



New York State Department of
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
www.dec.ny.gov

Public Fishing Rights Maps

Cattaraugus Creek - Steelhead Section

Cattaraugus Creek Steelhead Section



Vince Tobia

Description of Fishery

From its mouth at Lake Erie upstream 34 miles to the Springville Dam, Cattaraugus Creek supports an outstanding run of Lake Erie steelhead. The Cattaraugus is a large stream, averaging over 100 feet wide and varying from slow water near Lake Erie to boulder filled rapids in the scenic Zoar Valley area. Cattaraugus Creek offers anglers one of the best steelhead fishing opportunities in the eastern United States. Each year from October through April, thousands of steelhead ascend the stream on their migratory mission to spawn on the gravel shoals of the main stream and its tributaries. In addition to steelhead, a fair number of brown trout also run the stream in fall.

Virtually all of the lower 14 miles of Cattaraugus Creek are located on the Seneca Nation of Indians Reservation. Anglers wishing to fish **on the Reservation** must purchase a license from the Seneca Nation; however anglers do not need a New York State license on Seneca Nation lands.

Over seven miles of the Cattaraugus main stream and South Branch flow through public land on the DEC Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area. In addition, there are 3.8 miles of public fishing rights easements, all on the Cattaraugus County bank, above and below Hammond Hill Road. Anglers can also fish a short section just below the Springville Dam on the Erie County side of the stream. Very limited public access to the creek can be found at the mouth in Irving.

Primary Fish Species

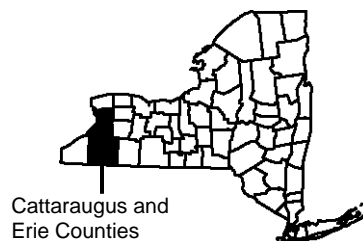
Rainbow Trout



Brown Trout



Location



Cattaraugus and Erie Counties

About Public Fishing Rights

Public Fishing Rights (PFR's) are permanent easements purchased by the NYSDEC from willing landowners, giving anglers the right to fish and walk along the bank (usually a 33' strip on one or both banks of the stream). This right is for the purpose of fishing only and no other purpose. Treat the land with respect to insure the continuation of this right and privilege. Fishing privileges may be available on some other private lands with permission of the land owner. Courtesy toward the land-owner and respect for their property will insure their continued use.

These generalized location maps are intended to aid anglers in finding PFR segments and are not survey quality. Width of displayed PFR may be wider than reality to make it more visible on the maps. Please look for this PFR sign to ensure that you are in the right location and have legal access to the stream bank.



For more information on this creek or if you believe PFR marked areas on these maps are incorrect or missing PFR signs, please call the Region 9 Fisheries office: (716) 372-0645.

Public Fishing Rights Maps

Cattaraugus Creek - Steelhead Section



Catch and Release

The steelhead of Cattaraugus Creek are a magnificent resource that can be enjoyed by anglers more than once. By voluntarily releasing some or all of the steelhead you catch, you can help to ensure high catch rates for yourself and other anglers throughout the season.

Methods for Releasing Fish

- Use barbless hooks, they cause less damage to the fish
- Play a fish no longer than necessary. Excessive play decreases its chances of survival.
- Wet hands before touching a fish that is to be released, dry skin removes the mucous coating on trout. Avoid touching the gills.
- Use of a landing net increases the survival rate of trout.
- Gently push the hook out and cradle the fish in your hand, underwater and facing upstream.
- After a moment, allow the fish to swim free. If the fish turns upside down, catch it and revive it as stated above.



Cattaraugus Creek Steelhead

Cattaraugus Creek is a tremendous steelhead resource. The steelhead section is stocked by the DEC annually with 90,000 "Washington strain" steelhead smolts. In recent years, the DEC has also stocked surplus Skamania strain steelhead in the creek when available. While the majority of steelhead in Cattaraugus Creek are a result of smolt stockings, there is significant natural reproduction that adds to the fishery. Recent DEC studies estimate that up to a quarter of the steelhead adults returning to Cattaraugus Creek are wild fish spawned in its numerous tributaries. To help protect spawning fish, fishing in two tributaries, Spooner Creek and N. Branch Clear Creek is prohibited from January 1 to March 31.

Steelhead Tackle and Equipment

Steelhead in Cattaraugus Creek generally average 5-8 pounds, but fish up to 12 pounds are common, so fairly heavy equipment is required. Medium or medium/heavy action spinning rods of 7-9 foot lengths, with reels capable of using 6-12 pound test lines are needed. Drifting egg sacs is popular among spin anglers. Attach a drift bobber, leaving an appropriate length of line or leader for the situation with a bait holder or octopus style hook. To keep bait down near the bottom, stagger split shot starting 12-15 inches above hook.

Fly rods from 8-10 feet long that handle 6-10 weight fly lines work well for landing these fish. Large arbor fly reels work great; make sure your fly reel is rated for the size weight-forward tapered fly line you use. Use 8-12 pound nine foot leaders with 6-12 pound fluorocarbon tippet. Your fly box should contain egg patterns, nymphs (stoneflies, hare's ear) and streamers (woolly buggers, egg-sucking leeches, zonkers) in a wide variety of sizes and colors.

Trout Fishing Regulations

Cattaraugus Creek from Aldrich Street bridge in Gowanda upstream to the Springville Dam: **Trout and salmon; open all year, 12 inch minimum size, daily limit 3 per person.**

Spooner Creek and tributaries and North Branch Clear Creek and tributaries from Taylor Hollow Road upstream to outflow of Clear Lake: **Trout and salmon; open April 1 - Dec 31, 12 inch minimum size, daily limit 3 per person. Fishing prohibited from Jan 1 - March 31.**

Check fishing regulation guide for other Great Lakes tributary regulations that may apply.

Other Sportfish of Cattaraugus Creek

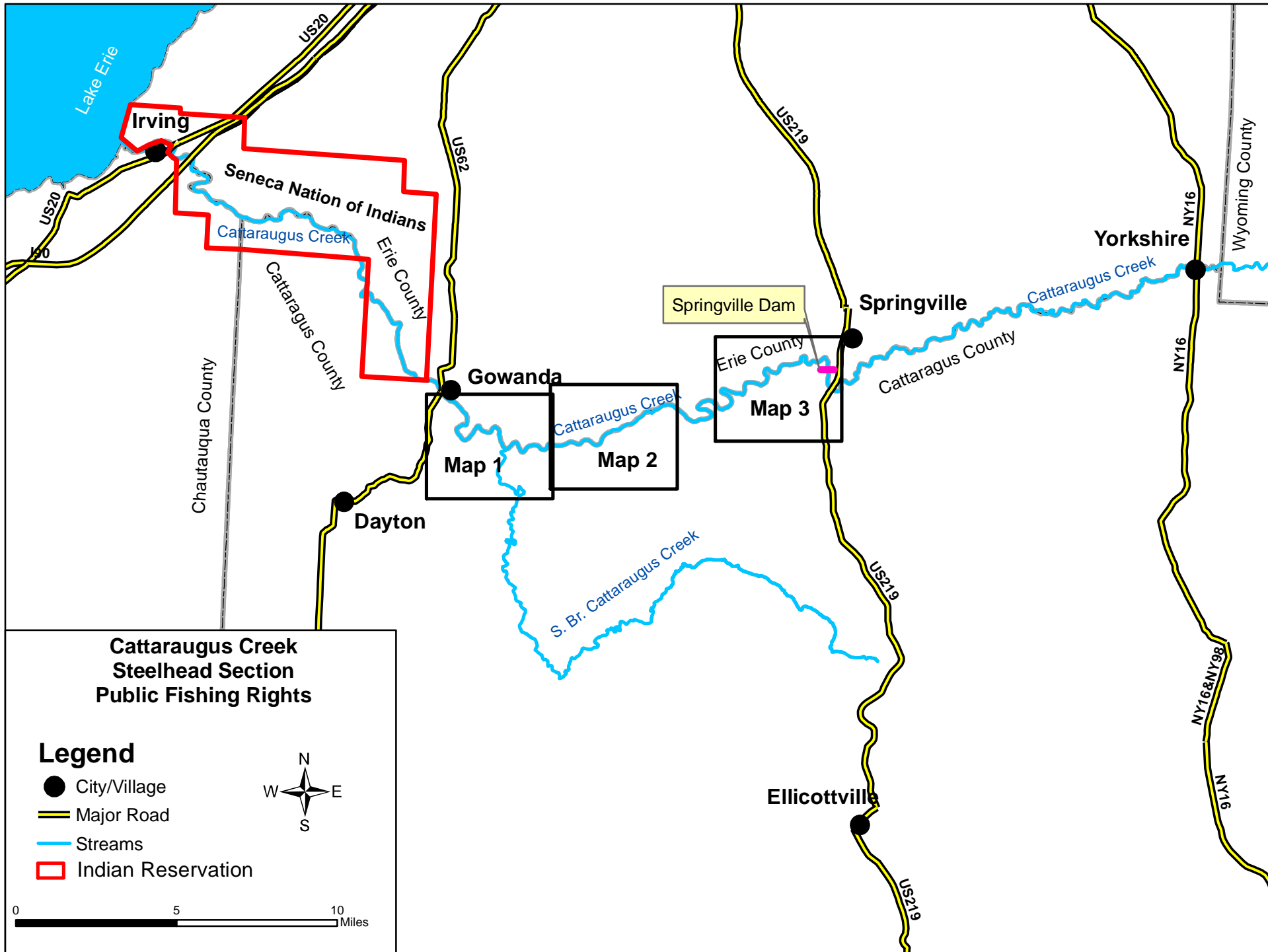
As steelhead fishing begins to taper off in May, a couple warm water species move into the lower section of the creek and offer productive fishing opportunities. During May and June, large numbers of spawning smallmouth bass provide plenty of action from the mouth of the creek up into the lower Reservation. Special regulations apply here for smallmouth bass (see regulation guide). Good numbers of channel catfish also inhabit the creek during May and June from mid-Reservation down to the mouth. The night bite is best in deeper holes on cut bait, worms or raw shrimp.

Channel Catfish



Smallmouth Bass

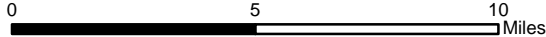


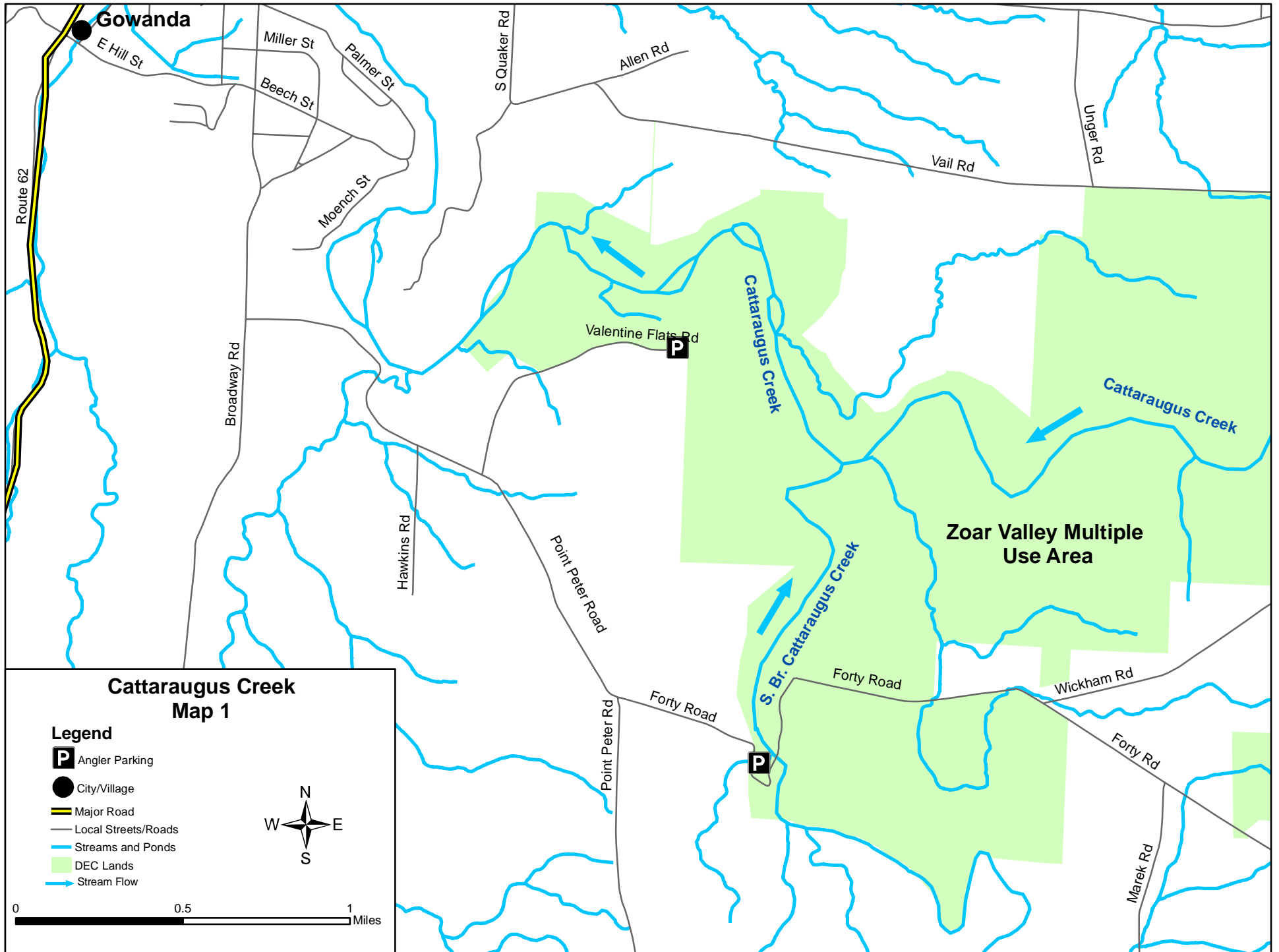


**Cattaraugus Creek
Steelhead Section
Public Fishing Rights**

Legend

- City/Village
- Major Road
- Streams
- Indian Reservation

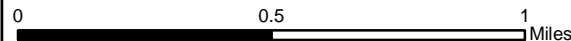


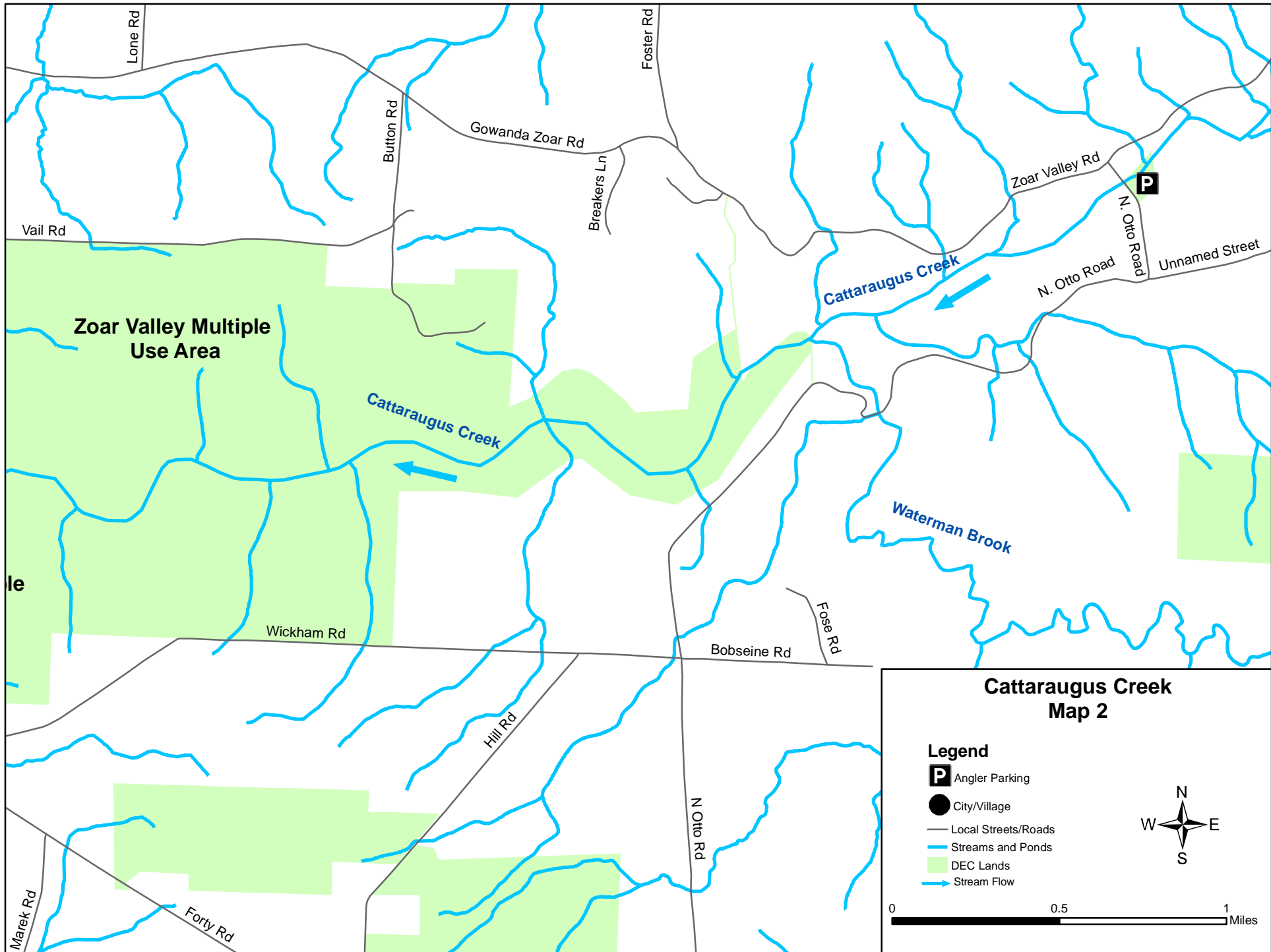


Cattaraugus Creek Map 1

Legend






- Angler Parking
- City/Village
- Major Road
- Local Streets/Roads
- Streams and Ponds
- DEC Lands
- Stream Flow

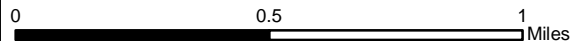


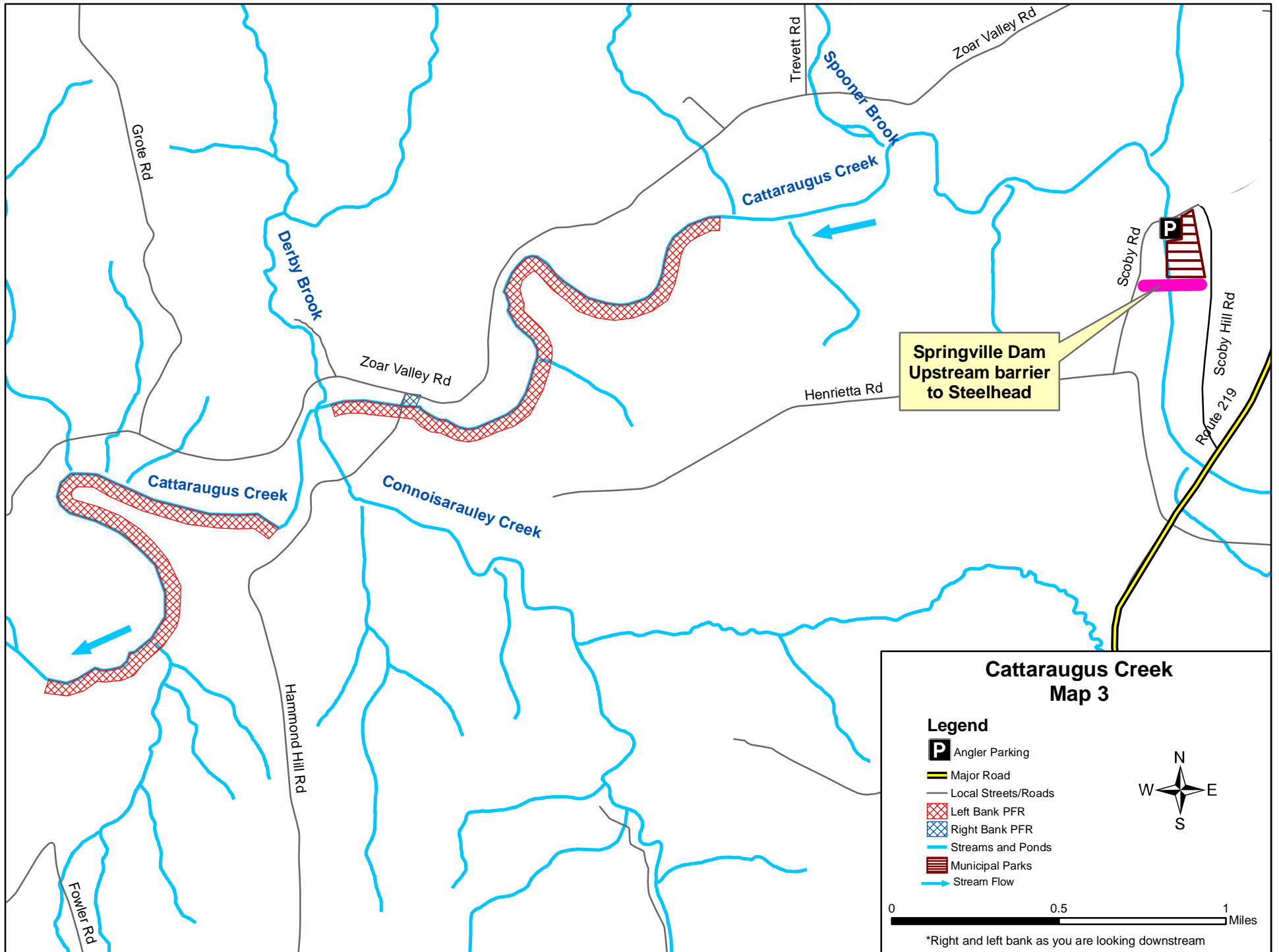


Cattaraugus Creek Map 2

Legend

-  Angler Parking
-  City/Village
-  Local Streets/Roads
-  Streams and Ponds
-  DEC Lands
-  Stream Flow



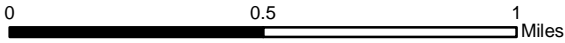


**Springville Dam
Upstream barrier
to Steelhead**

**Cattaraugus Creek
Map 3**

Legend

- Angler Parking
- Major Road
- Local Streets/Roads
- Left Bank PFR
- Right Bank PFR
- Streams and Ponds
- Municipal Parks
- Stream Flow



*Right and left bank as you are looking downstream