



# The Savage River (an Introduction)

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Matt O'Neal  
mo@matt92.com  
757-771-2531





# Agenda

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- Background
- River Facts & Miscellany
- Access Points
- Hatch Chart
- Notable Tributaries
- Productive Flies
- In the Area
- Video Library
- Questions



# Matt O'Neal Bio

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- Grew up in north Georgia (70-80s)
- Navy, 1992-2002
- Home Depot & Target Store Manager, 2002-2009
- Navy (civilian), 2010-present
- Currently lives in Hughesville (southern MD)
- Plans to retire in Cumberland ~2028
- Began fly fishing in ~1983
- Began tying ~1990
- Started “Savage Flies” YouTube channel, 2020





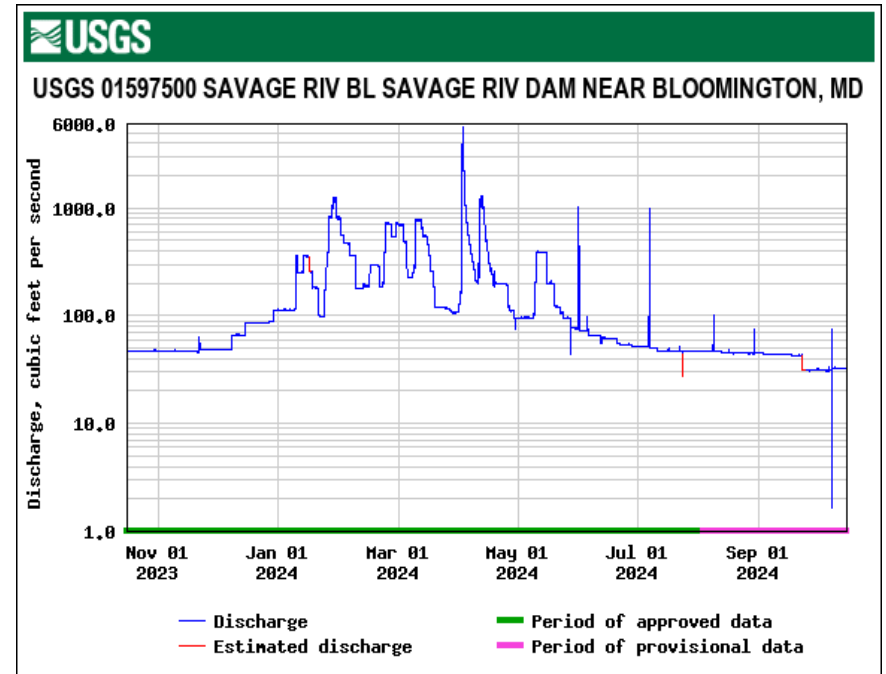
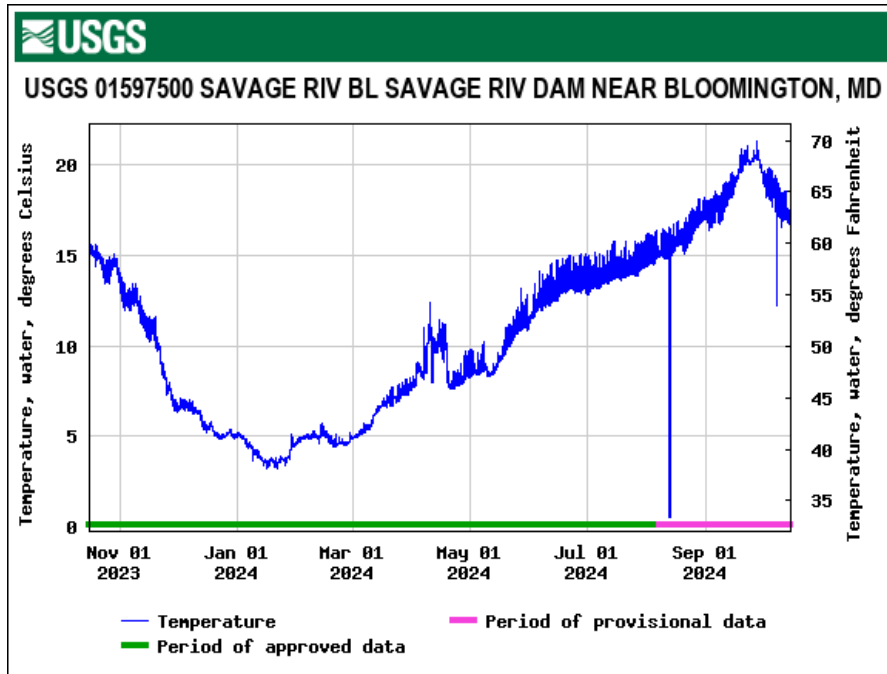
# Lower Savage River

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- Began in 1952 when the dam was built
- No stocking since 1991
- Four miles managed as a trophy wild trout fishery
- Mostly brown trout, some brook, a few rainbows
- Mouth to bridge (2.75 mi), artificial lures, single hook
- Allegany bridge to reservoir (1.25 mi), fly fishing only
- Moderate to steep gradient tailwater
- Mostly cobble and (slippery) boulder bottom
- Features deep pools, pocket water, riffles/runs
- ~8 access points
- White water releases – June, July, September



# LSR USGS Data

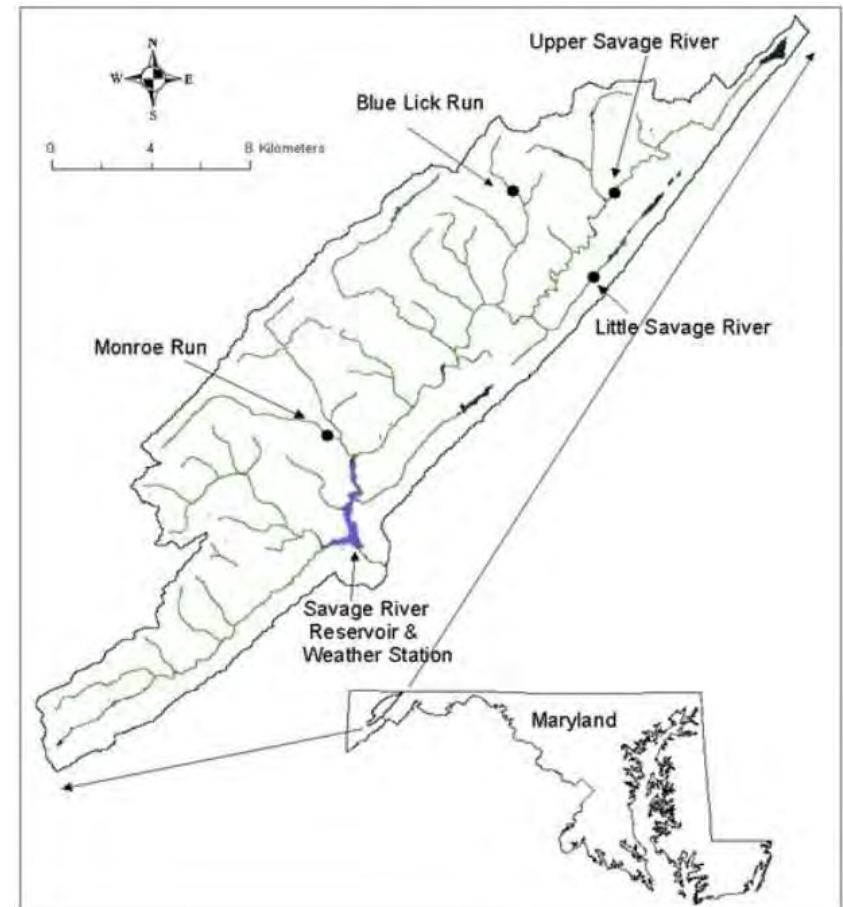


<https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/01597500>



# Upper Savage River

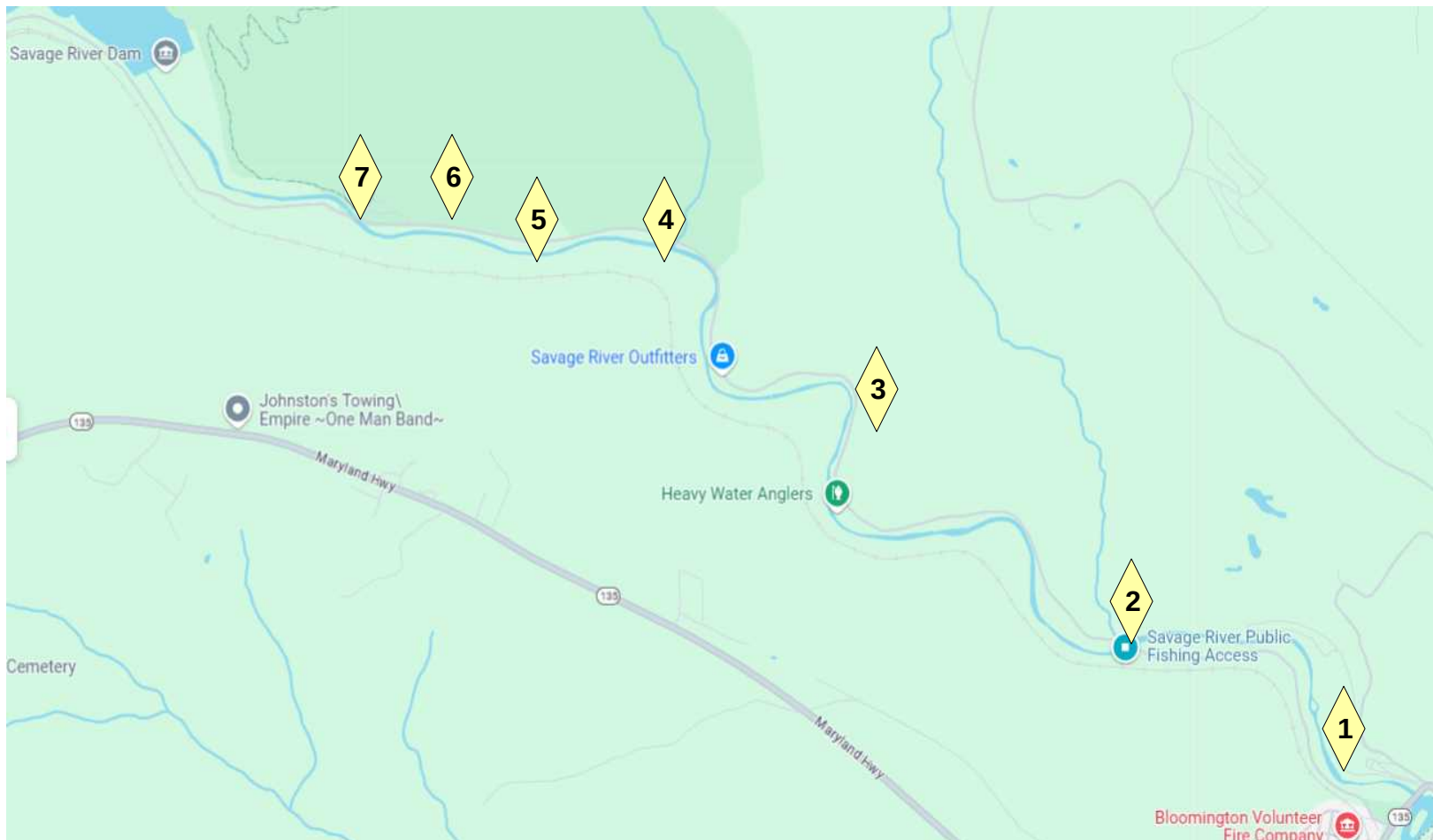
- Upstream of the reservoir, 100+ miles of interconnected streams
- One of the few brook trout populations (south of New England) that remains well connected
- Big Run State Park & Savage River State Forest
- Tributaries: Blue Lick, Black Lick, Little Savage, Elk Lick, Poplar Lick, Bear Ben, Big Run, Monroe Run, Dry Run, Middle Fork and Spring Lick



[https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Documents/USR\\_Brook\\_Trout\\_Summary\\_2017.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Documents/USR_Brook_Trout_Summary_2017.pdf)



# Main Access Points



1. Woodyard
2. Savage River Rd Bridge
3. Near Church
4. Allegany Foot Bridge

5. Garret Foot Bridge
6. Whitewater Campsites
7. PhD Pool





# Woodyard Access



- 4-5 parking spots on Savage River Rd (Woodyard is across the river)
- Two long flats/pools at walk-in, upstream is pocket water & riffles
- Good dry fly water while wading upstream
- You could wade from here up to the next access (bridge) but it would take a few hours
- Don't try to leave the river and hike up to the road anywhere except the access points (it's steep)
- Relatively low pressure
- If you see more than one car parked here, you may be better going to another spot







# Woodyard Access

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Looking upstream at the first flat at access point, during fairly low water. You can see where the riffles empty into the pool. Upstream from here to bridge is mostly pocket water with several riffles and runs.





# Savage River Road (Bridge)

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- When coming from the south, 2-3 parking spots before the bridge, 3-4 after
- One big pool just downstream of the bridge
- Mostly pocket water upstream of the bridge
- Two big flats/pools a few hundred yards upstream, but hard to wade as there is no real trail beside the river
- Relatively low pressure
- Good dry fly and nymphing water while wading upstream
- If you see 2-3 cars here you will still have plenty of water to fish. (But I would probably go somewhere else anyway.)
- I've had really good days here fishing during the May/June sulphur hatch in the evening. (I know, that's anecdotal, and possibly happenstance, but still...)





# Savage River Road (Bridge)

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Looking downstream at the entry point. You can see the big pool/flat just downstream of the bridge. Upstream from here is mostly boulders, with pockets and riffles/runs.





# Near the Church Access

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- Only one parking spot here
- Downstream is private property
- Upstream is one large flat/pool, then high gradient pocket water
- Very low pressure from here for the next ~1 mile upstream
- Good dry fly and nymphing water while wading upstream
- Even on crowded days, if you can get this spot, you will be fishing alone for several hours (while wading upstream)
- One productive tactic is to park here, walk the road upstream, and swing wet flies while wading back down to you car. You will likely have the river to yourself.





# Near the Church Access

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Looking upstream at the entry point. Upstream after this pool is mostly boulders, with pockets and riffles/runs.





# Allegheny Foot Bridge

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- 8+ parking spots
- Downstream of the bridge is medium gradient pocket water with a few runs/chutes
- Upstream between Allegheny Bridge and Garret Bridge is mostly pocket water
- Medium to high pressure from here due to the easy access
- Good dry fly and nymphing water while wading upstream
- There is a good hiking trail between bridges, easy to walk the trail and wade in at any fishy looking spots.
- A lot of the river is narrow between the bridges and you will need to be in stealth mode while approaching the water slowly.





# Allegheny Foot Bridge

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One of the easier to fish spots, directly across from the parking area. During moderate water levels. Some of the stretches are fairly narrow and will require more stealthy approaches.



# Garrett Foot Bridge

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- 3-4 parking spots
- This is maybe  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile upstream from the Allegheny foot bridge
- Upstream from here is the large 7x Flat, then medium gradient pocket water up to the whitewater campsites
- Fairly high pressure from here for the next  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile upstream
- Good dry fly water while wading upstream
- On weekdays you may have this stretch to yourself, not so on a nice weekend day.
- I've had luck here (even on the 7x Flat using 5x) with dry droppers. Elk Hair Caddis (#14-16), with a Zebra Midge dropper (#18)
- If you see other cars here, they may not be fishing (lots of hikers park here for the trail on the opposite side of the river).





# Garrett Foot Bridge

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Standing in the middle of the 7x Flat, looking back downstream to the foot bridge. This is during fairly low water. This stretch is usually still fishable even during high water. Just be careful wading.





# Whitewater Campsites

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- Lots of parking spots- there is room for 6-8 cars at the designated area, but you can park in any of the unused campsites
- You can wade in almost anywhere you park (there are several trails from the road to the river)
- Mostly all pocket water
- Tough (or impossible and dangerous) to fish during high water conditions
- You can wade this stretch from here up to the bridge (at the PhD Pool)
- Moderately high pressure here due to the easy access
- Good dry fly fishing during normal to low water conditions



# Whitewater Campsites

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Typical stretch across from the Whitewater Campsites. This picture was taken during normal to fairly low water conditions. This is a fairly narrow section of the river and after a rain, or during higher-than-normal water, this area is dangerous.





# PhD Pool

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- 4-6 Parking spots, but if you see two or more cars here, they are fishermen and you might be better picking another spot
- The PhD Pool is just upstream of the bridge, across from the USGS gauge
- Upstream of the pool is a narrow, high-gradient stretch, followed by lots of boulders and pocket water
- Moderately high pressure here due to the easy access
- I've had luck with heavy streamers, stripping deep in the pool
- Good dry fly fishing in the stretch upstream of the pool
- You can wade this area from the access up to the reservoir boundary (there is a sign saying don't go any further). But note, if you do fish this stretch (and it is good water), you will have a tough uphill hike to get back to the road.





# PhD Pool

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The PhD Pool during very low water conditions, looking down from the road.





# PhD Pool

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The mostly pocket water just upstream from the PhD Pool.





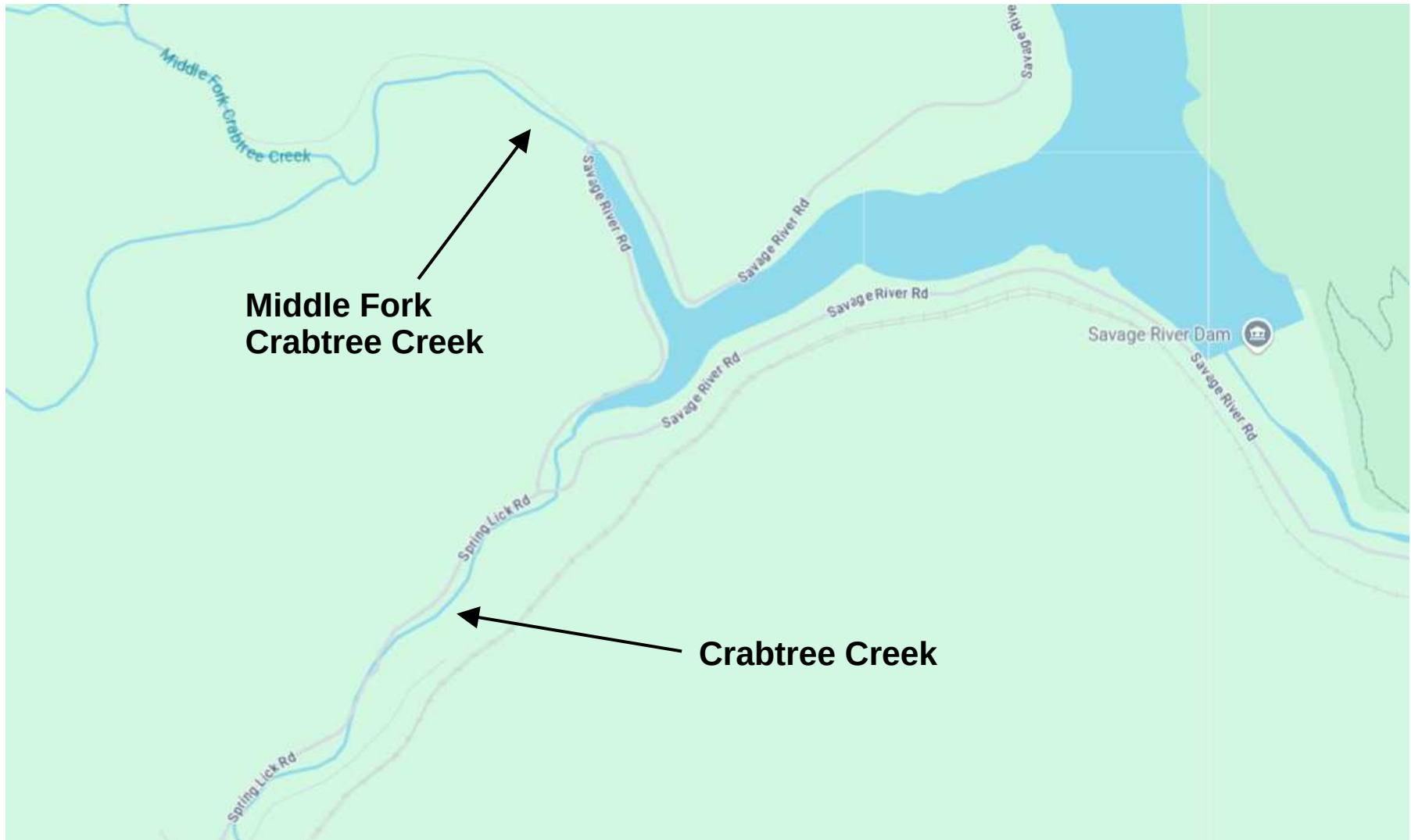
# Hatch Chart

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Black winter stonefly (#16-20)												
Brown stonefly (#14-16)												
Blue quill (#16-20)												
Quill Gordon (#12-14)												
Hendrickson (#10-12)												
Red quill (#14)												
March Brown (#10)												
Gray foxes (#14)												
Green drake (#8-10)												
Sulphur (#14-16) and (#18-20)												
Light Cahill (#12-14)												
Blue wing olive (#16-20)												
Yellow Sally stonefly (#12-14)												
Caddis fly, tan (#14)												
Caddis fly, olive (#14-16)												
Caddis fly, gray (#14-16)												
Caddis fly, cinnamon (#16)												
Terrestrials (ants, beetles)												
Terrestrials (hoppers)												
Midges (#20 and smaller)												
Streamers												

From "Guide To Maryland Trout Fishing: The Catch-and-Release Streams," 2014, by Charlie Gelso and Larry Coburn



# Notable Tributaries



Crabtree Creek and Middle Fork Crabtree Creek







# Middle Fork Crabtree Creek

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- Plenty of parking (just before the bridge when driving around the reservoir)
- Difficult to fish during low water (or the warmer months)
- Can be good fishing when the main Savage River is too high (or too crowded)
- Very low pressure
- The fish are typical native brook trout, 6-7 inches. Anything bigger is a great day.
- Zero creel limit area
- It is an easy hike along a DNR road if you want to explore back to another small trib (Tom's Spring Run)





# Productive Flies

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- As a typical tailwater with many attributes of an eastern freestone stream, all the standard imitations (noted in the previous hatch chart) can work well.
- The following are some of my personal favorites.



CDC Elk Hair Caddis



Flat Wing Caddis



EZ Sulphur



BWO



Parachute Adams



Yellow Palmer



Plain Ole Hare's Ear



Flashback Pheasant Tail



Parachute Hopper



Psycho Ant (Purple or Pink)



Any sleek hair wing



Any meaty, heavy zonker

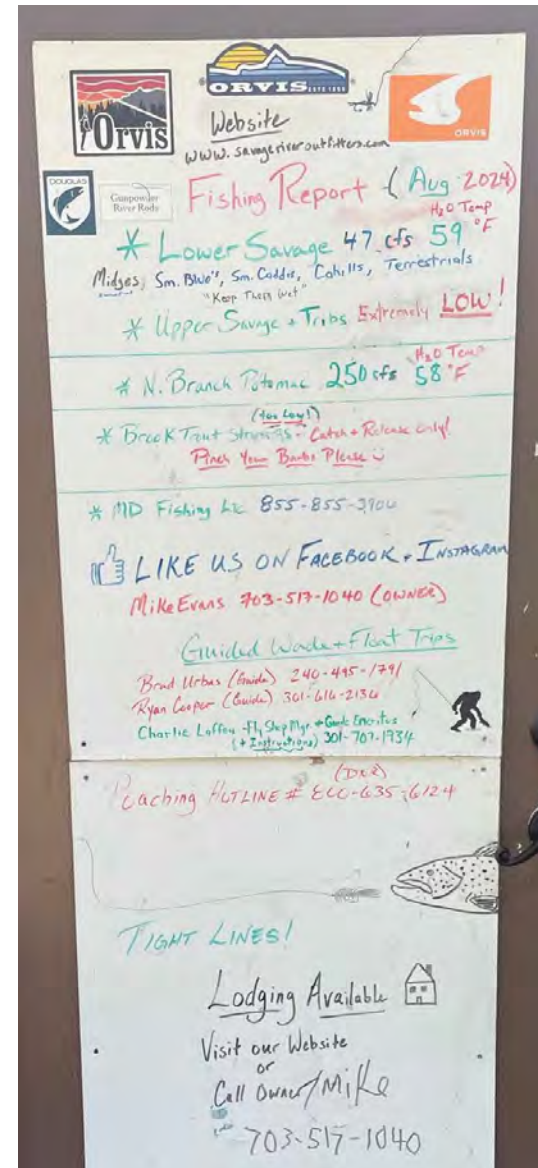


# In the Area – Fly Shop



## Savage River Outfitters

- [Savageriveroutfitters.com](http://Savageriveroutfitters.com)
- Posts water conditions for Lower and Upper Savage, North Branch of Potomac
- Owner: Mike Evans, 703-517-1040







# In the Area – To Eat

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- McDonald's
- Less than 10 minutes from the Lower Savage
- Open 5am - 11pm



- Subway
- Less than 10 minutes from the Lower Savage
- Open 8am - 9pm

These are the only two places to eat near the river. There is not much else. There is a Sheetz you will pass near Frostburg if you are driving in from the south. Also a Dollar General in Westernport (beside the McDonald's) which is open 8am-10pm.

Last note - cellular service in the area is sketchy at best.



# Video Library

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- Woodyard – an experimental caddis in October
  - [https://youtu.be/VY\\_qrV9wTG1](https://youtu.be/VY_qrV9wTG1)
- Savage River Rd Bridge – sulphur hatch in May
  - <https://youtu.be/qUthnK99zwQ>
- Church – nymphing in August
  - <https://youtu.be/d26AUazveP8>
- Allegany Foot Bridge
  - [https://youtu.be/\\_SplGWWNHGk](https://youtu.be/_SplGWWNHGk)
  - <https://youtu.be/l4CufXRazc4>
  - <https://youtu.be/eGfIQ2PymwU>
- Garrett Foot Bridge (7x Flat) – yellow palmer
  - <https://youtu.be/g82G0UiiTCA>
- Whitewater Campsites
  - <https://youtu.be/Ct3GRAE0J4g>
  - <https://youtu.be/5KFp9AyqouQ>
  - <https://youtu.be/PrmnO49eCb8>
- PhD Pool
  - <https://youtu.be/dvuB1PHhaA8>
  - <https://youtu.be/YsQbBOu92Xs>

Watch the last couple of minutes of these videos to see these sections of the river.

All the videos and tying instructions of all the flies mentioned here can be found at:  
[www.youtube.com/SavageFlies](http://www.youtube.com/SavageFlies)





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# Questions?