



An Alaska lodge, which does not offer fly-outs, must be in the right location on a special selection of water to offer an outstanding fishing opportunity. Since your access to the fishing is limited to whatever you can reach via a jet outboard propelled boat, location and the quality of the fishery in that section of the river are critical. The Goodnews River is simply one of the most productive rivers in Alaska featuring rainbows, grayling, sea-run Dolly Varden/Char, and all five species of Pacific Salmon. It is especially famous for its prolific Silver (Coho) Salmon run. Due to the size of the run and the structure of the waterway, this run of silvers may present the best opportunity anywhere to take numbers of silvers on the surface. The Goodnews is a large river system with three main forks of usually sparkling clear water. Those three forks are broken into countless braids and tributaries which offer, in many places, the atmosphere of medium sized stream fishing. There is only one lodge on the river and it is located perfectly, near the mouth where access to fresh run fish is available right in front of the lodge.



Our report this year comes from guys who were making return trips to the Goodnews during the prime time for the Silver Salmon runs. Josh Luft-Glidden (above left with silver) was on his third trip. Following a week after Josh and making their second visit were Paul Souza (above right with silver) and John Wilhelm (center with rainbow). All three gentlemen have rebooked again for next year.....getting space during the best time requires early booking as they have a loyal following of repeat clients. They don't open up slots for next year until the repeaters from this year have had an opportunity to rebook.

From John, regarding taking silvers on the surface: "There were a number of memorable sessions with silvers on the surface. Best luck was with smaller, less wind resistant, Gurglers. Any place you found fish rolling on the surface (whether it was calm or windy) they would willingly take a top water fly. Generally first thing in the morning, but sometimes you could find pods of new fish at midday willing to take on the surface. Lots of fun!!! That's Paul laid out on the beach (left, below).....totally exhausted from fighting Silver Salmon all morning."

Middle: two different rainbows. Silver on right.



Making return trips to fish destinations you've enjoyed in the past allows for repeating proven experiences, new explorations, and the interesting aspect of comparing results and conditions to past visits. Josh had these

comments on his third trip to Goodnews River Lodge: “The sight fishing this year was just insane. Water clarity and visibility made for great fishing.” He related some of his stalking experiences: “At one point I even went dapping for silvers. We pulled up to a shallower braid of the middle fork to walk and wade for big 'bows, and a pod of 8-12 silvers were holding in a pocket about 6-7 feet away. I pulled out my 7 wt and started dapping a streamer in front of the fish. On the first drift, a fish took the fly and I was hooked up! The other fish in the school had scattered by the time I landed him.....We fished the small braid just after dapping for silvers, and walked one bank mousing all the way down and took over a half dozen rainbows of 20+ inches on the surface with the mouse. After the first pass, we crossed the river and walked up the opposite bank which was about 6-8 feet above the river. When you crouched down, you could look into the shallow braid and see every large rainbow without exposing more than the top of your head. We had already caught all of them except one on the mouse. As we watched, that last rainbow that had avoided us moved under a log.....we took him with a drifted flesh fly under an indicator.”

The lodge – below (l to r): The price for a week at Goodnews River Lodge includes the charter flight from Anchorage. Most quality Alaska lodges will smoke or prepare a limited number fresh salmon for you to take home. Paul displays some fish that will reach the smoker (middle). John boats equipped with jet outboards allow access up and down the river. Goodnews is a serious fishing lodge – although the food is good (John at right), the ambiance is limited with stationary tents for accommodations.



Above (l to r): rainbow, grayling, Chum Salmon, bear footprint.

On their first trip two years ago, Paul and John hit a period of rainy weather with lots of high and dirty water. However, they could see the potential of the fishery and decided to give it another try. Comments from Paul on this year: “Wanted to let you know we hit it right on this trip. Weather - no issues. Rain, some wind. But this just kept the bugs down. Overall, the feeling is the runs were not as strong as in past years. That being said in one day John and I landed over 70 silvers. No too bad. John did manage to land a 27 inch rainbow. Nice fish. I took a dolly that went 27 inches as well. John had a 7 wt. Helios rod blow up (below, left) on a big silver just inches from the net. That one got away. I blew up a 5 wt Helios while trout fishing when a silver grabbed my fly. Everything was perfect.”



On Dolly Varden fishing from Josh: “This year the Dollies were bigger (above, right middle) than anyone can remember (I’m not even sure I got a picture of the largest one I caught). You usually have to go far upstream to get into the big ones. This year, they were just everywhere. I spent an entire day picking 20”+ Dollies out of the river, one after another.”

KING SALMON RUN ON THE GOODNEWS

This season fishing for King Salmon (below left and right) in Alaska has been the worst in the past 30 years, and many rivers had closed the King season before it even got started. However, on the Goodnews, the King Salmon run was a year when large fish dominated the run. Some Kings were already in the River in late June. By early July, chrome bright fish started to move into the river on every tide and fishing was very productive with big Kings up to 40 lbs. While the overall numbers of Kings were down slightly from previous years, what the run lacked in numbers it made up for in size. Adult fish between 20-40lbs made up the vast majority of the run, with very few jacks being caught. The big hens were the first to arrive, and by the end of the second week, the big bucks followed. The largest fish taken on a fly in the first two weeks was a 43" buck that had to weigh in the low 50# range.

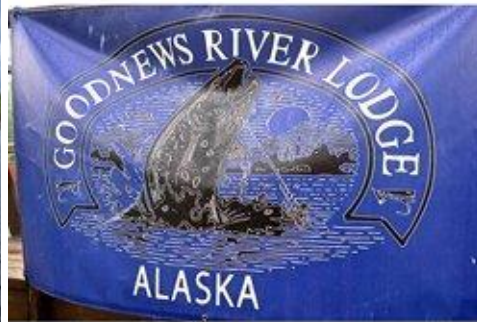


PHOTO CREDITS: All photos in this report (except the King Salmon), including the banner photo, were provided by Josh Luft-Glidden, Paul Souza, and John Wilhelm.

Either phone or drop us an e-mail if you have questions or would like more information about any of our destinations.

An enthusiastic traveling fly fisherman,
Don Muelrath
Fly Fishing Adventures
www.flyfishingadventures.org
888-347-4896
flyfish@napanet.net