

OKLAHOMA BLUE RIVER MAGAZINE 2026

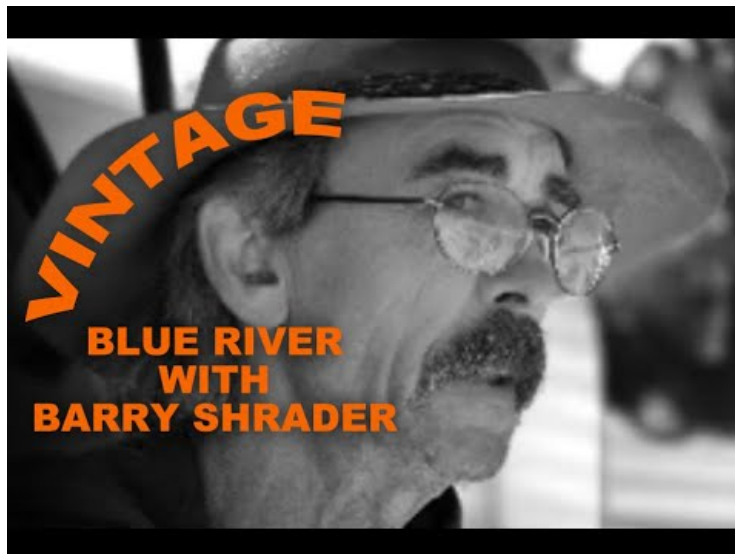
One of the first places I fly fished cold water was just north of home. The Blue River in South Central Oklahoma was a nearby “fix” for fly fishers who wanted to see a rainbow trout up close, in hand. It barely held a candle to Beavers Bend, at that time, but times have changed.



North of Tishomingo, Oklahoma, and a world away from the zoo that has become the Beaver’s Bend - Broken Bow “Cabin Country” resort, the Blue River still offers that fix, and nowadays a true escape from the noise, and crass intrusive nature of young, mostly non-native North Americans, bent on making their own impression on the great outdoors, and maybe snapping a viral selfie while they are in the weekend act.

You won’t see much of that around the Blue River, unless you stumble across me. I will be the one, not in selfie mode, but capturing the sights, sounds and surroundings of the Blue - desperately trying to show and tell just enough to attract friends and strangers who care enough to take the Blue River for what it’s worth, **care for the Blue**, and leave it at that. My efforts are to capture Blue River time in a bottle nowadays, before whatever happens next - happens.

Fishermen, especially fly fishermen in my opinion, *tend to care* about the habitat that brings them peace and joy. As the USA spirals away from the “horn of plenty,” and into differing desperate times for our natural surroundings, the Blue River is no exception. When I found it, it was facing challenges, as this interview with Barry Shrader makes evident. That was almost twenty years ago, and I have learned a lot more about the Blue River, been there more and less over the years, seen the drought seen the aftermath of floods of spring.



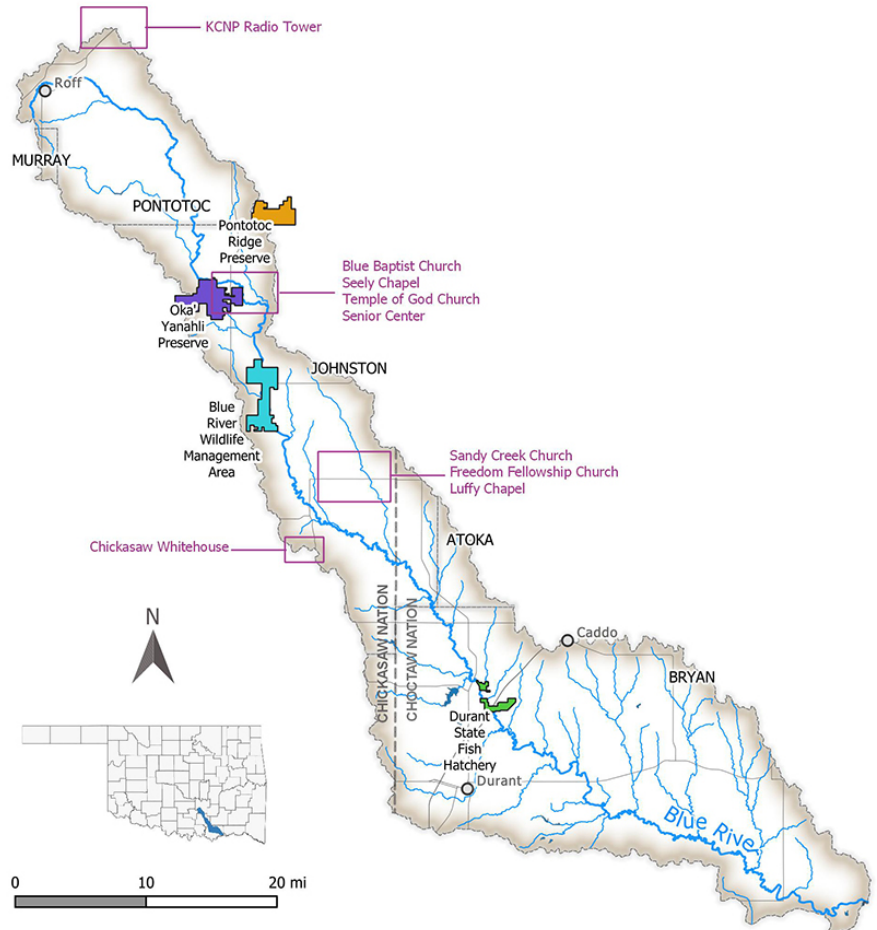
Just like much of the USA, the Blue River today, is also gripped by the weather extremes we find ourselves living within. **It should be taken as a given**, the Blue is going to change year-to-year, as active rivers do, and sometimes it changes a little, sometimes a lot.

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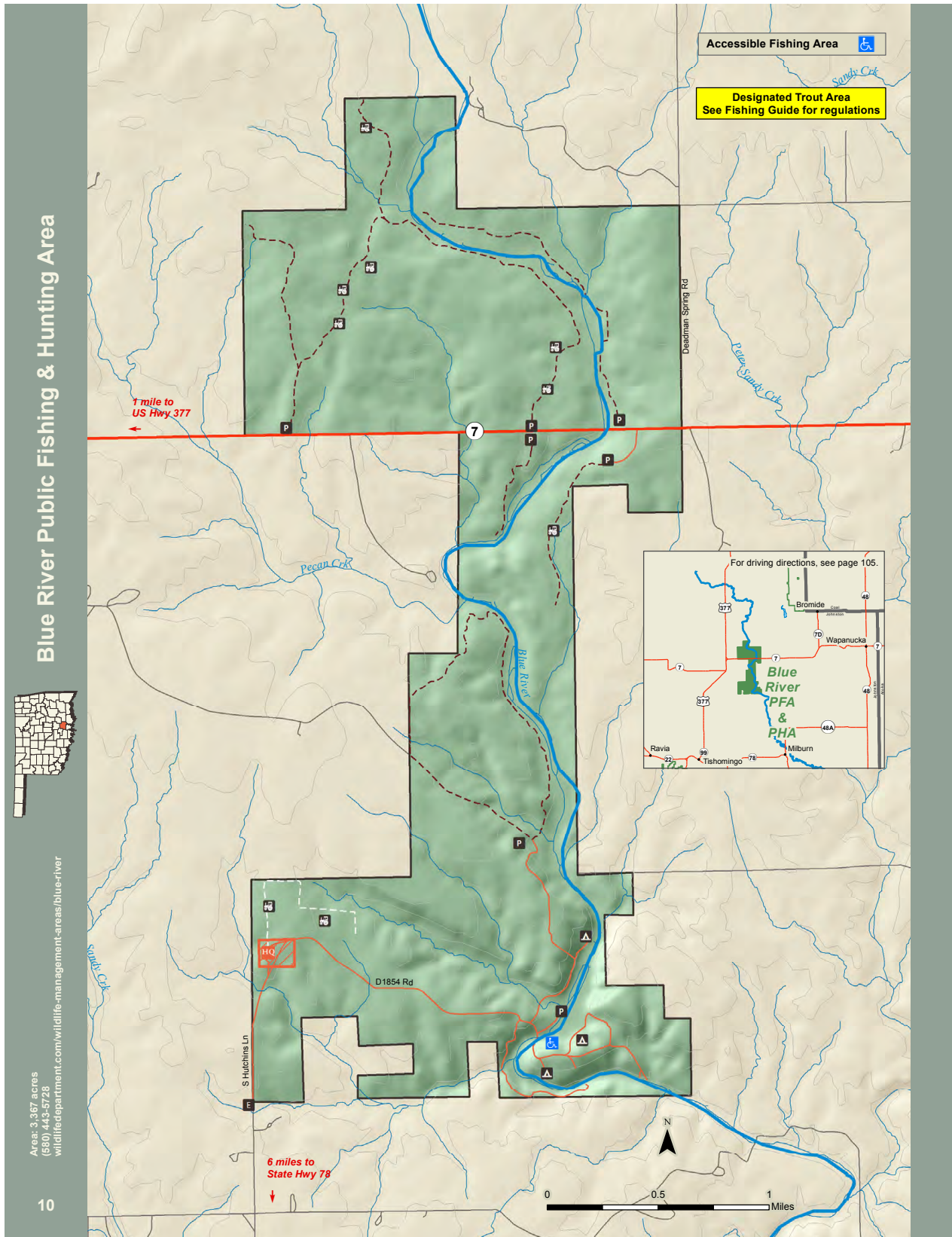
Every time I land riverside, after many months away, I expect it to be different. And that is part of my excitement level on the Blue River ... change, challenge and solving the new equation.

If you happen to click on that previous “video” you will realize it isn’t much of a video! You may also realize it is the very first video ever uploaded to the Texas Fly Caster YouTube Channel, in a time when YouTube was new, the internet was fairly new, and the skills and limits were extremely different from today!

Nothing substitutes for maps though, and they don’t change nearly as much as the internet has since that first video. **Maps**, are my friend, and I hope they are something you rely on as well. For many years, phone connections disappeared at the Blue River. Fly fishermen may not remember, or they may have never experienced that phenomenon, but now they never will. Your phone works on the Blue River, although I have not heard of anyone running the whole river bank, whispering, “Do you hear me now?” There must be a drop or two somewhere down in the area. If there is, you can bet it won’t last as long as this magazine does. If you stare at these maps long enough, perhaps enlarge or download them, and stare some more? They make a much deeper impression on your brain - than does a tiny phone image. There may be better maps, and there certainly are worse ones of the Blue River. But this is what I found and I hope they help you Know Before You Go.



BLUE RIVER ISSUE



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TO CATCH AND KILL or CATCH AND RELEASE?

The Blue River is a seasonal trout, put-and-take fishery. That means you can keep the stocked rainbow trout caught in the area I designate with ***no malice***, “The Catch and Kill” area of the Blue River. That area is entirely BELOW HWY7, and it is made very clear by the Highway and geography that abides the Highway, where Catch and Kill ends, and Catch and Release begins. There has always been poaching of the Catch and Release area, and no one believes, realistically, that is not still happening, and will continue to happen for reasons I will explain in a moment.



CNR Fall 2013 - <https://youtu.be/riv-5EBpG4Y>

RULES AND REGULATIONS

We have to hand it to Oklahoma, and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC). They do not just rely on old regulations, and never dust them off and give them an update. And 2026 is no exception. In fact, this season sees the most radical updates in years, and they apply to the ENTIRE State of Oklahoma - including the Blue River PFA.



Buy a Fishing License!

The ODWC has a much more advanced online licensing system in place now, than does Texas (TPWD). And it has been that way for several years. They have enforcement there when the season is on, and randomly throughout the year. Enforcement is ranked by me as **GOOD**. Buy your license ONLINE! **There is no sales outlet nearby!** I have been stopped enough times to know what I am talking about here.

- Click [HERE](#) to purchase your OKLAHOMA Fishing License -

Catch & Kill Blue River Rules - AREA - Below HWY 7

LINKS TO REGULATIONS AND RULES

- The [OKLAHOMA Trout Regulations 2025-2026](#)
- The [Oklahoma Conservation Passport](#) *
- The [Check-in Check-out Rules](#)
- [Camping on the Blue River](#)**

***Wildlife Conservation Passport** - "People who use Department owned areas for non-hunting or non-fishing activities, such as birdwatching or photography, are required to have either a Wildlife Conservation Passport or any current hunting or fishing license issued by the Wildlife Department. Persons 17 years of age or younger at the start of the calendar year, and students and instructors participating in bona fide educational tours or activities sponsored or organized by an education institution or any other organized event sanctioned by and approved in advance by the Wildlife Department are exempt."

AND the price for this Passport? Unbelievable. For a non-resident, the current price for an Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Passport (01/01-12/31) is \$239. + handling fees. **You are exempt** from purchasing that passport if you get a much more affordable fishing license! Feel Free to Think - and call yourself a fisherman.!

COST (2025-2026)

In State Annual Fishing License - \$31 Out of State Annual Fishing License - \$81

1-Day Resident \$11 | 1-Day Non Resident \$26

Daily & Size Limits (2025-2026):

- Daily limit is three trout combined in all state-designated trout areas except in portions of the Blue River, the Lower Illinois River and the Lower Mountain Fork River. There is no minimum size limit for rainbow, or brown trout at any state-designated trout area except in portions of the Lower Illinois River and the Lower Mountain Fork River.



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Just when you thought you were going to a deregulated Red State, the ODWC has come up with anything but - it's a brand new Big Brother policy.

This policy, I believe, is done with best of intentions. I believe it is how the ODWC is going to justify its expenditures on things like stocking trout.

And that policy is that you and I and the residents of Oklahoma have to “Check In” to wildlife management areas designated by OWDC, and “Check Out” when we leave. This is covered in the video below, and I had direct contact with the highest placed authorities at OWDC when this policy came online in 2024. I was told there would be “consequences” for not checking in on the APP, but that was all I was told. So we can summarize they have not reached the “penalty phase” for this regulation as of this writing.

Assuming I am correct, please do the check-in-out to help OWDC maintain a positive budget picture for the Blue River - that is mostly public land. HOWEVER, since some of the Blue River land is leased by Oklahoma, you could potentially imagine a time of budget cuts that would result in the discontinuation of those multiple leases, and re-privatization of the Blue River. Think massive housing developments ... and the ruination of the Blue River

Welcome to Catch & Release!

There aren't many rivers nearby Texas-Oklahoma that actually have designated Catch-and-Release trout fishing. Given the seasonal nature of southern trout, and the fact their brains boil at about 73f., it makes sense that “put-and-take,” or as I call it “Catch and Kill” rules the season - and almost the entire State ... almost ...

The section of the Blue River above Highway 7 has its own unique regulations that are in force from the FIRST trout stocking, about November 1st. and through the winter to *sometime in March* the following calendar year - after the last stocking happens.



But wait, there's more!

The fish I have found in the catch and release area in the past are special, not just special need fish. They get bigger, “slabbier” and smarter. This is where you want to go for a real fly fishing challenge, or as real as a stocker challenge gets anyway!

The Catch and Release (C-n-R) area also stipulates that it is fly and lure only, with a single barbless hook.

If you are debating with yourself, and have the wherewithal to trek into the Blue River Catch and Release, the rewards of the journey can be fantastic. The hike is significant, and a bike is something I use and HIGHLY recommend. While the ground is particularly flat and improved

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along the “hiking” trail, it is also long. This is no mountain bike up-down challenge. It is significantly improved. The seclusion is noteworthy, and adds a small element of danger, and a large dose of quietness. My advice: Don't go alone, but also don't let being alone stop you if your health and agility is at least **GOOD to BETTER**.

I would not venture to the top of the C-n-R unless it were for a long day, even though a bike ride to-and-from, shorten that part of the journey by about 1.25 hours. IF you do walk in, **carry waders in a backpack**, so that your walk doesn't wear you out, and you don't start sweating before you even arrive! Sweat is the enemy in cold. More on the cold later, along with a complete gear list that takes everything into account on the Blue River, especially the C-n-R.

NOTE: At the release of this magazine, I have ONLY trekked up the WEST SIDE TRAIL. I do not know what the trail(s) are like on the EAST SIDE. Regardless, you cannot drive up to the headwaters of the Blue River C-n-R.

Known Unknowns

It is not advertised that the Catch and Release has been stocked, and there is some mystery and guesswork, and behind the scenes gossip that has to be tapped into every year, so that the effort of going to the C-n-R is not a fishless waste of time. Ask me how I know that. It is mostly unknown exactly where the fish are released all along the Blue River, unless it is witnessed by those unnamed sources. Your best knowledge, besides word of mouth? Look for tire tracks. No vehicles are allowed except for those that are authorized, like a trout loaded tank truck. Look for worn down walking paths too. They are worn down for a reason!

In my decades long sporadic trips into the C-n-R, I have seen poachers there, and they are not shy at all. I am not sure what their thinking is, but power bait and treble hooks are their rules, and I don't bother with them. Neither should you - because you don't know. At the end of this magazine is a list of people. In that list is a direct number to enforcement. Phones work in the C-n-R. Make that call!

BOOTS ON THE GROUND in C-n-R Country

Once you find a spot along the bank, plant your backpack and gear, so you can see it, and in a place that is not too loaded with thorny vines. You will see clearly, water access, and shelved waterfalls that make the C-n-R area look a lot like the Kill area.

A WADING STICK is highly recommended. It acts as a third leg, and it gives you something to “punch through” the leaves with - to be sure your next step isn't into a hole. The top of the falls are pockmarked with these holes, and the leaves at times, make them invisible. Ask me how I know.

At the top shelf fall, you can fish down, and that is what I recommend. The only fish I have found upstream from that fall were released upstream by fly fishers rehoming a catch. The water is shallower than you think - below the falls. And the clarity is actually a disadvantage when the sun is bright. That is because these trout know enough to know they can be predated on by birds of prey - being seen in bright sunlight from above.

- Gear you might consider is listed at the end of this magazine article.-

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NOTE: It is plenty cold up on the C-n-R, and if you happen to take a wet fall, unless you have a way to warm up? I would end my day - then and there. Weekdays are best, but there's a good chance no one will be there to hear you scream. That's why I recommend doubling up with a friend, or get to know your neighbor on the falls shelf. Know the weather. The wind really does come whistling off the plains, and good trout water is COLD water.

END NOTES on The Blue River Near Tishomingo Oklahoma 2026

The Blue River, in South Central Oklahoma, changes but it doesn't. There have been catastrophic flood events, the kind that are happening about every three years, instead of ever five hundred. Expect the holes, trees, debris and habitat to have changed since you were last there - sometimes a little, sometimes a lot. As of this publication, I have not been to the BRO for about eight months. So I have not seen this year's changes to the game board.

There is a distinct line between size, and type of fly fishing that is done on the Blue River. This is my perception. Nymphing is a killer option for the Blue River - IF you seek numbers of stocker trout. It means longer rods than I use for the streamer fly fishing I do there. Streamer and deeper flies have been my favorite approach since I tired of the numbers game long ago. It is what it is. There is nothing wrong, or right, or bad about either approach. Nothing.

I cannot emphasize enough: BAD WEATHER makes good fly fishing great, and sends great fly fishing off the charts. Overcast skies, maybe drizzling sleet and frozen guides - those are to be welcomed and remembered. So if you are prepared to keep the cold out? GO!

RODS

- For Streamer Fly Fishing the Blue River

I like 3 and 4 weight rods with a medium action.

- For Nymph Fly Fishing the Blue River

You would go to 8'6" and 9' rods and now even longer. And learn to **roll cast** for maximum coverage!

LINES

Match your fly needs. A sink tip is unnecessary as is a full sinker, and will only hang you up on rocks you don't even see. If you are nymphing, consider a nymph fly line if you are truly serious about it.

REELS

Reels, in this situation, are mostly line holders.

LEADERS

Fluorocarbon and mono. Fluorocarbon sinks. Mono floats.

STRIKE INDICATORS

Can really come in handy and help with clearing the hidden boulders underneath.

FLIES

Here is where everybody's got one ... so stop at Scotty's and ask what is going on with flies, AND BUY A FEW for the privilege of that information!

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SCOTTY'S Blue River One Stop Tishomingo Oklahoma

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Scotty's is your closest thing to civilization - from the fly fishing shores of the Blue River! Go inside, buy something and ask questions and listen for answers. Add all that to your "KNOW BEFORE YOU GO" packet of information, and take it with a shaker of salt and pound of good burger grease. *I hope to spend more time on Scotty's in a future magazine supplemental or video.*

REMEMBER: Scotty's does NOT sell licenses anymore!

BLUE RIVER FOUNDATION of Oklahoma

I know the Blue River Foundation is taking a lead role in environmental concerns and "issues" that River faces. Thank God. This is the website - <https://blueriverfoundationokla.com/> And HERE is their Statement:

We work to sustain the Blue River—the lifeblood of South Central Oklahoma—through our organization's three pillars: **science, education, and action.**

SCIENCE

We are an agile, forward-thinking foundation that provides a nexus of understanding for policy makers, scientists, diverse industries, and deep-rooted cultures.

EDUCATION

We aim to educate lawmakers, landowners, tourists, and others about the cultural, ecological, and economical importance of the entire Blue River watershed to South Central Oklahoma.

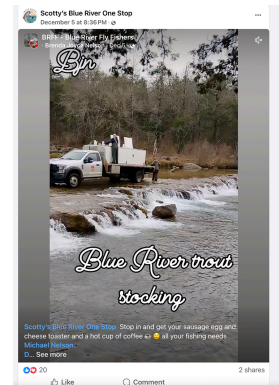
ACTION

We apply generational knowledge of the watershed to facilitate policy change, needed research, and public education to promote the sustainability of the Blue River watershed for all stakeholders.

- FROM THE WEBSITE Blue River Foundation Oklahoma

Blue River Tournament - THE BRFC!

Theres even a growing tournament at the Blue River! It is called the Blue River Fly Classic, and If I am correct, the old name was the "One Fly" Classic. Here is what the website has to say: "The BRFC is an annual event held the first Saturday of March each year at the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area. The purpose of the Blue River Fly Classic is two-fold. First, the mission of this event is creating a day of greater fellowship among the fly-fishing community on Blue River. Secondly, this event is designed as a fund-raising event with the totality of monies raised by entries fees going directly to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife in support of the Catch and Release section at Blue River. Funds will be monitored by and through the Blue River Association." <https://www.blueriverflyclassic.com/>



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CAMPING AND CAMP SITES ON THE BLUE RIVER 2026

There was major flood destruction of the bigger sites and the only road that leads to them, where you could pull in a smaller trailer or embed your SUV. I have seen repairs being made in photographs. Across the River, across the low bridge, there are sites that are (as I recall) not as big, and tent sites with room for a vehicle beside the campsite you make. I am pretty sure it is first-come-first-served and I do not see any “reserved” signs, or anything that indicates monitoring or a reservation system. There are NO hookups, water or electricity provided sites.

BLUE RIVER 2026 LINKS

ODWC YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@okwildlifedep>

Blue River Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/blueriverokalltroutfishing>

ODWC Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/BlueRiverPFHA>

BOOTS on the GROUND - ethan.lovelace@odwc.ok.gov

Scotty's Blue River One Stop - <https://www.facebook.com/blueriveronestop/>

Blue River Fly Classic - <https://www.blueriverflyclassic.com/>

(580) 371-9288 blueriveronestop@gmail.com

Texas Fly Caster Website - www.texasflycaster.com

Texas Fly Caster YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@texasflycaster>

USGS Blue River/Blue River - <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/USGS-07332500/#dataTypeld=continuous-00065-0&period=P7D&showFieldMeasurements=true>

Chickasaw Country Website - <https://www.chickasawcountry.com/nature-outdoors/blue-river>

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: The Blue River is in Oklahoma. You would never know it, but the fly fishing discussed here, lies inside the Chickasaw Nation. There are people (non-Native Americans) there who have views that may be different from your own. You just may see more than one Confederate Battle Flag fluttering off a trailer or camp site. This is no warning. This is just a suggestion for “awareness.” Every Citizen of the US has their right to express their opinions, like those opinions or not. IF you are a Texan, behave like a Texan - remember we are “The Friendly State?”

If I am there, I will be flying a different flag though. And that, *my friends*, is how you will find me.

Published 01/2026 and subject to change and update!