the fall and early spring. Special fishing regulations here, so refer to our regulations booklet (MDNR Fishing Guide).

Directions to site: From "The Rock" access site (MB-110) turn north on Chandler Dam Rd. and follow for approximately 1.0 mile at which point the road will turn west. Follow Chandler Dam Rd. an additional 0.5 mile to trail road on south side (45° 7.813'N/84° 24.042'W). Head south for 0.1 mile to access site.

MB-130 - Black River Sand Trap

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 7.685'N 84° 24.277'W

This is the old sand trap which is still cleansed of unwanted materials on occasion. The trap is near the Tin Shanty Bridge and is a slow deep basin with an associated upland pad. This site is a popular location for local campers. It is close to the road, but far enough away not to hear it. Brook trout of all sizes can be captured in this reach, but pressure is slightly higher. **This is in the gear restriction reach, so no bait fishing allowed.** Catch and release fishing for brook trout is allowed outside the normal season, and can be quite good on October and November warm days.

Directions to site: From the Tin Shanty Bridge 45° 7.606'N 84° 24.459'W (see MB-140), head north to first 2-track trail road on right (east side: 45° 7.738'N/ 84° 24.485'W) approximately 0.1+ mile. Turn east, bear to the right and follow road to end at access area.

MB-140 - Tin Shanty Road Bridge

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 7.606'N 84° 24.459'W

This bridge is often the welcoming view for most anglers to the Black River. It is a scenic location that probably receives the most fishing pressure due to its easy access. Downstream of the bridge is higher gradient with excellent fall spawning areas for fish. The river upstream is popular for some anglers, especially if you venture upstream a very long distance. Large fish are occasionally caught in the general Tin Shanty Bridge area, but smaller fish are more typical.

Directions to site: From the southerly bend at Sparr Road (45° 3.335'N/84° 25.746'W) 3.0 miles west of Meridian Line Rd. turn north on Tin Shanty Rd. for 1.9 miles at which point the road will fork and here bear to the right which is the continuation of Tin Shanty Rd. From this point the road will continue in a northeasterly direction until the bridge is reached in another 4.0 miles.

MB-150 - McKinnon's Bend

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 7.052'N 84° 27.049'W

Ask some local anglers where they fish, and they will tell you places other than this location. That is because they would rather keep this a secret. The river in this reach is slow and deeper, the channel is narrower, the bottom is mainly sand and silt, hard substrate is a rarity. Brook trout densities in this reach are lower, but biomass numbers are higher. Simply put, bigger trout, fewer young fish. Each year anglers catch some of the largest brook trout in the watershed in the general vicinity of this landing. The farther away you are from the landing, the better. Fish are fickle here. One day they can be on fire, other times, you wouldn't think there are trout in this river. This is big swamp corridor water, with lowland tag alders lining the river like a tunnel. Fly fishing is for the toughest here. Most anglers use bait or spinners. Brook trout grow fast here (based on age analysis) on a quality diet and slow water which allows them to put the pounds on quickly.

Directions to site: McKinnon's Bend can be most readily reached at the easterly end of Old Vanderbilt Rd. where it intersects with Black River Trail (45° 7.383'N/84° 28.628'W). From this point continue southeasterly 1.5± miles where the road turns south (45° 7.089'N/84° 27.078'W). The access site is immediately south of this point.

MB-160 - Green's Landing Access

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 6.484'N 84° 27.378'W

This upper remote reach of the Black River is popular with some local anglers. Access is limited and should only be attempted with the right vehicle. There are two access sites known as this landing, one further upstream on a small two-track. This is remote, wild country. The river is suitable for some fly fishing, but is good for all angling types. Brook trout up to 10 inches dominate. Gradient is slow to moderate with tag alder and conifer riparian zones. Stream bottom is mostly sand, with some gravel. This is the beginning of a long reach of decent water on the Black River.

Directions to site: Access requires the proper vehicle. From Old Vanderbilt Rd. (see MB-150) where it intersects with Black River Trail (45° 7.383'N/84° 28.628'W), continue 0.3 mile to trail road on south which is Green's Trail (45° 7.286'N/84° 28.237'W). Turn south and follow in a southerly and then southeasterly direction for 1.2 miles at which point the first access trail can be found (45° 6.512'N/84° 27.719'W). Turn east (left) and continue to trail end. River can be found 0.1 mile east through wetlands. Additional access points can be found by taking prior trail road further south and east, but vehicular travel is precarious.

MB-170 - Sparr Road Access

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 3.267'N 84° 25.877'W

This is the headwaters of the mainstem Black, which is occasionally called the West Branch. This reach is dominated by lowland conifers and low gradient. This reach sees little pressure except for an occasional angler trying to catch a brook trout below the culvert at Sparr Road. Beaver dams and log blockages are common. Fly angling would be all but impossible.

Directions to site: From the southerly bend at Sparr Road (45° 3.335'N/84° 25.746'W) 3.0 miles west of Meridian Line Rd. continue south for a few hundred feet. The river can be accessed directly west of this point: (45° 3.264'N/84° 25.765'W).

MB-180 - Saunders Access

Stream: Main Branch Black River

Position: 45° 3.698'N 84° 27.283'W

This is relatively new land within the state forest system. This upper reach of the Black sits adjacent to the unique Black River swamp. Access to this site is a long hike in off a local county road. The dam and old camp near the dam were removed in 2013. Gradient in this reach is limited, and the bottom is predominantly sand and silt. Saunders Creek, a coldwater tributary, offers some additional thermal refuge for fish in this reach. Brook trout of all sizes can be found here, but you may have to fish long reaches to come across quality waters. Fishing with all gear types is a possibility.

Directions to site: From Sparr Rd. east of its southerly intersection with Gingell Rd., turn north on Gingell Rd. and continue to its end at Saunders Rd. Turn right (east) onto Saunders Rd and follow bend to the north until gated parking area is reached within 0.6 mile at 45° 3.532'N/84° 28.187'W.



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