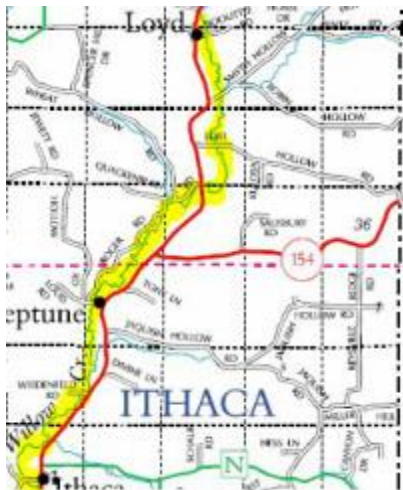




Trout fishing on Willow Creek – Len Harris photo.

Willow Creek – Richland County, Wisconsin.

Willow Creek is a 23 mile Class I trout stream that runs mostly north and south through Richland County in Western Wisconsin's Driftless Area and flows along Highway 58 in eastern Richland County. The main trout fishing area is between the small villages of Ithaca and Loyd. The designated trout portion is about 20 miles long and provides a "big trout area" below designated trout water. Cool limestone creeks cascade through rolling hills and glide under sandstone cliffs in western Wisconsin. This "Driftless Area" was untouched by the many glaciers that covered the surrounding region thousands of years ago. The result is a rugged landscape of breathtaking bluffs, steep hillsides and spring-fed creeks loaded with native trout. In nearly every valley or coulee or hollow, you will find a trout stream, and most of them have the same characteristics. "Our streams are very unique in that they are spring-fed," said Jeff Hastings, director of the Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE). "What makes them great is that they have a high gradient, contain a lot of macro invertebrates, have a desirable rock-rubble substrate and are in an area with a strong conservation ethic. So, for the most part, water quality is high."



Willow Creek is an often discussed stream and much has been written about it. In the book *Exploring Wisconsin Trout Streams - The Anglers Guide* (Born, Mayers, Morton and Sonzogni) the creek gets its own chapter. It is a beautiful setting; while there are several access points for fishermen and kayakers, the terrain is rough and makes getting to the miles of stream that are off of the road difficult.

As you travel up and down Highway 58, you will have several opportunities to check out the main stem of Willow Creek and its six tributaries, all of which hold trout. On the main stem, start at Hollow Road and fish upstream through Loyd.

You will find parking at Hollow Road and also at Smyth Hollow Road, both of which are off Highway 58. There are rumors that large brood-stock rainbows have been released into Willow Creek, but otherwise, you should expect to catch native brook and wild brown trout. The first tributary to Willow Creek is the Little Willow on Highway NN. Other spots to try are Smith Hollow, Lost Hollow, Wheat Hollow, Jacquish Hollow and Happy Hollow.



Mark McCauley photo – Pine River Paddle & Tube.

