



# Mount Baker Scenic Alpine Trout Stream

## Gameplan

Fishing Scenario ID# 412



Right below Upper Bagley Lake.

From <http://outdoors.webshots.com/photo/1482134894034162806NqgpBr>

A good percentage of the time we seem to hook a fish on every 3<sup>rd</sup> cast or so here, when we use our Fishing Coaches system. The only section that seems to work for fishing is between Upper and Lower Bagley Lakes, and also the tiny creek upstream of Upper Bagley Lake (but only in the very deepest pools.) The fish are pan-sized Brook Trout, up to 11.1 inches (most are under 10 inches). Fly-fishing is the most fun, and likely the most



productive in the creek. In the fall, their spawning colors are spectacular! If you're a sucker for alpine scenery, and lots of little trout, well....

This is how colorful they get in the fall



(Not from Bagley, but this is what they look like...send us your pictures, and also tell us what techniques worked and didn't work.)  
From <http://gf.state.wy.us/fishexam/species/frnBrookTrout.aspx>

You "must" check on Road/Trail conditions before going!:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/conditions/road-trail-conditions.shtml>

Click on "Road Conditions" and "Trail Conditions" for "Mt. Baker Highway (State Route 542) Heather Meadows / North Fork Nooksack"

After 4 casts to the same part of the pool, with no strikes, MOVE ON! That's the #1 key. You also might only hook fish in the very *deepest* pools, as the real shallow pools, and dead-water pools, don't hold many fish. So cover lots of ground.

Another great scenario, if you like lakes, that's literally on the same trail as Bagley: Iceberg Lake and Mazama Lake, entitled "Mount Baker Hike-in Brookies":

[http://fishingcoaches.org/members/gameplans/333\\_mtbaker\\_hikein\\_brookies.pdf](http://fishingcoaches.org/members/gameplans/333_mtbaker_hikein_brookies.pdf)

Dale had one day in mid-summer where he was bumping into ice bergs on his float-tube, and on the other lake he fished for 4 *hours* and only had *two* casts w/out a strike. Iceberg has bigger fish than Mazama.



From: <http://outdoors.webshots.com/album/89952556vFVXxl>

Upper Bagley and Lower Bagley *lakes* themselves have had great fishing (a strike every 1-4 casts or so) using a 6 foot 2 pound test leader using a spinning rod and a CASTING BUBBLE! It's almost as if the casting bubble attracts the fish when it hit the water! The clear casting bubble seems to badly outfish fly-casting with a fly rod, in lakes (not rivers.) Fishing the inlet creek mouths is the key! We did catch no fish whatsoever in Lower Bagley Lake when it's

water level dropped so low (3 feet deep, it's a reservoir) that you could practically wade across the entire lake...but by walking to Upper Bagley Lake, and fishing near it's the two main inlet streams, we had red-hot fishing.

95% of Bagley Creek seems too steep to fish or even to traverse, except for when flows are real low, so that keeps people away. It's also literally the one spot in recorded world history that got the absolute most annual snowfall:

<http://www.google.com/search?q=Mt.+Baker+%22world+record%22+annual+snowfall&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a>

For stream flows, consider seeing NF NOOKSACK RIVER BL CASCADE CREEK NR GLACIER, WA as a surrogate, just to see if the creek is likely in the ball-park of flows that you want:

[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=12205000&PARAMeter\\_cd=00060,00065](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site_no=12205000&PARAMeter_cd=00060,00065)

It's about the same elevation as parts of the Mt. Baker Ski area, and that ski area gets more snowfall than Whistler BC does. So in many years on AUGUST 1st even the road uphill from there is closed and snowbound (to "Artists' Point")! Artist Point never opened during the summer of 1999, because of record snow fall that winter. I fished it the end of September and a few people were SKIING at my eye level, on some snow at the upper end of Upper Bagley Lake.

Hey, who cares if you happen to hook no fish, check out this scenery!

Fish the creek into, and especially out of Upper Bagley Lake:



From: <http://my.opera.com/bibikool/albums/show.dml?id=579714>

You can't fish Picture Lake, but you get this bonus view as you are driving, maybe a mile before you hit Bagley!

One of the most photographed lakes in the world:



Yep, it had the world's record annual snowfall



From <http://annej6.wordpress.com/2009/08/20/picture-lake-pathheather-meadows/>

Mt. Baker!

(So tall that, for example, it actually rises up from its *base* more than any mountain in the entire state of Montana does.)



From <http://www.concerttee.com/posters/posters.php?item=4525557>



On the drive up, you can stop at spectacular Nooksack Falls!



From <http://blog.taeleman.com/2008/11/11/mount-baker-washington-usa>

Aim for days when the high temperatures at MAPLE FALLS are expected to range between 59 and 71 at weather.com!

Considering the scenery, and the cooperativeness of small trout, is this possibly the best place in the Northwest to introduce children to the joys of fly-fishing? Did we mention the scenery!? Ok, then we'll mention it again!

You can't fish Bagley Creek w/in 400' downstream of the dam on Lower Bagley Lake, we believe. We checked with Don Gay at WDFW, and with the local Ranger Station, and everything else about our scenario seems to be legal. Normally, when hiking this area, please don't hike off the trail, but to fish the creek you've got to get off the trail. As always, please check fishing regulations before you fish, anywhere, and follow the law.

Park at the Heather Meadows Visitor's Center, and head down hill. No fish seem to be present in Austin Pass Lake, so head down to the creek. Or hike up from the ski parking area that's at the lower end of Lower Bagley Lake.

Fish the entire creek from the outlet of Upper Bagley to the entrance to Lower Bagley before you give up, as some pools hold more fish than others.

Consider starting about ½ way between Upper Bagley Lake and Lower Bagley lake (find the first part of the creek that gets shade in the early evening), as this area seems to get the shade sooner than the other areas do.

In the very flat water (such as right by the rock-arched-bridge at the outlet of Upper Bagley Lake), with the sun in the sky, these fish are extremely finicky! But in the deeper riffled water, once the sun is off the creek, they seem to turn from *Eastern* Brook Trout into *Kamikaze* Brook Trout. Especially once the sun goes down behind the huge mountain to the west, the dry-fly fishing seems to pick up...this happens at what, 5 PM in the summer, since the mountain is so high!? This really extends the great “evening bite”.

Best fly in the rougher water seems to be a #14 Orange-body Humpy. As always, also try the #1 dry fly in the northwest: #12 Adams, with the hackle tied around the wing, not the hook shank, but mostly in the real calm water or the lakes. One angler uses a Renegade pattern. A #14 Royal Wulff was great too.

Doug Huddle says that unless there’s a real “gully washer” of a rainstorm, the creek here doesn’t get blown out too much.

Try 2 flies on the same line at the same time, but maybe not in the dead-flat slow water.

We recommend no more than 2-3 lb. test leader here, in this often clear water, for shallow trout.

In the riffles, swinging/holding the fly against the current seems at least as productive as a free-drift...but not on the real smooth water. These are cooperative, but not dumb, fish.

Please use barb-less hooks, and consider catch-and-release, so that others can enjoy catching that fish later.

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