



Paddle Guide

for the
**Quinebaug, Willimantic,
 and Shetucket River Water Trails**



**National Recreation Water Trails in
 The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor
 Eastern Connecticut and South-Central Massachusetts**

2016



US Army Corps
of Engineers

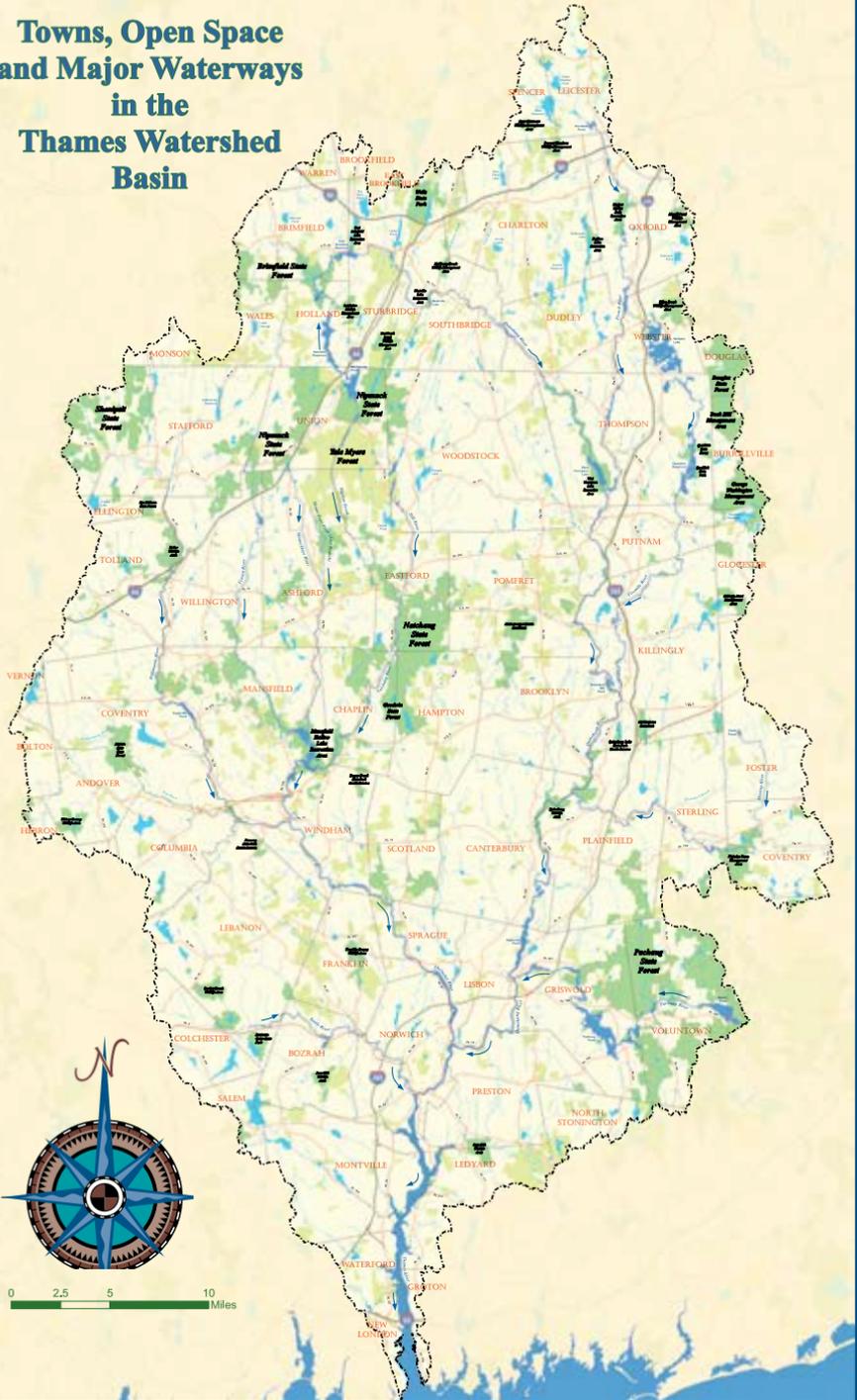


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MAP

Towns, Open Space and Major Waterways in the Thames Watershed Basin





Welcome!

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Welcome to the Quinebaug, Willimantic, and Shetucket River Water Trails. These water trails are located on the largest rivers in The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor in south-central Massachusetts and eastern Connecticut. All three rivers are part of the Thames River Watershed, the third largest watershed draining into Long Island Sound.

Dedication

This Paddle Guide is dedicated to Roger Hunt, a true friend of The Last Green Valley's rivers.

Each of the water trails has exceptional paddling opportunities combined with well-maintained public canoe and kayak access sites. Many of the segments provide an opportunity for family-friendly outdoor adventures with a surprisingly remote feel; wildlife is abundant and the only traces of civilization are the remnants of old mills.

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What Is A Water Trail?

It is the combination of a waterway with paddle routes and segments, clearly described in maps and guides, managed for public access and conserved to protect land and water resources – the very resources paddlers come here to enjoy.

The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) is teaming up with paddlers, businesses, municipalities, agencies, and river groups like the Willimantic River Alliance to create water trails on the rivers of the National Heritage Corridor. Visit [The Last Green Valley](#) for more information about TLGV and paddling in the National Heritage Corridor.



CAUTION: Do not use this guide as your only source of navigation information. Conditions on the river change constantly, sometimes drastically. It is your responsibility to be aware of changing conditions and the abilities of your group so your decisions lead to a safe trip.



What is a National Recreation Trail?

The Secretary of Interior recognizes “exemplary trails of local and regional significance” as National Recreation Trails (NRT) after a rigorous application process. More than 85 miles of the Quinebaug, Willimantic, and Shetucket Rivers have been designated as National Recreation Water Trails in the last few years. For information about all NRTs, visit [American Trails](#)



On-the-Water Paddle Skills Training

Whether you are new to paddling or have messed about in small boats since you were a kid, there are always new skills to learn for fun and safety. The following groups offer excellent paddling and outdoor safety workshops:

- [Appalachian Mountain Club](#)
- [Eastern Mountain Sports](#)
- [Collinsville Canoe & Kayak](#)
- [LL Bean](#)

Before You Go

Think ahead and prepare for a safe trip. A safe paddle outing begins before you leave home. It's up to you to make good decisions for yourself and your group. Learn how from the [American Canoe Association](#). Also, check out the [American Whitewater Safety Code](#).

Life Jacket!

Just wear it! Smart paddlers wear life jackets at all times. Connecticut state law requires that every person wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket between October 1st and May 31st. From June 1st through September

30th, there must be a life jacket aboard for each person. See the [Connecticut Boater's Guide](#) for full information.

Massachusetts law requires all canoe and kayak paddlers to wear a Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, or III life jacket between September 15 and May 15. Like Connecticut, outside this time period, an approved life jacket for every person must be in the boat. See the [Massachusetts Boater Safety Handbook](#).

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GLOSSARY OF PADDLING TERMS

Boat Ramp: A public launch ramp that is available for power boats as well as canoes and kayaks. See also canoe launch.

Bony: An adjective paddlers use to describe rocky, scratchy conditions due to low water.

Bow and Stern: The front and back ends of a boat, respectively.

Canoe Launch: A less developed public launch site that is suitable for launching canoes and kayaks by hand. See also boat ramp.

Cubic Feet per Second, or "cfs": River flow is measured as the number of cubic feet of water flowing past a certain point each second; it's called cfs for short. River gages provide online readings updated every 15 minutes, with graphs showing trends.

Eddy: A back-current along the edge of a river. Eddies are a good place to pull off to the side, out of the main current, to rest and re-group, or land. Be careful as you cross into an eddy as your boat may become less stable momentarily.

Flatwater: A section of river with no current, usually due to impounded water behind a dam.

Impoundment: A body of flatwater held behind a dam.

Lee: An adjective, meaning sheltered or away from the wind. By staying close to the lee shore, you'll be exposed to less wind and paddling will be easier.

Painter: A length of rope (known as a line) tied to the bow or stern.

PFD – Personal Flotation Device: The Coast Guard has shifted back to calling them life jackets. No matter the name, they only work if you wear them.

Portage: Derived from French, it means "to carry." A portage is the trail you walk to go around an obstruction (like a dam) or from one water body to another. It's also a verb that means to carry your boat and gear.

Quickwater: Stretches of river with enough current to carry the boat and create ripples, but not as steep or rough as rapids. Generally, you can navigate quickwater by following the main current. Also known as Class I whitewater (see below).

River Left and River Right: Refers to the river as you face downstream. As in, "Watch for the big rock on river left."

Rock Garden: A section of river with many partially submerged rocks. It's usually applied to areas with swift current where strong paddling skills are needed to dodge rocks.

Strainer: A fallen tree, partially submerged in the current, so the limbs and branches "strain" the water. People and boats pushed by current into a strainer put themselves and rescuers in extreme danger!

Sweep: An experienced paddler who remains the last boat in a group. He or she makes sure nobody is left behind and is ready to help with rescues.

USGS: Stands for the US Geological Survey. This agency and the US Army Corps of Engineers maintain a network of river gages to register water level and flow data online every 15 minutes. These readings are useful to decide whether the river flow is too low, too high or just right for your skills and equipment.

Whitewater: Stretches of river with enough flow and rocks to create breaking waves of water. On the standardized scale from I to V of whitewater difficulty, the Quinebaug has Class I (also called quickwater) and a few Class II spots at higher water levels.

(Adapted from www.AmericanWhitewater.org)

Class I: Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. There are few obstructions, all obvious and easily avoided with little training.

Class II: Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-sized waves are easily avoided by trained paddlers.

Use Stream Gages to Judge Paddling Conditions Before You Go

Water levels rise and fall with rainfall, snowmelt and dam releases, sometimes dramatically. Please pay attention to changing conditions before and during every trip.

In the paddling condition descriptions that follow, we suggest minimum thresholds for water flow so you don't end up walking more than paddling. Note that we intentionally do not recommend maximum levels because your safety depends entirely on your skill, equipment and judgment. This is true at any flow; what's safe and easy for a skilled paddler may be life-threatening to a less experienced paddler.

Before heading out, check the [USGS online stream gages](#). They measure both the river level and volume of water passing by every 15 minutes, 24/7. The sites also display recent trends and historic averages.

Internet Address Links

Website addresses are embedded in Paddle Guide text wherever you see a word or phrase in blue and underlined. When viewing the Paddle Guide on a computer connected to the internet, you can go to a website by holding down the Control key and clicking on the word or phrase. If you are reading a paper copy, use the spelled-out listing of every website address in the Appendix to enter addresses manually.

Let's Take Care of the River We Enjoy

As people enter and leave the water, launch sites tend to erode. As the footing gets muddy, the erosion gets worse and silt pollutes the river. To break this cycle, local officials and volunteers are lining up funding, materials and volunteers to stabilize launches. [Email The Last Green Valley](#) to receive monthly updates of upcoming water trail outings and clean-up events.

In the meantime, do your part right away:

- Carry out everything you carry in.
- Take an extra grocery bag to stash trash you find along the way.
- On a water trail, make every day a clean-up day.

Volunteer to Help Manage the Water Trail

Volunteers are the heartbeat of this trail. They prepare and update Paddle Guides and they help develop and maintain launches and kiosks. We need volunteers to help with occasional events and on-going projects. [Email The Last Green Valley](#) or call 860-774-3300 to add your name to the volunteer list. We'll contact you when there is work to do. Plus, join us for water trail outings to enjoy the river and meet other paddlers.

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Preparation Checklist

- Attach a whistle to each life jacket so paddlers can signal for help in an emergency.*
- Bring a USGS map to track your progress and to find a road or assistance, if necessary.*
- Bring an extra paddle for each boat, water bottles, food or energy snacks, hats, sunglasses, sunscreen and bug spray.*
- Have a line (known as a painter) attached to the bow and stern of each boat.*
- Hypothermia is a real threat, even on beautiful warm days, especially in the spring when river levels are often good for paddling but the water is still freezing. Dress for cold water and be prepared to spot the signs of hypothermia, including bad judgment by fellow paddlers. Take a complete change of dry clothes in a dry bag.*
- Let friends or family know where you will put in and take out and when to expect your return.*
- Take a cell phone in a waterproof bag for emergency calls (though you may not always be able to get a signal).*
- Be sure everyone's paddling skills are up to the demands of the segment you wish to paddle. When in doubt, don't go out.*
- Clean your boats when you travel between rivers or watersheds. You don't want to transport Didymo (also called rock snot) and invasive plants to choke your favorite paddling spots.*
- Position the most experienced paddlers so they lead the way and bring up the rear. The leader out front watches for hazards and gives directions; the last paddler (known as the sweep) makes sure nobody is left behind.*



Join The Last Green Valley

The Last Green Valley is two things: it is the popular name given to the The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor (designated by Congress in 1994) and it is the name of the non-profit organization which manages the National Heritage Corridor. The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) helps you to care for, enjoy, and pass on the National Heritage Corridor's unique natural and cultural resources.

By joining The Last Green Valley, you will support a local, sustainable economy. It is a member-supported nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. In partnership with watershed groups, paddlers, local, state and federal agencies, TLGV aims to create a water trail network on all navigable rivers that flow to the Thames. [Join today!](#)

Calendar of Events

To see upcoming events on and about the rivers in the Heritage Corridor, please visit the [The Last Green Valley](#) and look for the Events Calendar.



Welcome to the Quinebaug River Water Trail!

The Quinebaug River runs for almost 60 miles between Holland, Massachusetts and Norwich, Connecticut. Of that, more than 45 miles are described in this Paddle Guide as part of the Quinebaug River Water Trail.



This guide describes public-access launches and portages, as well as points of interest you will find along the way. Like all streams and rivers, the Quinebaug changes character every day, even hourly. While this guide cannot possibly predict your experiences on the water, it does provide basic information and sources for real-time information.

The guide also encourages you to ask questions, learn from others and make careful decisions before you head out. Ultimately, it's up to you to make good choices based on the weather, the river, your paddling expertise and equipment. More specific safety tips are suggested in the "Before You Go" and "Preparation Checklist" sections of this Guide.

How to Find Locations & Calculate Distance

River Mile

To describe locations and relative distances on the river, the guide identifies every point by River Mile, beginning with 0.0 at Holland Pond Canoe Launch in Holland MA and ending with 59.3 at Butts Bridge in Canterbury CT.

Street Address

Because there are rarely structures with specific addresses at launch sites, street addresses are often approximate and derived from Google® Maps.

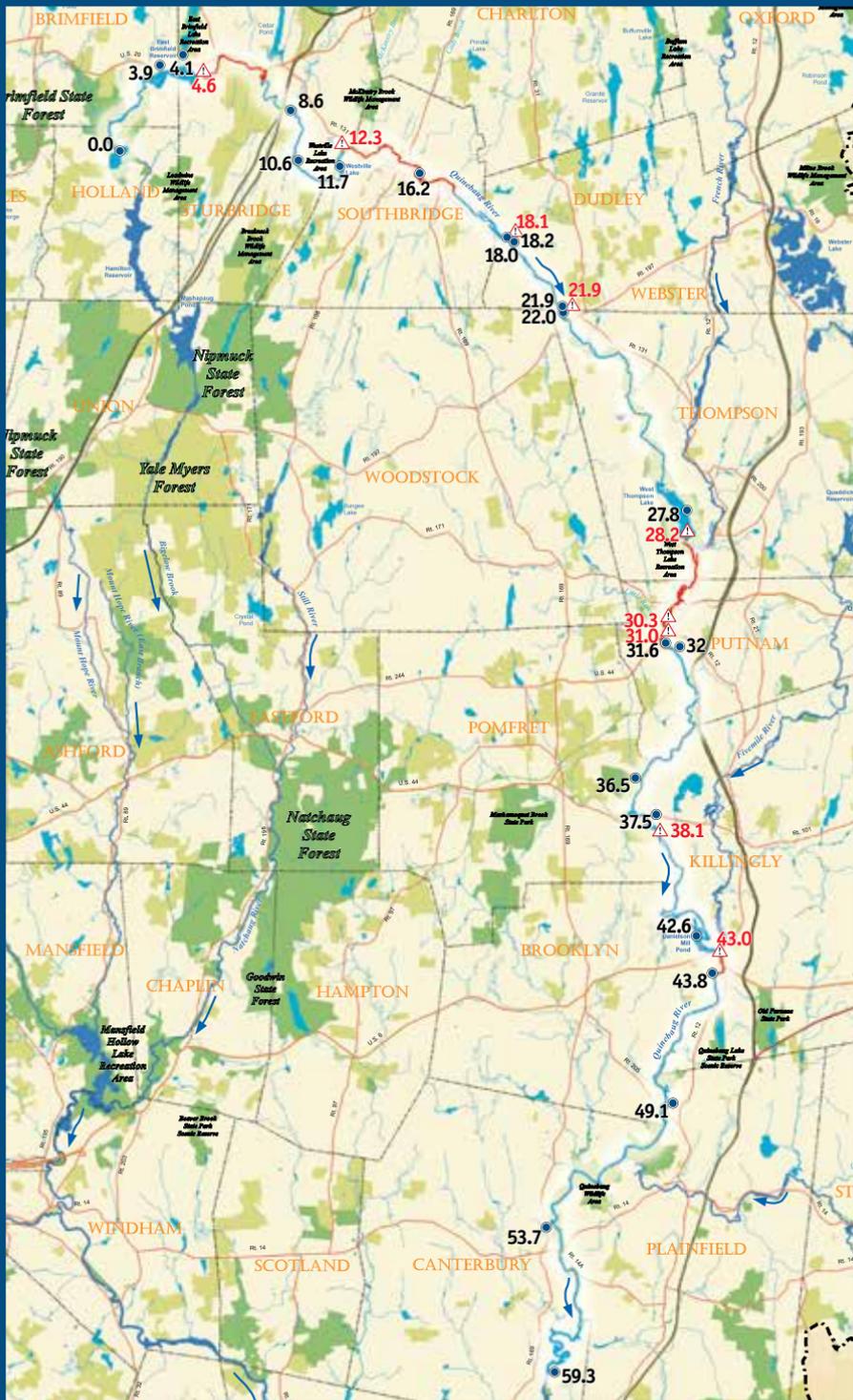
Latitude & Longitude

Called lat/long for short, these decimal coordinates are precise and function well on sites like Google® Maps, Google® Earth and Bing®. Copy the coordinates into the search window of Google® or a mapping

website (yes, the first is a positive number and the second is negative) and it will display that location. Note: in this Paddle Guide we use decimal lat/longs. Coordinates can also be expressed in minutes and seconds, but that format doesn't work as well with online mapping sites.

Google® Earth

On The Last Green Valley website, you will find a link to detailed data and an interactive map for the [Quinebaug River Water Trail](#). This map was created in Google Earth, a free online mapping program. You do not need to download Google Earth software to use this link, but to view more advanced features, such as a flyover of the Quinebaug River, you may wish to [download Google Earth](#).



Overview of the Quinebaug River Water Trail

Seven water trail segments on the Quinebaug provide more than 45 miles of paddling:

- 4.6 miles Holland Pond (Lake Siog) in Holland MA to East Brimfield Lake in Brimfield MA
- 2.2 miles Haynes Road (Old Route 15) in Sturbridge MA to Old Mashapaug Road in Sturbridge MA
- 1.7 miles Old Mashapaug Road in Sturbridge MA to Westville Lake in Southbridge MA
- 11.8 miles Dudley River Road in Southbridge MA to West Thompson Lake in Thompson CT
- 6.5 miles Simonzi Park in Putnam CT to Route 101 Bridge in Pomfret CT
- 4.8 miles Brooklyn Riverside Park in Brooklyn CT upriver to Rogers Dam in Pomfret and Killingly CT
- 15.5 miles Wayne R. Lafreniere Memorial Canoe Launch in Killingly CT to Butts Bridge in Canterbury CT



Are You New to Paddling?

If you are a beginner or your group includes youngsters and novices, consider paddling at the following access sites to practice and gain experience where there is no current.

- River Mile Launches for Less-experienced Paddlers
 - 0.0 Holland Pond Canoe Launch
 - 3.9 East Brimfield Lake Boat Ramp
 - 11.7 Westville Lake Boat Ramp
 - 18.0 West Dudley Pond (also known as Paper Mill Pond) Canoe Launch above West Dudley Hydro Dam
 - 27.8 West Thompson Lake Boat Ramp
 - 42.6 Brooklyn Riverside Park Canoe Launch
 - 59.3 Butts Bridge Canoe Launch

USGS Stream Gages

Before heading out, check the [USGS online stream gages](#). They measure both the river level and volume of water passing by every 15 minutes, 24/7. The sites also display recent trends and historic averages.

River Mile 4.8 – Quinebaug River below East Brimfield Dam

River Mile 12.5 – Quinebaug River below Westville Dam

River Mile 20.6 – Quinebaug River at Quinebaug, CT

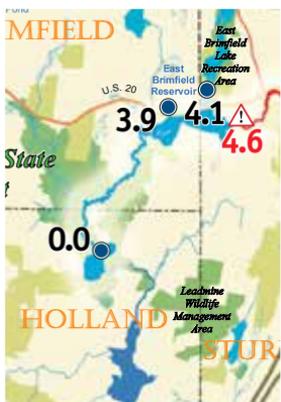
River Mile 28.5 – Quinebaug River at West Thompson CT

River Mile 31.4 – Quinebaug River at Putnam CT



River Mile 0.0

Holland MA



Wildlife and beautiful scenery are plentiful. Watch for turtles, Great Blue Herons, Canada Geese, various ducks, red fox, hawks, turkeys, Bald Eagles and many songbirds.

Canoe Launch: Holland Pond - also known as Lake Siog (river right)

20 Pond-Bridge Road, Holland MA 01521

Lat/Long: 42.082236°, -72.163644°

Driving Directions

From Brimfield Center, drive east for 0.25 mile on Route 20, then turn south onto Holland Road. Follow for 2 miles (the name changes to Brimfield Road about halfway) then turn left onto Pond-Bridge Road. The put-in is 0.25 mile on the left, on the far side of a small bridge.

Please be aware that Pond-Bridge Road is closed to traffic when the reservoir behind East Brimfield Dam rises above 16 feet following very heavy rains or snowmelt. Call the Corps of Engineers during weekday business hours to confirm status of the road: 508-347-3705.

Parking & Access to the River

There are a dozen free parking spaces in the unpaved parking lot at the put-in and more in an adjacent lot. The carry to the water's edge is less than 50 feet. The put-in is a low bank with a grassy shoreline. Rest rooms are available at the beach across Lake Siog from June until Labor Day. You can drive into the beach on Fri-Sun.

Description

This segment is within the East Brimfield Lake Project of the US Army Corps of Engineers and is called the Quinebaug River Canoe Trail. It was the first water trail designated by the Department of Interior as a National Recreation Trail and Watchable Wildlife Area. Download an excellent two-page guide and map from the [Corps of Engineers](#) website.

Paddling Downstream to East Brimfield Lake or Long Pond Boat Ramp

This segment is about 4 miles long with little current, extensive wildlife habitat, three picnic landings and no portages. It is an excellent three-hour outing for beginning paddlers and families.

Because current is not an issue, you can paddle downstream to East Brimfield Lake and back, or stop there, depending on the weather, your time and stamina. Paddle conditions are best when flow is more than 50 cubic feet per second (or cfs), as measured by the online [USGS stream gage](#) at East Brimfield. Below 20 to 30 cfs, it will be a scratchy and weedy ride.

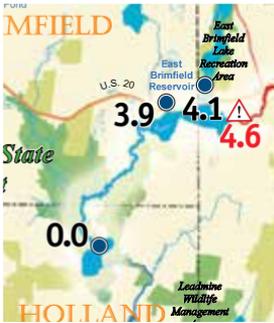
There are 3 designated rest stops along the route for picnicking and relaxation. Fires and camping are prohibited, but fishing is permitted with a Massachusetts fishing license. For most of this trip, the river moves very slowly and is

surrounded by extensive marshes. Once you enter the open water of East Brimfield Lake, stronger winds can be a factor.

The East Brimfield Lake Boat Ramp is on the northern shore about 0.5 mile from where the river enters the lake. You can also paddle 0.2 mile further and under the Route 20 bridge to the Long Pond Boat Ramp on the right.

River Mile 3.9

Brimfield MA



Boat Ramp: East Brimfield Lake (river left)

Across from 366-398 Sturbridge Road, Brimfield MA 01010

Lat/Long: 42.110269°, -72.139380°

Driving Directions

From Route 20 near the Brimfield/Sturbridge town line, turn into the launch across the street from Green Thumb Nursery, on the south side of the road. There is a sign.

Parking & Access to the River

There are more than a dozen spaces in the paved lot and the carry to the water's edge is less than 50 feet. Access to the water includes a paved launch ramp and a low grassy slope into the water.

Paddling Conditions on East Brimfield Lake

You can paddle upstream to Holland Pond, downstream, or both, depending on the weather, your time and stamina. It is less than a mile down the lake to the barrier above the dam. There is no hand-carry portage around it. There is plenty of fishing and paddling to do around the lake. Keep an eye on the wind as conditions can change dramatically.

River Mile 4.1

Brimfield MA



Boat Ramp: Long Pond

Old Streeter Road, Brimfield, MA 01010

Lat/Long: 42.112691°, -72.129461°

Driving Directions

From Route 20 near the Brimfield/Sturbridge town line, turn right onto Old Streeter Road to the boat launch.

Parking & Access to the River

There are more than a dozen spaces in a paved lot and it is an easy carry to the water's edge. Portable restrooms are available year-round. Explore Long Pond or paddle under the Route 20 bridge to access East Brimfield Lake.

Drive from East Brimfield Lake (River Mile 3.9) to the Canoe Launch on Haynes Street in Sturbridge (River Mile 8.6)

Drive east on Route 20 and take Route 131 (Main Street) east towards the center of town, past the Sturbridge Police Station on the left, under I-84 and then a right at the first light, across the street from the Sturbridge Town Hall. The boat launch is at the bridge over the Quinebaug River, 1.3 miles from Route 20.

River Mile 4.6

East Brimfield Dam – DANGER

Do Not Paddle!

Lat/Long: 42.108093°, -72.126962°



River Mile 8.6

Sturbridge MA

Canoe Launch: Haynes Street

Also known as Old Route 15

70 Haynes Road, Sturbridge MA 01566 (river right)

Lat/Long: 42.097410, -72085384°



Driving Directions

From Route 20 in Sturbridge take Route 131(Main Street) east towards the center of town, past the Sturbridge Police Station on the left, under I-84 and then a right at the first light, across the street from the Sturbridge Town Hall. The boat launch is at the bridge over the Quinebaug River, river right and 1.3 miles from Route 20.

Parking & Access to the River

The unpaved parking area can accommodate a few cars and is on the east side of Haynes Street. From the parking area it is a carry of 340 feet down a path to the launch location on river right. There are no restrooms.

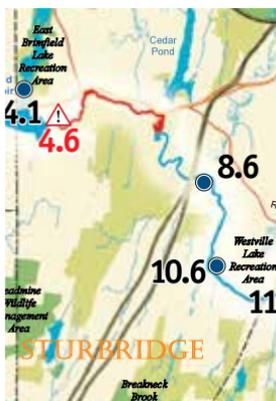
Padding Upstream to Old Sturbridge Village Dam (River Mile 7.3)

You can paddle upstream for 1.3 miles to Old Sturbridge Village Dam where you will have to turn around because there is no official portage. This section is mostly flat water and friendly to novice paddlers. At less than 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) of flow, it's more walking than paddling, so check the real-time level at [USGS stream gage](#) at East Brimfield. Note that the 2011 tornado ripped across the river just south of Old Sturbridge Village and there may still be strainers and other debris in the river.

Padding Downstream to Old Mashapaug Road (River Mile 10.6)

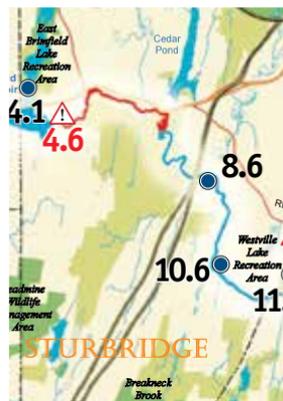
Padding downstream to the Canoe Launch at Old Mashapaug Road is a nice, slow, meandering paddle through wooded areas. At .5 miles you'll pass under the Farquar Road bridge and at 1.4 miles under the Grand Trunk Trail footbridge. At just over 2 miles is the Canoe Launch at Old Mashapaug Road, also known as the Old Box Shop Dam on river right. Paddlers with limited experience should take out at this location.

Experienced paddlers may wish to continue to the Westville Lake Recreation area and boat launch. Note that from Old Box Shop Dam, the first .75 mile of river drops about 25 feet beginning at the low-head dam at the put-in. In high water, this is a Class II rapid; in low water, it is a rock field. When the [USGS stream gage](#) at East Brimfield shows 300 cfs or more, the rocks are covered by water.



River Mile 10.6

Sturbridge MA



Canoe Launch: Old Mashapaug Road
also known as Old Box Shop Dam (river right)
3 Old Mashapaug Road, Sturbridge MA 01566
Lat/Long: 42.074933°, -72.077203°

Driving Directions

From Route 20, take a right at the entrance to Old Sturbridge Village and then left on Old Sturbridge Village Road and continue south on Old Sturbridge Village Road. Follow it to the bridge over I-84, where it becomes River Road. Continue on River Road to the four-way intersection with Mashapaug Road; turn left. Drive 1.1 miles, turn left onto Breakneck Road. In 1/3 of a mile, Breakneck bears left at a small traffic island and becomes Wallace Road. Cross the river and turn left onto Old Mashapaug Road, a gated Corps of Engineers road. (You will pass the entrance to Westville Dam Boat Ramp on your right.) This old road is open from mid-April until the second Sunday in September, generally from 8 to 8 each day. It's .75 mile upriver to the canoe launch.

Parking & Access to the River

The unpaved lot will accommodate a dozen cars. The carry to the water's edge is about 50 feet and the access to the water is gently sloping. There are no restrooms.

Paddling Upstream to Old Sturbridge Village Dam (River Mile 7.3)

You can paddle upstream for 3.3 miles to Old Sturbridge Village Dam where you will have to turn around because there is no official portage. This section is mostly flat water and friendly to novice paddlers. At less than 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) of flow, it's more walking than paddling, so check the real-time level at [USGS stream gage](#) at East Brimfield. Note that the 2011 tornado ripped across the river just south of Old Sturbridge Village and there may still be a lot of strainers and other debris in the river.

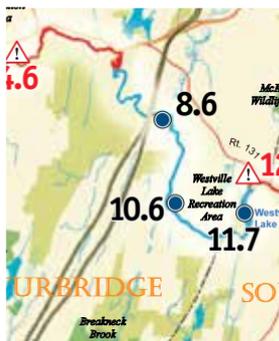
Paddling Downstream to Westville Lake Recreation Area (River Mile 11.7)

The first .75 mile drops about 25 feet beginning at the low-head dam right at the put-in. In high water, this is a Class II rapid; in low water, it is a rock field. When the [USGS stream gage](#) at East Brimfield shows 300 cfs or more, the rocks are covered by water.

Given how tricky this stretch can be just downstream, you may want to launch at Westville Lake to paddle the lake and as far upstream as you find comfortable. Visit the [Corps of Engineers website](#) for more information about the Westville Dam Recreation Area.

River Mile 11.7

Sturbridge MA



Boat Ramp: Westville Lake Recreation Area (river left) 125 Wallace Road, Sturbridge MA 01566

Lat/Long: 42.074344°, -72.064509°

Driving Directions

Westville Lake is located in Southbridge and Sturbridge MA. From I-84 westbound take Exit 3B to Route 20 West, on to Route 131 East.

Follow the signs to Recreation Area entrance. From Connecticut and I-84 eastbound take Exit 1 to Mashapaug Road. Follow the signs to the Dam and Recreation Area.

Parking & Access to the River

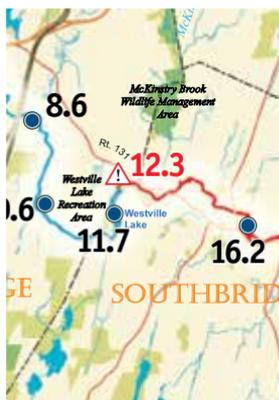
There are more than a hundred parking spaces here, but remember that the athletic fields are sometimes used for softball and soccer leagues. There is a walking trail around the reservoir. The park is open for vehicles and the bathrooms are open from mid-May until the second Sunday in September, seven days a week from 8 to 8. There is a water fountain. Visit the [Corps of Engineers website](#) for more information about the Westville Dam Recreation Area.

Paddling Conditions

The reservoir behind the dam provides a reliable place to paddle regardless of stream flow levels.

From the launch area, you can paddle the lake upstream as far as you find comfortable and downstream to the dam (.6 of a mile). There is no portage at this dam. Beginning at the dam, the river is unsuitable for paddling through Southbridge for 3.9 miles due to hazardous conditions.

River Mile 12.3



Westville Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!

Lat/Long: 42.081199°, -72.059265°



Vehicular Portage: Drive from Westville Lake Boat Ramp (River Mile 11.7) to Dudley River Road Launch in Dudley (River Mile 16.2)

3.8 miles by road

Exit the parking lot and turn left onto Wallace Road, cross the bridge and bear left onto Old South Street. At .7 mile, turn left onto South Street and follow it for 1.1 mile to the junction with Main Street (Route 131) in downtown Southbridge. Bear right and continue on 131 through downtown Southbridge to the rotary and keep to the right onto East Main Street and past the Big Y Marketplace plaza. As Route 131 bends to the right just south of the Big Y, turn left onto the bridge to Dudley River Road. Cross the bridge and turn right. The launch site is immediately on your right, just downstream of the bridge.



River Mile 12.3 to River Mile 16.2

No Water Trail from Westville Dam through Southbridge

This section is dangerous and unpleasant for paddlers at any level of water flow. The river is channelized between vertical concrete walls through the Town of Southbridge. You must portage by car to the next put-in at Dudley River Road (River Mile 16.2) or West Dudley Hydro (Paper Mill) Dam (River Mile 18.0).

River Mile 16.2 Dudley MA



Canoe Launch: Dudley River Road (river left)

2 Dudley River Road, Dudley MA 01571

Lat/Long: 42.066953°, -72.007569°

Driving Directions

At the bend in Route 131 just south of the Big Y, turn east onto the bridge to Dudley River Road. Cross the bridge and turn right. The launch site is immediately on your right, just downstream of the bridge.

Parking & Access to the River

There are No Parking signs on both sides of the road except for an area that will accommodate two to three cars. This land is owned by the Town of Southbridge, but is not yet a formal launch site. Paddlers must improvise a trail down a very steep bank through brush and poison ivy. This is especially difficult in wet weather. At the bottom of the slope, the flood plain can accommodate several boats when the river is low. At high water, there is not much room to maneuver.

Less experienced paddlers should skip this section and drive to the launch above West Dudley Hydro Dam (River Mile 18.0) instead.

Paddling to West Dudley Hydro Dam

At high water, this is a challenging stretch, best suited for experienced paddlers who can enter their boats under difficult conditions and handle swift current. It is 1.9 miles to the take-out above West Dudley Hydro Dam (River Mile 18.0). During low water in summer and fall, this section is not navigable. If the [USGS stream gage](#) at Quinebaug CT reads lower than 200 cfs, you may want to paddle another day, after some rain.

Vehicular Portage Option:

Drive from Dudley River Road (River Mile 16.2) to West Dudley Hydro Dam (River Mile 18.0) 2.2 miles by road

Return to Route 131 south and follow it for 2.1 miles. Turn left onto West Dudley Road for .15 mile where you will find a parking area and kiosk on the portage around the West Dudley Hydro Dam.



River Mile 18.0

Dudley MA



Canoe Launch: Above West Dudley Hydro Dam at West Dudley Pond – also known as Paper Mill Pond and Paper Mill Dam (river right)

11-37 West Dudley Road, Dudley MA 01571

Lat/Long: 42.050087°, -71.982596°

Driving Directions

From Southbridge Road (Route 131), turn onto West Dudley Road. Continue .15 mile, between Industrial Transfer & Storage Company and the bridge where the Quinebaug River Valley Trail crosses the road.

Parking & Access to the River Upstream

An eight-car parking and kiosk area is part of the rail and water trail corridor. The West Dudley Pond launch is adjacent to the parking area. There is vehicular access and a turn-around to drop off your boat and gear.

Paddling above West Dudley Hydro Dam

The impounded river behind the dam provides a pleasant stretch of river with current and plenty of water even in dry conditions. Paddle around the pond, or upstream until either current or scratchy rocks convince you to turn back. West Dudley Pond is an ideal place for family outings and novice paddlers. Keep an eye on the wind as the open water is about .75 mile long and 400 feet wide.

River Mile 18.1

West Dudley Hydro Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!

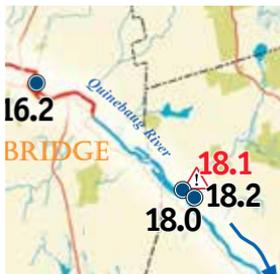
Lat/Long: 42.050552°, -71.981568°

Portage: Carry around West Dudley Hydro Dam (river right) 400-foot carry by hand



River Mile 18.2

Dudley MA



Canoe Launch: Below West Dudley Hydro Dam at West Dudley Pond – also known as Paper Mill Pond and Paper Mill Dam (river right)

11-37 West Dudley Road, Dudley MA 01571

Lat/Long: 42.049600°, -71.981433°

Driving Directions

From Southbridge Road (Route 131), turn onto West Dudley Road. Continue .15 mile, between Industrial Transfer & Storage Company and the closed bridge, where the Quinebaug River Valley Trail crosses the road.



Parking & Access to the River

An eight-car parking area with information kiosk serves this convergence of rail and water trails. The launch is downstream of the rail trail bridge, on river right. You can unload your boat and gear near the put-in then park in the lot. The carry to the water is less than 100 feet.

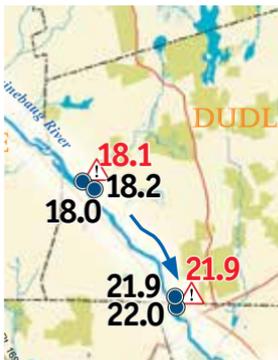
Paddling to Fabyan Dam

This section includes quickwater, river turns with Class I whitewater, small islands with narrow channels and fallen trees cut down by beaver. Less experienced paddlers should skip this section, especially at higher flows. Check the [USGS stream gage](#) at Westville Dam. At low flows, as long as you have at least 200 cfs (2.7-feet on the stream gauge reading), you should have enough water to paddle.

Before you put in, beware of turbulence from water released from the dam to run the powerhouse; it is automated and unpredictable. It may get bony in the half-mile Rock Garden sections between MA 131 (Old Turnpike Road) and CT 197 at the state line. You will float comfortably again once you pass under 197. The paddle to Fabyan will take up to two hours depending on flow and your group.

Be careful as you approach Fabyan Dam which is unsafe to shoot. Hug the shore on river left and enter the marked channel for the take-out/portage.

River Mile 21.9



Fabyan Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!

Lat/Long: 42.010425°, -71.942169°



The breach in the dam on river left is too steep and rocky to shoot safely. The remains of the dam create sharp snags that you cannot see.

River Mile 21.9

Thompson CT



Take-out & Portage: Above Fabyan Dam (river left)

622 Fabyan Road, Thompson CT 06255

Lat/Long: 42.010593°, -71.942139°

Driving Directions

From the intersection with CT Route 131, the launch is .6 mile south on Fabyan Woodstock Road, on the left just before the bridge. Watch for the brown sign: Fabyan Dam Canoe Launch.

Parking & Access to the River

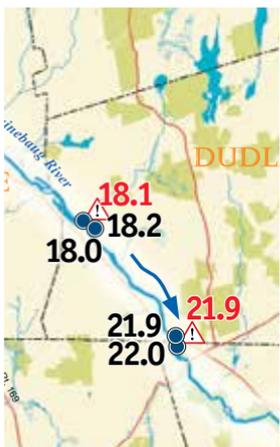
The take-out is on river left. Be careful unloading as the breach is just downstream. There is an unpaved parking area with lots of room on the north side of Fabyan Road, a carry of about 200 feet.

Portage: Carry around Fabyan Dam (river left) 400-foot carry by hand, with road crossing

For those continuing on downstream, be extra careful portaging across Fabyan Road as vehicles fly through, oblivious to slow-moving portagers. Always have a spotter give the All Clear before carrying boats across!

River Mile: 22.0

Thompson CT



Canoe Launch: Fabyan (river left)

622 Fabyan Road, Thompson CT 06255

Lat/Long: 42.009886°, -71.941597°

Driving Directions

From the intersection with CT Route 131, the launch is .6 mile south on Fabyan Woodstock Road, on the left just before the bridge. Watch for the brown sign: Fabyan Dam Canoe Launch.

Parking & Access to the River

There are six free parking spaces in a paved lot (and additional spaces across Fabyan Road in an unpaved lot). There are no public restrooms. The carry to the water is 175 feet. You can back your vehicle down the paved ramp to unload if necessary. The put-in is gently sloping with room for several boats to launch at a time.

In addition to the launch for canoes and kayaks, the 7.5 mile Quinebaug River Hiking Trail starts here and runs along the river to West Thompson Lake.

History of the Site

Before you put in at Fabyan, notice the remnants of the dam just upstream of the bridge. It was built in 1804 to power a carding and felting machine at the mill on site. Between 1821 and 1870, steel axes and tools and woolen



goods were produced here. The Fabyan Mill was severely damaged by the 1938 hurricane and never recovered. In March 1939, a fire destroyed the mill completely.

Paddling to West Thompson Dam

This segment is within the West Thompson Lake project of the US Army Corps of Engineers. The [Corps website](#) includes an excellent water trail guide and map. This segment is 5.8 miles long with some moving water (but no rapids), some flat water, extensive wildlife habitat and no portages. It is an excellent three-hour outing for paddlers who are comfortable with moving water.

Paddling is not suggested during high-water events after snowmelt and heavy storms, or when water levels are too low. You can check the [USGS stream gage](#) at Quinebaug, CT for this information. If water levels are below 300 cubic feet per second (cfs), you may scrape or have to walk.

The banks range from steep and forested to flat, agricultural fields. Especially during the first three miles, you will feel isolated, except for two bridge crossings. The first bridge is Brickyard Road, about two miles downstream. About one mile farther down is Red Bridge Road. The river begins to widen as you paddle between corn fields. You will pass by stone bridge abutments where the Old Blain Road pedestrian bridge used to be; this marks the beginning of West Thompson Lake, the impoundment behind the dam. You'll reach the Boat Ramp about one mile downstream on the left. With no current to help you along, and possibly a headwind, this may feel like the longest mile of your trip.

Wildlife and beautiful scenery are plentiful. Watch for turtles, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Canada Geese, various ducks, hawks, osprey, turkeys and many song-birds. You may see beaver, deer and red fox, too. Bald Eagles pass through in the late winter and early spring. The Quinebaug River is stocked with brook, brown and rainbow trout. There is also a healthy population of small-mouth bass throughout the river.

River Mile 27.8

North Grosvenordale CT



Boat Ramp: West Thompson Lake (river left)
341-365 Reardon Road, North Grosvenordale CT 06255
Lat/Long: 41.953556°, -71.899741°

Driving Directions

From CT 12, go west on West Thompson Road then turn right onto Reardon Road. Turn left onto Campground Drive and follow signs to the boat launch and parking area.

Parking & Access to the River

There are about 30 free parking spaces at the West Thompson Lake Boat Ramp which serves power boats as well as paddle craft. You can drive down to the water to load and unload boats. Access to the water includes a broad paved launch ramp and a grassy slope into the water with sandy bottom. Portable restrooms are available from mid-May to Columbus Day.

This 200-acre lake is managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers for recreation and flood control. Visit the Corps of Engineers website for more information about West Thompson Lake.

Paddling on West Thompson Lake

You can paddle around the lake, fish (with a Connecticut license) and venture upstream to the north end where the Quinebaug River enters. At the south end of the lake, please stay away from the inlet of the dam. There is no hand-carry portage downstream around the dam.

Winds are changeable and can make paddling difficult on this large lake, especially for inexperienced and young paddlers. Keep an eye on the weather and stick to the lee shore.

The normal pool level (or "stage") of the lake is 15 feet. If you have questions about paddling conditions, please contact the Park Office at 860-923-2982.

About the Recreation Area

After the devastating floods of 1955, the federal government planned flood control projects to prevent future disasters. The US Army Corps of Engineers acquired land through eminent domain. West Thompson Dam is part of a network of six flood control facilities in the Thames River Basin which help to control flooding all the way from the upstream tributaries of the Thames River to the Long Island Sound. Construction of the dam created multiple recreational opportunities. The natural setting surrounding West Thompson Lake is enjoyed year-round by hikers, picnickers, campers, photographers and other visitors.

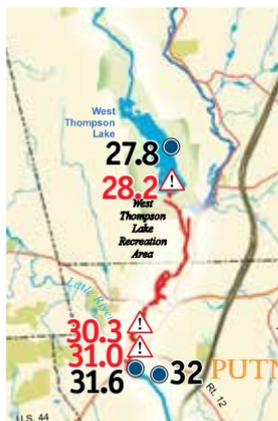


The West Thompson Lake Campground is open from the third Friday in May through the Sunday after Labor Day. There are 24 sites, including 11 with water and electricity, 11 basic sites, and two Adirondack-style lean-to-shelters. There are restrooms with hot showers, firewood for purchase, a playground, horseshoe pits, a half-court basketball court, amphitheater with small stage and an RV dump station. For reservations, call 877-444-6777 or go to www.recreation.gov.

Three picnic shelters and several group use areas may be reserved for a fee, on a first-come, first-served basis. Group activities such as bass tournaments, field dog trials and Scout group campouts require a special-use permit. An 18-hole disc golf course is available for use by the public free of charge. West Thompson also offers over 17 miles of hiking trails throughout its 1,857 acres.

River Mile 28.2

West Thompson Lake Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!
Lat/Long: 41.946641°, -71.901354°



You can drive the length of this dam on West Thompson Road, but you cannot hand carry a boat around it. Portage by car to Simonzi Park.



Vehicular Portage: Drive from West Thompson Lake Boat Ramp (River Mile 27.8) to Simonzi Park in Putnam (River Mile 31.6)

4.5 miles by road

Follow West Thompson Lake Recreation Road for .4 mile, turn right onto Reardon Road. Follow Reardon for half a mile, turn left onto West Thompson Road (Route 193) and continue .25 mile to intersection with Route 12. Turn right onto 12 (it's called Riverside Drive) and follow it for 1.9 miles to the junction with Route 44. Turn right and follow 44 through downtown Putnam for .8 mile. Turn left onto Kennedy Drive at intersection just before the bridge at Cargill Falls. Follow Kennedy Drive along the river for half a mile, then turn right into the Simonzi Park parking lot.

River Mile 30.3

Belding Mill Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!
Lat/Long: 41.923316°, -71.906378°

There is no portage around this dam.



River Mile 31.0

Cargill Falls – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!
Lat/Long: 41.915951°, -71.911440°

There is no portage around this dam and falls.



River Mile 31.6

Putnam CT



Old Canoe Launch: Simonzi Park (river left)

80-82 Kennedy Drive, Putnam, CT 06260

Lat/Long: 41.908536°, -71.909695°

Driving Directions

From I-395: Take exit 45 for Kennedy Drive toward Putnam. Head west for .9 mile to the paved parking area on the left across from Canal Street.

From Route 44: turn south on Kennedy Drive in Putnam and head .5 mile to the paved parking area on the right across from Canal Street.

Parking & Access to the River

There are about a dozen free parking spaces. The carry to the water's edge is about 100 feet and gently sloped. The shoreline is a grassy bank with a one- to two-foot drop to the water; this can be tricky, depending on the water level. The Town provides a portable restroom.

In 2016, the Town extended the River Trail and constructed a new car top boat launch and parking lot to the east of this launch which has a slightly longer carry to the water but a much easier put-in and is recommended.

River Mile 32

Putnam CT



New Canoe Launch: Kennedy Drive (river left)

16 Kennedy Drive, Putnam, CT 06260

Lat/Long: 41.902507°, -71.902369

Driving Directions

From I-395: Take exit 45 for Kennedy Drive toward Putnam. Head west for under a .5 mile to the second left (not the first left to the YMCA). Take an immediate left into the parking area.

From Route 44: Turn south on Kennedy Drive in Putnam and head 1.2 miles past the Farmer's Market Pavilion and Putnam Dog Park then take a right towards the bridge. Take an immediate left in to the parking area.

Parking & Access to the River

There is room for approximately 14 cars. The boat launch is located under the bridge and about 200 feet from the parking area.



Paddling to Route 101 in Pomfret

The trip to Route 101 is 5.5 miles long with current, some quick-water and flat-water, but no portages. It is an excellent two-hour outing for paddlers who are comfortable with moving water. This section holds water well and may be navigable when other sections are too low. Beginners will enjoy this stretch with moderate flow of 300 to 600 cfs on the [USGS stream gage](#) at Putnam, CT. At high flows the current is strong and spans the river. The riverbed slopes gently and there aren't many big rocks, so there are few eddies or waves. In dry conditions, with flows lower than 200 cfs, you may walk more than paddle. You may want to wait until after the next rainy day.

If you launch from Putnam with moderate and higher flows, be ready for a stretch of quickwater right away. With good flows, the current will do a lot of the work almost all the way to Cotton Bridge, but you will need to watch for turbulence and strainers (partially submerged trees and branches).

The first mile and a half parallels Kennedy Drive and I-395, but even with cars and trucks in sight, it's surprisingly quiet and peaceful. There are few houses and businesses once you paddle away from 395. Don't be alarmed if you hear gunfire from a neighboring sportsman's club shooting range. The river flows between wooded banks that screen your view of agricultural fields and several gravel operations, so you'll hardly notice them. This is pleasant and beautiful paddling.

At River Mile 35.9, watch on river right for a small man-made inlet and a monolithic curiosity left over from a never-completed hydro dam: a freestanding stone wall with three round holes, each about 12 feet in diameter.

Farther along, you may catch sight of an abandoned cabin along the way. On the river bottom, look for remnants of Native American fish weirs, visible as cobbles arranged on the river bottom. Historians have documented weirs in Killingly and downriver.



River Mile 36.5

Pomfret CT



Canoe Launch: Cotton Bridge Road (river right)

107 Cotton Bridge Road, Pomfret CT 06259

Lat/Long: 41.858608°, -71.924741°

Parking & Access to the River

There is a gravelly parking area between the road and river which accommodates about four cars, but there are no other facilities here.

Paddling to Route 101

A mile past Cotton Bridge Road, you will reach the take-out at Route 101 on river right, just past the bridge as the river bends to the right. The shoreline is moderately steep and constructed of railroad tie steps. If the flow is strong you may want to pull into the tiny cove about ten feet downstream of the canoe launch steps. The first paddlers to land should help later arrivals to come ashore.

It is a good idea to get off the river at Route 101 because .6 mile downstream is the Rogers Dam, a dangerous drop with no formal portage, though some people walk around on river right. Someday, there may be a public portage; for now, you should drive to Brooklyn Riverside Park and paddle upstream to enjoy the river below Rogers Dam.

River Mile 37.5

Pomfret CT



Canoe Launch: At Route 101 Bridge (river right)

437 Killingly Road, Pomfret CT 06259

Lat/Long: 41.849063°, -71.921325°

Driving Directions

From I-395: Take exit 41, Route 101. Head west on Route 101 for 2.2 miles, cross the Quinebaug River and turn left at the brown boat launch sign.

From the west: The launch is on Route 101, about 2.1 miles east of the Route 101 and Route 169 intersection. Turn right at the brown boat launch sign.

Parking & Access to the River

This is a popular take-out for the 5.9-mile paddle from Putnam with about a dozen free parking spaces in an unpaved lot. Eversource owns the site and has authorized the Pomfret Conservation Commission to make improvements for paddlers and anglers. The Last Green Valley funded an informational kiosk. There are no public restrooms. The carry from the water's edge is about 100 feet.

Padding Downstream

Padding downstream from this launch is not advisable until a formal portage can be created around the Rogers Dam, .6 mile downstream. The dam is a dangerous drop and is hazardous under any conditions. Some paddlers do walk around on river right.

River Mile 38.1



Rogers Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!

Lat/Long: 41.841585°, -71.914808°



Padding in this area is not advisable until a formal portage can be created around the Rogers Dam. The dam is a dangerous drop of more than 10 feet and is hazardous under any conditions. Some paddlers do portage on river right. You can also paddle upstream from Brooklyn to enjoy the river below the dam. See below.

River Mile 42.6

Brooklyn CT

Canoe Launch: Brooklyn Riverside Park (river right)

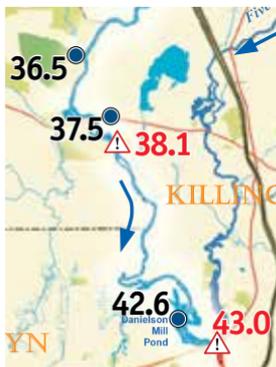
24 Greenway Drive, Brooklyn CT 06234

Lat/Long: 41.802682°, -71.896252°



Driving Directions

From Route 6, turn north at the traffic signal onto Day Street. There is a convenience store at the intersection. Drive 300 feet, then turn right onto Greenway Drive at the signs for “Maury Bowen Complex” and Riverbend Apartments. Drive down the hill approximately 400 feet and bear left at the apartments.



Parking & Access to the River

River access is on the right. There is a river information kiosk adjacent to the parking lot.

Site Description

The Canoe Launch is very user friendly. Both novice and experienced paddlers can enjoy several hours here. The site is easy to find, has good parking, and can be used almost all year. It is a good place for fishing and a picnic. There is a portable restroom available at the ballfield. Paddlers can travel three to four miles upstream and then return back downstream to the launch site.



The ramp is constructed of two-inch angular stone and is about 10 feet wide. At the bottom of the stone ramp there are several three by three-foot concrete slabs resting on the river bottom. Adjacent steeper slopes are cleared of underbrush and covered with wood chips to create river views.



This is intended to be a hand launch ramp. Nevertheless, be aware that small motorized boats do travel on this portion of the Quinebaug.

The area in between the parking lot and the river has nice views of the river and is shady. People enjoy fishing from the shore and from boats in this area.



Paddling Upstream

Due to the hazards of the dam, it's unwise to paddle downstream toward the Route 6 bridge. Instead, head upriver for 4.4 miles toward the dam at Rogers Corporation. There are some houses with yards that extend down to the river as you paddle upstream but the banks are generally undeveloped.

Even in mid-summer and droughts, the ponded water upstream of the launch tends to be navigable thanks to water backed up behind the dam. It's a good place for novice paddlers to enjoy the river.

There are islands and sand bars to explore, but it can be tricky to find the main branch of the river. Stay to the left as you paddle upstream. This area is especially good for fishing and watching birds and wildlife that depend on the rich habitat. During the summer, you will likely see and hear small planes using the Danielson Airport.

Vehicular Portage: Drive around Quinebaug (Killingly) Dam from Brooklyn Riverside Park (River Mile 42.6) to Wayne LaFreniere Canoe Launch in Killingly (River Mile 43.8)

1.75 miles by road

Drive uphill out of the park, turn left on Day Street, then left on Route 6 at the light. Go exactly one mile on Route 6, then turn right onto Wauregan Road (CT 12 south) at the traffic light. In .1 mile, turn right into the sewage treatment plant entrance; there is a sign for the canoe launch. Continue straight to the back of the parking lot by the baseball fields. Park and carry your boat past the baseball fields to the launch, adjacent to the paved Quinebaug River Trail, about 500 feet.

River Mile 43.0

Quinebaug (Killingly) Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!

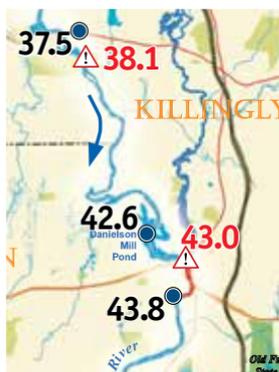
Lat/Long: 41.801527°, -71.887553°



Stay away from this dam, especially in moderate and high flows! Instead, get a good look at the dam, cascading water and powerhouse from the Route 6 bridge and Quinebaug River Trail – a lovely riverfront esplanade.

River Mile 43.8

Killingly Ct



Canoe Launch: Wayne R. LaFreniere Memorial (river left)

43 Wauregan Road, Killingly CT 06239

Lat/Long: 41.793788°, -71.889130°

Driving Directions

From I-395, take Exit 37 onto Route 6 West. In less than half a mile, then left onto Wauregan Road (CT 12 south) at the traffic light. In .1 mile, turn right into the sewage treatment plant entrance; there is a sign for the canoe launch. Continue straight to the back of the parking lot by the baseball fields.

Parking & Access to the River

There is plenty of parking available, even if ball games are in progress. Park and carry your boat down the gravel driveway between the baseball fields to the paved Quinebaug River Trail. Turn left onto the trail and carry about 100 feet more to the kiosk. Watch for walkers and cyclists as this is a popular trail. There are portable toilets in the Little League complex.

The put-in is down a short gravelly slope by the kiosk, on the downstream side of a small peninsula formed by a tree. The river always flows swiftly in this stretch, but the protected launch sets you off downstream very smoothly. Several kayaks can fit comfortably side by side on the slope and more can fit on the grassy shoulder of the trail near the kiosk. Thanks to UNFI for funding the installation of this water trail information kiosk.

Paddling to Robert Manship Park

This is the longest and most challenging segment of water trail on the Quinebaug. You can paddle 5.3 miles to the CT DEEP Fish Hatchery, or continue on to Robert Manship Park in Canterbury for a ten-mile outing. Along the way, you'll encounter lots of quick-water, several Class II rapids, spiky remnants of dams, some flat-water and no portages. It is a challenging outing for experienced paddlers.

With moderate flows, this stretch of the river moves swiftly with broad, powerful current. The banks are low and forested with residential neighborhoods at first, then the banks rise higher as the stream gradient steepens. You may see Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagles and Osprey in this segment.

This is not a good section for novices; better choices include East Brimfield, West Thompson and the Putnam to Pomfret sections.



With moderate flows of 300 to 500 cfs on the [USGS stream gage](#) at Putnam, CT, rocks are showing, the rapids are passable and the trip to Manship Park will take around four hours. With flows of 1000 cfs or more, it can be a two-hour trip. At high flows, spray skirts are important to keep turbulent water out of your boat. If the gage reads lower than 300 cfs, you'll have a bumpy ride and may need to walk at times.

Those who go all the way to Butts Bridge will cover 15.6 miles, with less current and more meanders as you approach the still water of Aspinook Pond. Count on up to six hours to go the whole way.

River Mile 45.0

Remnants of Dyer Dam - HAZARD

Lat/Long: 41.781763°, -71.898719°



Be careful as you approach the remains of the Dyer Dam (destroyed in the 1955 hurricane), 1.2 miles downstream from the LaFreniere Launch. Iron rods protrude from concrete on river right. They are invisible at certain water levels and potentially lethal all the time. If you shoot through the notch in the old dam, watch for concrete fragments downstream. At higher flows you may not even notice it.

River Mile 45.5

Remnants of Diagonal Dam - HAZARD

Lat/Long: 41.778390°, -71.904999°



Half a mile below Dyer Dam are the remains of an old stone dam running diagonally across the river. It can be runnable on river left; if not, lift over or portage on river right. At higher flows you may not even notice it.

River Mile 47.8

Remnants of Wauregan Dam - HAZARD

Lat/Long: 41.749237°, -71.914131°



Wauregan Dam is another tricky spot with hazardous iron rods at certain flows. Stay left to avoid the rebar and spikes in the timber cribbing. The old dam is located where the river narrows, 600 feet above the Route 205 bridge. At higher flows you may not even notice it.



River Mile 49.1

Plainfield CT



Canoe Launch: CT DEEP Fish Hatchery (river left)
139-159 Trout Hatchery Road, Plainfield CT 06374
Lat/Long: 41.735065°, -71.919776°

Driving Directions

From I-395, take Exit 32 onto Route 14 West. Follow Route 14 for half a mile to a right onto Main Street, for .25 mile to a left onto School Street in Central Village and finally for .4 mile to the right onto Trout Hatchery Road. Two roads diverge to the right; don't take the sharp right, do take the right at 2 o'clock. On the 1.2 mile-long driveway, you'll pass the hatchery (on your left), then follow the winding road downhill toward the river. When the gate is open, you can drive to the launch and drop off your boat and gear, but you'll need to park outside the gate. When the gate is locked, it is a 570-yard carry to the water's edge.

Parking & Access to the River

When the gate is open, you can drive right to the launch and drop off or pick up boats, but you are not permitted to park there. There is plenty of parking outside the gate which is several hundred feet from the river. There is a river paddling information kiosk located adjacent to the launch.

The gravel launch ramp provides a roomy spot for lunch or a rest stop. It's a 10-minute walk uphill to the hatchery.

Paddling to Robert Manship Park

The 4.7 miles of paddling to Manship Park is somewhat less challenging than the miles above the hatchery, but there are several stretches of white water to paddle carefully. Generally, the river is wide, undeveloped, tree-lined and very beautiful!

Watch for the Route 14 bridge as you near the park. As you approach the take-out on river right, stay close to the right bank and arrange your group in a line. The broad current can make this a tricky landing. Have the first paddlers ashore catch subsequent boats as they pull in.

River Mile 53.7

Canterbury CT



Canoe Launch: Robert Manship Park (river right)
39-55 Lovell Lane, Canterbury CT 06331
Lat/Long: 41.698312°, -71.962861°

Directions

From I-395, take Exit 29 onto Route 14A West and stay on it for 3.2 miles. It will change names from Academy Hill Road, to Cemetery Road, to Canterbury Road and finally to Lovell Lane. Robert Manship Park is on the right just after the junction with Route 14 and the bridge across the river.



Parking & Access to the River

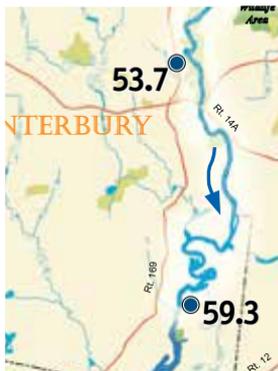
At the bottom of the sloping driveway, the launch is straight ahead. There are plenty of parking spaces in that corner of the park. Manship Park includes fields for youth sports and portable restrooms. The carry to the water is about 100 feet. The path to the water is moderately sloped and can be slippery. There is a river paddling information kiosk located adjacent to the launch.

Paddling to Butts Bridge Road Take-out at Aspinook Pond:

After Manship Park, the current slows and the river makes five large, meandering turns. The lack of current may make paddling feel sluggish and you may wonder whether the bends will ever end!

River Mile 59.3

Canterbury CT



Canoe Launch: By Butts Bridge on Aspinook Pond (river left)

67 Butts Bridge Road, (Rt. 688), Canterbury CT 06331

Lat/Long: 41.649933°, -71.970370°

Directions

About 800 feet (.15 mile) from the eastern end of Butts Bridge is the turn onto an unpaved access road adjacent to the power lines; it's a thousand feet to the river. There is a river paddling information kiosk located at the entrance to the access road.

Parking & Access to the River

There is room for many cars. You can pull up a car right to the water's edge. The take-out itself is a nearly flat firm surface into the flatwater of Aspinook Pond. Anglers launch power boats here, too, so it can be busy during weekends. There are no public restrooms.

Paddling on Aspinook Pond

The still water of the Pond and the easy access make this an excellent place for novice paddlers to learn new skills safely. The scenery is less dramatic than upriver, but you may see everything from Bald Eagles and Osprey to Wood Ducks, Canada geese and Mergansers. You can paddle downriver on the pond almost 3 miles to Jewett City.

Future Connections to the Shetucket River

There is not yet a take-out and portage at the Wyre Wynd Dam, but we hope in future editions to describe additional water trail segments downstream to Norwich. You can help make that happen as a volunteer. Please contact The Last Green Valley at 860-774-3300 to find out how to help.



Welcome to the Willimantic River Water Trail!

The Willimantic River Water Trail provides more than 22 miles of paddling enjoyment and challenges between Stafford Springs and Windham, Connecticut, with only one short portage. This guide describes public-access launches and landing areas, as well as river features you will find along the way.



Like all streams and rivers, the Willimantic changes character every day, even hourly. While this guide cannot possibly predict your experiences on the water, it does provide basic information and sources for real-time information. The guide encourages you to ask questions, learn from others and make careful decisions before you head out. Ultimately, it's up to you to make good choices based on the weather, the river, your paddling expertise and equipment. More specific safety tips are suggested in the "Before You Go" and "Preparation Checklist" sections of this Guide.

How to Find Locations & Calculate Distance

River Mile

To describe locations and relative distances on the river, the guide identifies every point by River Mile, beginning with 0.0 at the Commuter Lot in Stafford Springs and ending with 22.3 at the landing in Willimantic.

Street Address

Because there are rarely structures with specific addresses at launch sites, street addresses are often approximate and derived from Google® Maps.

Latitude & Longitude

Called lat/long for short, these decimal coordinates are precise and function well on sites like Google® Maps, Google® Earth and Bing®. Copy the coordinates into the search window

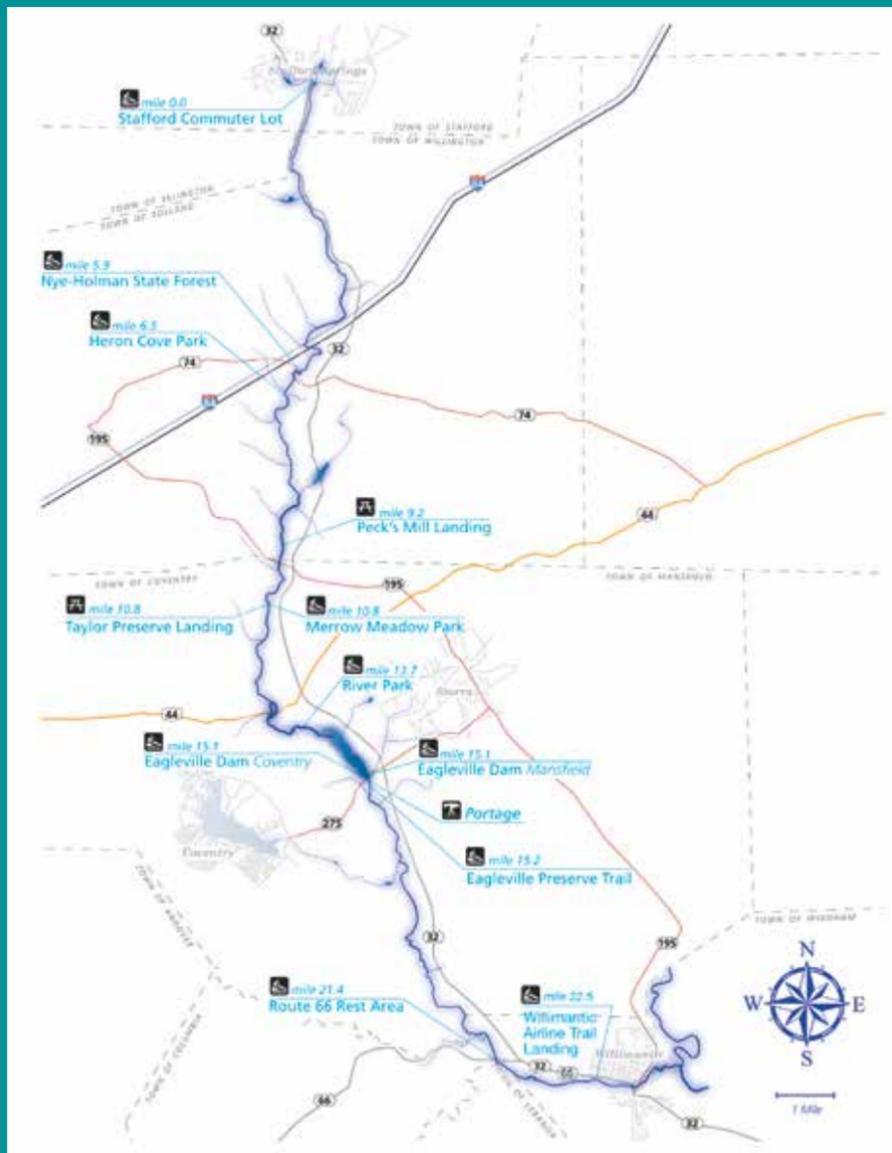
of Google® or a mapping website (yes, the first is a positive number and the second is negative) and it will display that location. Note: in this Paddle Guide we use decimal lat/longs. Coordinates can also be expressed in minutes and seconds, but that format doesn't work as well with online mapping sites.

Google® Earth

On The Last Green Valley website, you will find a link to detailed data and an interactive map for the [Willimantic River Water Trail](#). This map was created in Google Earth, a free online mapping program. You do not need to download Google Earth software to use this link, but to view more advanced features, such as a flyover of the Willimantic River, you will need to [download Google Earth](#).



Caution: Do not use this guide as your only source of navigational information. Conditions on the river change constantly, sometimes drastically. It is your responsibility to be aware of changing conditions and the abilities of your group so your decisions lead to a safe trip.



Volunteer to Help Manage the Water Trail

Volunteers are the heartbeat of this trail. They prepare and update Paddle Guides and they help develop and maintain launches and kiosks. We need volunteers to help with occasional events and on-going projects. Email the [Willimantic River Alliance](#) or [The Last Green Valley](#) to volunteer. We'll contact you when there is work to do. Plus, join us for a water trail outing to enjoy the river and meet other paddlers.

Overview of the Willimantic River Water Trail

There are three major segments of the Willimantic River Water Trail:

- rapids & quickwater of the narrow upper section,
- flatwater impoundment above Eagleville Lake Dam and
- moderate current and flatwater down to Willimantic.



Are You New to Paddling?

If you are a beginner or your group includes youngsters and novices, consider paddling at the following access site to practice and gain experience where there is no current.

River Mile Launches for Less-experienced Paddlers

13.7 River Park Canoe Launch, Mansfield

15.1 Eagleville Dam Canoe Launch, Coventry

USGS Stream Gages

Before heading out, check the [USGS online stream gages](#). They measure both the river level and volume of water passing by every 15 minutes, 24/7. The sites also display recent trends and historic averages.

[Online USGS gage](#) at Willimantic River at Mellow Road (River Mile 10.8)

When the online gauge reads 2.1 feet or more, you will have enough water to paddle above and below Eagleville Dam. Below 2.1, the river gets increasingly bony. There is also an old-fashioned stream gauge attached to the Mellow Road bridge. Note: A level of 2.1 on the “yardstick” equals a 2.1 reading on the online Mellow gage.

[Online USGS gage](#) at Willimantic River near Coventry (approximately River Mile 18.2, just above the Route 31 Bridge) When the South Coventry gauge reads 4.2 feet or higher, the river above and below Eagleville Dam is deep enough to paddle. Below 4.2, the ride gets increasingly bony.

About the [Willimantic River Alliance \(WRA\)](#)

The mission of the Alliance is to protect and preserve the Willimantic River through cooperative and educational activities that promote regional awareness, stewardship, and enjoyment of the river and its watershed.

[WRA](#) is a member-supported nonprofit organization and sponsors:

- regional forums to encourage cooperation among towns and local planning and conservation organizations;
- outings to promote discovery of the river’s recreational and natural features; and
- publications and a web site to promote awareness of the river and its watershed.

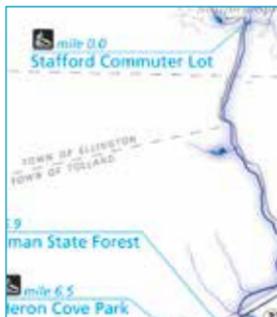
Join the Alliance and become a volunteer - as a member you support our efforts to promote awareness and enjoyment of the Willimantic River and its watershed.

River Mile 0.0

Stafford Springs CT



CAUTION: Do not use this guide as your only source of navigation information. Conditions on the river change constantly, sometimes drastically. It is your responsibility to be aware of changing conditions and the abilities of your group so your decisions lead to a safe trip.



Access: Commuter Lot on Route 32

Lat/Long: 41.945072°, -72.304525°

Directions

Located .4 mile south of Stafford Springs center on Route 32, look for the Stafford Springs sign.

Parking & Access to the River

The paved commuter lot has about 15 spaces, including room for a trailer, but is available for paddlers during weekends only. There is a picnic table and a grassy area. The carry to the river is flat and only 25 feet from the parking lot. The put-in is easy and almost level, but once in the boat, you'll be in the current right away.

Paddling Conditions to Nye-Holman State Forest

This first reach of the river is tight and can be challenging with low-hanging branches. It is best run at medium to high water by more experienced paddlers, not newcomers to river paddling. Watch especially for the two-foot drop over an old low-head dam .8 of a mile downstream from the put-in. Pull off the river and scout the drop from river left.

Soon you pass under the Route 32 bridge. Farther along, the river has many easy turns, flanked by Route 32 South and forest. Like most of the Willimantic, this stretch is fairly narrow. This keeps you close to the natural beauty of the shoreline; paddle quietly and you may see wildlife.

Stay alert downstream, too, for downed trees which can create dangerous strainers. At high flows, there are few eddies to pull out of the current to rest and re-group.

At around River Mile 2.9, Roaring Brook enters on river left, adding volume to the Willimantic. For the next few miles, you are likely to pass fly fishermen just about year-round as this is a state-designated catch-and-release Trout Management Area.

Please be courteous and alert anglers that you are coming well in advance. Generally, it's best to paddle behind anglers so you don't disturb the water they are fishing, but watch out for back casts! If possible, ask for their preferences as you approach.

Remember, the river is cleaner thanks to years of effort by anglers. We enjoy the same river, though in different ways. Please give them the space they need to enjoy their sport.

The river takes a sharp right turn, then a "Rock Garden" lies just downstream. Watch for a large boulder and several smaller ones in the river. Once you pass under the high-

way through the right-hand culvert, the river becomes a bit more secluded and has more bends to navigate. You will continue to see fishermen as the Trout Management Area extends downstream to the Route 74 bridge.

River Mile 5.9

Tolland CT



Access: Nye-Holman State Forest on Route 74
Route 74, Tolland, CT

Lat/Long: 41.883264°, -72.306808°

Directions

The Nye-Holman State Forest access site is one of the most easily found access sites to the Willimantic River. The site can be reached from either Exit 69 or Exit 70 off I-84. The well-marked entrance to the State Forest is directly off Route 74, just west of the river on Plantation Road.

Parking & Access to the River

The parking area has room to maneuver a truck with trailer. The river is visible as you enter, at least until vegetation closes in by late summer. The best access point is about 350 feet up the road at a small parking/picnic area opposite the grassy field. A narrow dirt path traverses a short slope down to the river's edge.

Paddling Conditions to Heron Cove Park

The river can be bony, with fewer turns and some quick-water stretches. The river follows South River Road in Tolland and there are a number of homes on river right.

River Mile 6.5

in Tolland



Access: Heron Cove Park on South River Road
South River Road, Tolland, CT

Lat/Long: 41.877874°, -72.309214°

Directions

About half a mile downstream from Nye-Holman, Tolland's Heron Cove Park is just about as easy to find. From Exit 69 off I-84 follow State Route 74 East .5 miles to the bottom of the hill just before the Route 74 bridge. Turn right onto South River Road. Follow South River Road .5 mile. Heron Cove Park is on the left opposite Woodhenge Drive. Follow the paved driveway to the left into a paved parking area by the soccer fields.

Parking & Access to the River

The gravel drive to the canoe launch is at the end of the parking lot and is often closed off. Park in the lot and carry about 200 feet to the canoe launch sign and down a path to the launch platform on the river bank.

River Mile 6.5 continued on next page

Paddling Conditions to Peck's Mill Landing

In the next two miles you will paddle through Class 2 rapids, under the Depot Road bridge and past an informal rock dam, mid-river boulders and possibly some standing waves created by water flowing over submerged rocks.

You may also begin to notice more wildlife as birds, ducks, geese and beavers abound. Most of the way, Route 32 is not far away, off to the left, and a number of roads are off to the right. Even so, there are moments when the only noise you'll hear is the blade of your paddle and the movement of your boat through the water. However, sometimes you may hear your boat scraping a rock!

Approach to Peck's Mill Landing

Watch for these landmarks: 150 yards downstream of Pulpit Rock (a large mid-stream boulder), there is a not-quite-so-large rock mid-stream, followed by 100 yards of quick water, followed by 50 yards of Class II whitewater. At the very bottom of the rapid, on river left, there is an eddy with room for two to three boats at a time (depending on water level). It is an easy eddy, but if paddlers are not alert at the bottom of the rapid, it's easy to miss and end up downstream of the landing.

River Mile 9.2 *Willington CT*

Landing: Peck's Mill Landing (no access by road)

Lat/Long: 41.845601°, -72.308954°



Peck's Mill Landing is one of two landings without road access where the general public can land for a picnic and a rest. There are no facilities. Be aware that this is a tricky pull-out due to the currents. For an easier rest stop, go to the Taylor Preserve Landing, as described below.

Paddling Conditions to Merrow Meadow Park & Taylor Preserve Landing

As you pass under Route 195, the river narrows a bit and the water speed increases.

In a short distance the river will turn left, then right. In the left turn, debris can accumulate; stay to the right to avoid it. In the right turn, the current will push you to the left where large submerged rocks create some turbulence. Notice the remnant bridge abutments of the former Jones Crossing as you pass.

As you pass under the Merrow Road bridge, you have two options if you wish to take a break and stretch your legs. On river left is a difficult take-out for Merrow Meadow Park; on river right is an easy take-out for the Taylor Preserve.

However, if you wish to end your trip here, use Merrow Meadow Park as it is the only approved access site.



River Mile 10.8

Coventry CT



Landing: Taylor Preserve Landing on Merrow Road Merrow Road, Coventry, CT

Lat/Long: 41.823431°, -72.313712°

The Taylor Preserve is directly across the river from Merrow Meadow Park. It's an easier place to land than either Peck's Mill or the park. Pull out on river right just after the Merrow Road bridge to enjoy this property of [Joshua's Trust](#). For now, this is not an official access site, but it is available to paddlers as a landing for rest stops and picnics. See below for Paddling Conditions to River Park.

River Mile 10.8

Mansfield CT



Access: Merrow Meadow Park on Merrow Road Merrow Road, Mansfield, CT

Lat/Long: 41.824032°, -72.313119°

Directions

Take Route 32 South from I-84, Exit 70. Continue south on Route 32 at the intersection of Route 195. Continue .9 miles past Valley View Park to Merrow Road, turn right. Continue .3 mile on Merrow Road, over the railroad tracks to the park entrance on your left. It's a narrow and winding road, so please take it slowly!

Parking & Access to the River

Merrow Meadow Park has about 10 parking spaces and is excellent for family outings, with easy walking trails and connections to Spring Manor and the River View Trail in Coventry. The park is nicely designed and maintained.



The carry to the water is flat and less than 200 feet, but the actual put-in is awkward at best. Follow the stone-dust path to the bank of the river, where the put-in path turns sharply to the right and turns to dirt. Watch your step as you descend the narrow ramp and railroad-tie steps to the sharp left turn at the water's edge, right by the bridge. This is a two-person operation -- not for beginners, nor single paddlers. When current is flowing fast, this is a very tricky place to launch or land.

Before you put in, notice the stream gauge "yardstick" mounted on the bridge. A reading above 2.1 usually means there is sufficient flow for paddling. As it drops below 2.1, you can expect an increasingly scratchy ride. [Note: A level of 2.1 on the "yardstick" equals 2.1 feet on the online [USGS stream gage](#) at Willimantic River at Merrow Road.]

River Mile 10.8 continued on next page

Paddling Conditions to River Park

You'll encounter two islands in this stretch. Approach the second island slowly. While the quickest route is on the left, it is narrow and can get blocked with trees, creating a dangerous strainer. The right side can be shallow. So, look carefully before the river divides, then decide which way to go.

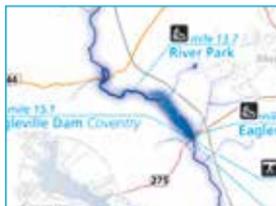
Below this island, after a straight-away, beware of a sharp right turn where the current can range from mild to strong, pushing you to river left. This area has strong eddies and a number of bends. You will pass under Route 44 where the current begins to slow.

River Mile 13.7 *Mansfield CT*

Access: River Park on Plains Road

Plains Road, Mansfield, CT

Lat/Long: 41.797428°, -72.300799°



Directions

From the intersection with Route 44, go south on Stafford Road (Route 32) for .3 miles, then turn right onto Plains Road. River Park is .2 miles on the right.

Parking & Access to the River

The parking lot has about ten spaces and a nicely landscaped circular drive. This is a newly developed area, just upstream of the point where the river becomes an impoundment behind the Eagleville Dam. Access for car-top carriers is excellent, the concrete ramp is smooth and wide and the gradual slope to the water's edge makes getting in and out of boats easy.



This is the best launch site on the river for novice paddlers and those unfamiliar with paddling in a current. The spacious and well-groomed launch site, plus the adjacent playing field, makes it an ideal site for outings with kids.

Paddling Conditions to Eagleville Dam

Upstream from River Park, you will encounter some current. If you are comfortable paddling upriver, it's worth the extra effort to explore in this direction until the current gets the best of you.

Since the river becomes an impoundment downstream of the launch (due to Eagleville Dam), this is a good place to launch a loop trip with no worries about current. But, be aware that there can be wind on the lake! Eagleville Lake is a popular destination for paddlers and anglers.

River Mile 15.1

Coventry CT on
RIVER RIGHT

Note: The descriptions of River Miles 15.1 can be confusing until you realize that there are two take-outs above the dam; one on river left and river right. To portage around the dam and paddle downstream, it's preferable to take out on river left in Mansfield. Both take-outs are described in case you end up on river right.

Access: Eagleville Lake Dam (upstream side)

Route 275, Coventry, CT

Lat/Long: 41.784596°, -72.281600°

Directions

Take Route 275 from Route 31 in Coventry (1.7 miles) or Route 32 in Mansfield (.3 mile) to the river at Eagleville Dam. Here, you'll find an access point on each side of the river.

Parking & Access to the River

The Coventry side has convenient, all-season parking and a grassy lawn; however, the water's edge is a slippery, steep bank of rock rip-rap. Scout it in advance to determine whether it's a good option for you and your group. This spot is very scenic and is among the most popular launches along the River as it provides access to Eagleville Lake, the largest flat water stretch on the river. Those only wishing to paddle the northern end of Eagleville Lake and upriver ought to use Mansfield's River Park instead. See above.

River Mile 15.1

Mansfield CT on
RIVER LEFT



Access & Portage: Eagleville Lake Dam (upstream side)

Route 275, Mansfield, CT

Lat/Long: 41.785139°, -72.280583°

Directions

Take Route 275 from Route 31 in Coventry (1.7 miles) or Route 32 in Mansfield (.3 mile) to the river at Eagleville Dam. Here, you'll find an access point on each side of the river.

Parking & Access to the River

Parking here is available for about 20 cars. This is the preferred landing for those seeking to portage the dam. It's among the most popular launches along the river as it provides access to Eagleville Lake, the largest flatwater segment on the river. The launch site is small, but provides easy lake access. It can be reached by a 100-foot carry around the dam's earthen embankment.

Those only wishing to paddle the northern end of Eagleville Lake and upriver may want to use Mansfield's River Park instead. The carry to the water is shorter and flat, the put-in is more gradual and you'll be protected from the wind. See above for a full description of River Park. This parking lot also serves as the primary access for the Eagleville Preserve Trail, just downstream on river left.

Paddling Conditions on Eagleville Lake

There is no current on the lake, but it can be windy. Stay close to the lee shore for shelter from the wind. This is a popular destination for anglers, so please be courteous by steering clear of them.

River Mile 15.2

Mansfield CT on

RIVER LEFT



Access & Portage: Eagleville Preserve Trail (downstream side)

Route 275, Mansfield, CT

Lat/Long: 41.783823°, -72.280312°

Directions

Take Route 275 from Route 31 in Coventry (1.7 miles) or Route 32 in Mansfield (.3 mile) to the river at Eagleville Dam.

Parking & Access to the River

Park in the lot by the dam on the Mansfield side and carry across Route 275 to launch on the downstream side of the bridge along Mansfield's Eagleville Preserve Trail. This is the place to put into (or back into) the river to paddle downstream to Willimantic.

There are several places to put in along the trail, but the bank here is in poor shape. Paddlers need to put in over tree roots, large rocks and several steel barrels filled with concrete. As members of your group put in, consider paddling upstream to play in the current until your whole group is on the water.

Paddling Conditions to Route 66 Bridge

Water levels are less of a concern from here on thanks to a deeper river channel but can still be scratchy when the [USGS online stream gage](#) for Willimantic River near Coventry reads lower than 4.2 feet. The current ranges from slow to quick in the bends depending on water flow. As you head downstream from the dam, watch for a narrow chute bending to the left. Stay on right side of the narrow channel. The current will push you toward woody debris on the right bank, but you'll want to steer clear.

There are five road bridges in this section of the river:
Coventry/Depot Street

Route 31

Cider Mill Road

Route 6 and

Route 66

The river is narrow, wooded and flows along railroad tracks and farms. Watch for low branches, strainers in the river (fallen trees) and sand bars.



Caution: During high flows in this section, partly submerged barbed wire fences along flooded banks and fields become extremely dangerous strainers.

Downstream of the Route 31 bridge, stay right on the first bend to avoid a gravel bar on the left. Below here, watch for tricky currents. The channel is narrow with possible obstructions. The river takes many twists and turns before broadening out and passing through open land. Once the river passes under the twin bridges of Route 6 it continues with less current.

As you pass under the rusted railroad bridge in Columbia, look for the take-out on river right, just before the Route 66 bridge. The take-out is a weedy, gradual slope. Water is moving, but usually smooth in this stretch.

River Mile 21.4

Columbia CT



Take-out Access: Upstream Side of Route 66 Bridge

Route 66, Columbia, CT

Lat/Long: 41.717607°, -72.244654°

Directions

The Willimantic River is the town line between Columbia and Windham/Willimantic. From Eagleville, at the intersection of Route 275 and Route 32, drive south on Route 32 for 5.6 miles, then turn sharp right on Route 66. Continue .6 of a mile to far side of the bridge over the river. You are in Columbia now.



From downtown Willimantic, drive west on Route 66 about 1.5 miles to the river; parking is on the far side of the bridge, on the right.

Parking & Access to the River

There is off-road parking through the unmarked gap in the guard rail on the upstream side of the bridge; about six vehicles fit in this unpaved lot of a former rest area. About six cars fit on the road shoulder, too, next to the guard rail, from the bridge west to the kettle-hole pond.

This former rest area provides access to the river for fishermen as well as canoe and kayak paddlers, so be courteous to anglers. It also connects to the terminus of the Hop River State Park Trail for hikers and mountain bikers headed toward Bolton Notch on the abandoned rail bed.

The shoreline is nicely sloped to the water, but usually muddy where the ramp meets the water directly under the bridge. Please avoid the mud. Stirring it up erodes the bank and silts the water.

River Mile 22.5

Willimantic CT

Access: Airline Trail Landing & Launch

42 Wilson Street, Willimantic CT

Lat/Long: 41.711757°, -72.225987°



The landing at the Airline Trail in Willimantic is the last landing area on the Willimantic River. It is also a good location for launching for a leisurely paddle upstream.

Directions

From Main Street (route 66) in downtown Willimantic take Bridge Street south, over the railroad tracks and an immediate right at the sign for the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum. The dirt road follows the newly paved Airline Trail and at .5 miles you'll see the launch and landing site on the left. Look for the Willimantic River Information kiosk.

Parking & Access to the River

There is room for a few cars in a small parking area on the left side of the road. It is a short carry down a newly constructed path to the water.



Caution: It is not safe to paddle downstream (to the left facing the river) due to a high dam, dangerous rocks, and fast moving current. There is no public landing downstream of this point.

Paddling Conditions Upstream

From here you can paddle upstream (to the right facing the river) for approximately 1 river mile to the landing just past the Columbia Route 66 Bridge on the western shore. During most of the year the river current will be gentle enough for an easy paddle upstream, though the current may make it more difficult during high water or after a rain event.

If water conditions allow, you can continue upstream towards the Eagleville Dam in Mansfield. The current may be too strong to paddle the entire 6 river miles to Eagleville, however you can paddle as far as the current allows and then turn around and follow the river back to this point.

As you paddle upstream be aware that there will be stronger current at the outside curve in the river so stay to the inside curve for smoother water.

This section of river has very nice river habitat with limited development down to the river bank. Eagles, hawks, cormorants, swans, ducks, blue heron, green heron, turtles, muskrat, and otter are a few examples of wildlife common to this area.

In the future this site may also serve as a launch for the Willimantic Whitewater Park that is envisioned just downstream.



Welcome to the Shetucket River Water Trail!

The Shetucket River Water Trail provides more than 20 miles of paddling enjoyment and challenges between Windham and Norwich, Connecticut, with four portages. This guide describes public access launch and landing areas, as well as river features you will find along the way.



Like all rivers and streams, the Shetucket River changes in water flow and character on a daily basis, even by the hour. While this guide cannot predict your paddling experience on the water, it does provide basic information and resources for real-time information. The guide encourages you to ask questions, learn from others and make careful decisions before you head out. Ultimately it is up to you to make good choices based on weather, the river, your paddling expertise and equipment. More specific safety tips are suggested in the “Before You Go” and “Preparation Checklist” sections of this Guide.

How to Find Locations & Calculate Distance

River Mile

To describe locations and relative distances on the river, the guide identifies every point by River Mile, beginning with 0.0 at the Lauter Park Canoe and Kayak Launch in Willimantic and ending with 22.0 at Harold T. Brown Memorial Park in Norwich.

Street Address

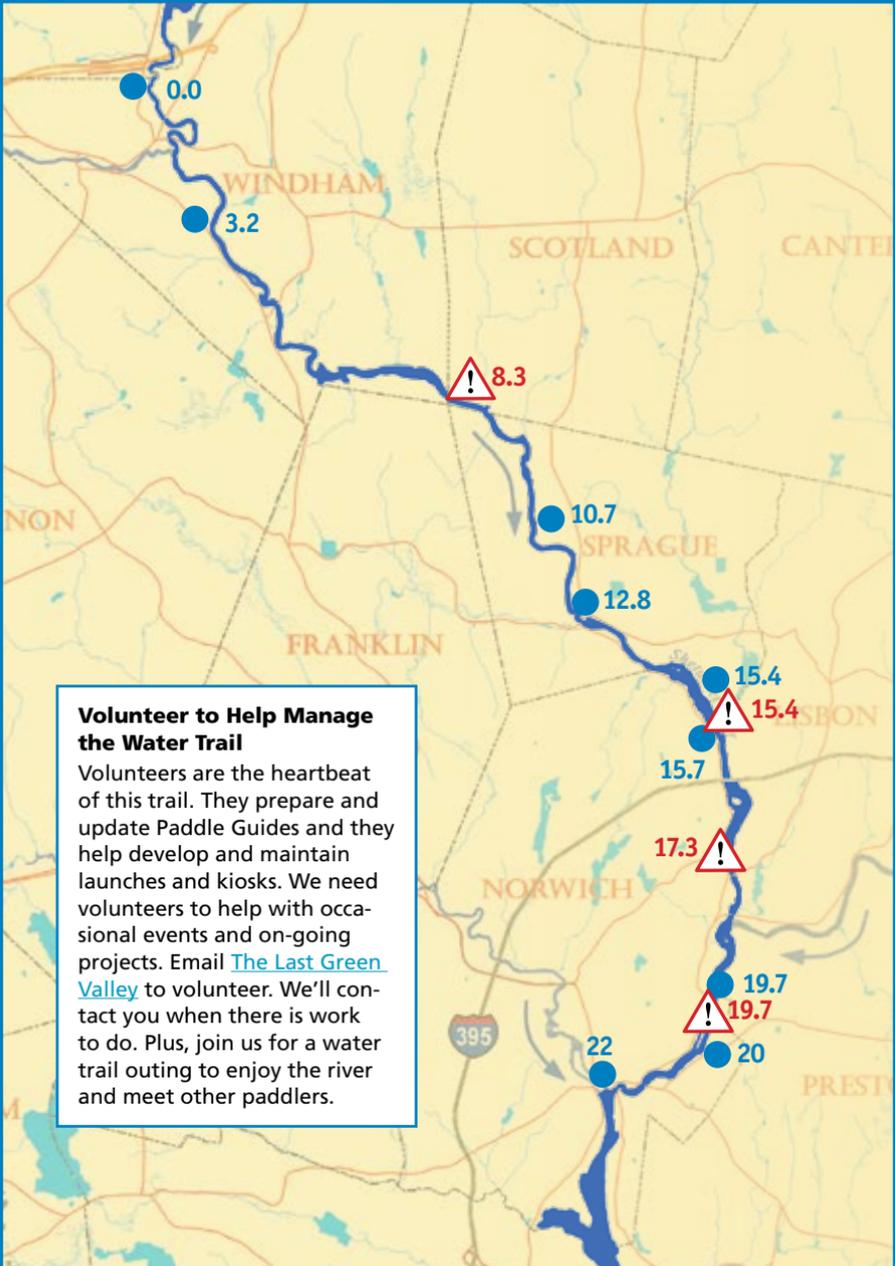
Because there are rarely structures with specific addresses at launch sites, street addresses are often approximate and derived from Google® Maps.

Latitude & Longitude

Called lat/long for short, these decimal coordinates are precise and function well on sites like Google® Maps, Google® Earth and Bing®. Copy the coordinates into the search window of Google® or a mapping website (yes, the first is a positive number and the second is negative) and it will display that location. Note: in this Paddle Guide we use decimal lat/longs. Coordinates can also be expressed in minutes and seconds, but that format doesn't work as well with online mapping sites.

USGS Stream Gages

Before heading out, check the online [USGS stream gage](#) for the Shetucket River near Willimantic. When the online gauge reads 400 cubic feet per second (cfs) or greater you should have enough water to paddle above and below Scotland Dam to Sprague River Park.



Are You New to Paddling?

If you are a beginner or your group includes youngsters and novices, consider paddling at the following access sites to practice and gain experience where there is no current.

River Mile Launches for Less-experienced Paddlers

15.4 Occum Dam, Sprague (upstream paddle)

15.7 Red McKeon Park, Norwich (downstream to Taftville)



River Mile 0.0

Windham/
Willimantic CT



Caution: Do not use this guide as your only source of navigational information. Conditions on the river change constantly, sometimes drastically. It is your responsibility to be aware of changing conditions and the abilities of your group so your decisions lead to a safe trip.

Access: Lauter Park Canoe & Kayak Launch

619 Jackson Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

Lat/Long: 41.725569°, -72.199645°

Directions

Located 1.26 miles from downtown Willimantic on Jackson Street, landmarks include Jillson Square on the left and Saint Joseph's Church on the right. The entrance to Lauter Park is located across Jackson Street from the smaller Whittemore Park. Follow the road into the park and past the skateboard park towards the river. You'll see the car top boat launch sign and information kiosk.

Parking & Access to the River

There is plenty of parking along the road and room for several cars near the boat launch area. The put in is relatively easy. Depending on water levels, there is a large rock at the launch location that you'll want to avoid.

Paddling Conditions to Plains Road and Shetucket River Park

The launch at Lauter Park is actually on the Natchaug River. In less than 2 miles, the Natchaug meets the Willimantic River and together they form the Shetucket River, making Lauter Park a popular starting location for paddling the Shetucket River.

From Lauter Park you'll pass under the Route 66 Bridge. Just beyond the Route 66 Bridge the river makes three sharp turns and there are several houses on the east side of the river (river left) with property down to the river's edge. The river then flows under the Route 14 Main Street Bridge before passing the Windham wastewater treatment facility on the west bank (river right). In under 2 miles, you'll meet the Willimantic River at the confluence and beginning of the Shetucket River. The river moves with some current (depending on water levels) but is still relatively easy for novice paddlers.

The next public landing/launch location is Shetucket River Park on Plains Road. The landing at Plains Road is just under the Plains Road Bridge about 1.4 miles from the start of the

River Mile 0.0 continued on next page

Shetucket. The landing is on the western shore (river right). Depending on water levels there can be some current at this location so be careful when approaching the landing. The landing has a relatively steep incline of 25 feet to a flat surface then another 50 feet to the parking lot.

Paddlers can either take out at the Plains Road landing or continue to Scotland Dam at 8.3 river miles (an additional 5 miles from the Plains Road landing). Scotland Dam has a portage on the western shore (river right) however there is no public landing and take-out at Scotland Dam. Salt Rock State Park & Campground is the next public landing at 10.7 river miles and there is another public landing and launch site at Sprague River Park at 12.8 river miles.

Note: If you paddle beyond the Plains Road landing, you need to be prepared for a paddle of 11 – 13 miles and plan accordingly for an extensive period of time on the water. In addition, you must be prepared for a scratchy paddle and some walking below Scotland Dam if water levels are low. Check the online [USGS stream gage](#) for the Shetucket River near Willimantic CT, for current water levels. Water levels below 400 cfs (cubic feet per second) may result in bony conditions below Scotland Dam.

River Mile 3.2

Windham CT



Access: Shetucket River Park Launch & Landing at Plains Road

305-331 Plains Road, Windham, CT 06226

Lat/Long: 41.701262°, -72183624°

Directions

Located approximately .5 east from Route 32 in Willimantic and 1.3 miles west from the intersection of Routes 203 and 14 in North Windham, Shetucket River Park at Plains Road is the location of Little League baseball fields and other recreational facilities for the Town of Windham.

Parking & Access to the River

There is ample parking for many cars. The park is located adjacent to the river and directly west of the Plains Road Bridge. From the parking lot to the top of the river bank is about a 50-foot carry. From the top of the bank to the water there is a relatively steep incline about 25 feet long.

Paddling Conditions to Scotland Dam, Salt Rock Park & Campground and Sprague River Park

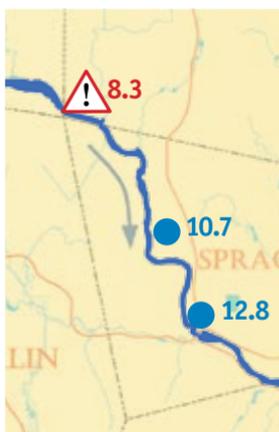
This section of the Shetucket River is one of the most frequently paddled sections and at almost 10 river miles, is much longer compared to the other segments. From Plains Road to Scotland Dam the water is relatively slow and good for novice paddlers and the river winds past railroad tracks and Route 32 on the western shore before entering a more wooded and forested habitat. The first public



takeout and landing location is Salt Rock State Park & Campground more than 7 miles from Plains Road followed by Sprague River Park more than 9 miles from Plains Road.

A mile from the Plains Road launch you'll approach an island about 800 feet in length. In typical conditions, paddle to the east side (river left) of the island where the channel is wider with fewer strainers. Next you'll pass under the Route 203 Bridge. In case of emergency, paddlers can exit the river at the Route 203 Bridge on the east side (river left). Note that this is not a public landing or launch location and should only be used for emergency purposes. In 3.5 miles paddlers will pass the Windham Fish and Game Club. This is a private club and not a public landing.

River Mile 8.3



Scotland Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!

Lat/Long: 41.665265, -72.122123



Paddlers must portage the Scotland Dam at River Mile 8.3, about 5 miles from the Plains Road launch. The portage is on the western shore (river right) and is 350 feet long with the first 50 feet up a hill beside the dam, then down a sloping path to the launch location below the dam.

Scotland Dam is a good location to rest and prepare for the trip to either Salt Rock State Park & Campground or to Sprague River Park.

Paddling Conditions Below Scotland Dam

Scotland Dam is a hydroelectric generating facility and is converting to a "run of river" instead of "pond and release" operation. This will impact water levels and will impact paddling conditions from the dam to Salt Rock State Park & Campground and Sprague River Park. During drier weather conditions and the summer months this stretch of the river can be very "bony" with limited water for paddling.

To determine water levels below the dam, check the online [USGS stream gage](#) for the Shetucket River near Willimantic. If the gage is reading below 400 cubic feet per second (cfs), you may have difficulty paddling below Scotland Dam and may encounter stretches of very low water.

The Shetucket River from Plains Road to Sprague has exceptional wildlife habitat. The Sprague Preserve on the west side of the river and Salt Rock State Park & Campground on the east side of the river provide hundreds of acres of preserved forest habitat making for some of the most scenic paddling in the region. It is common to see bald eagles, osprey, great blue heron, belted kingfisher, ducks and other birds as well as muskrat and otter that depend on the river for food.



River Mile 10.7

Baltic/Sprague CT

Access: Salt Rock State Park & Campground

137 Scotland Road, Baltic, CT 06330

Lat/Long: 41.643783°, -72.089281°



Directions

Salt Rock State Park & Campground is located on Scotland Road (Route 97) 3.9 miles south from the intersection with Route 14 in Scotland, CT and 1.9 miles north from the intersection of Route 97 and 207 in Baltic.

Parking & Access to the River

Salt Rock Park State Park & Campground is 7.5 river miles from the Plains Road launch site and 2.4 miles from the Scotland Dam. Salt Rock is located on the eastern shore (river left) and has an excellent parking area and river access tunnel that goes under the railroad tracks for easy access to the river. The carry from the river landing area is on a flat walking trail that goes under the railroad via a pedestrian tunnel with a total length of 300 feet to the parking area.



Paddling to Sprague River Park

Sprague River Park is 2.1 miles from Salt Rock Park Campground. The Sprague River Park boat landing is on the east side of the river (river left) and just past a sharp right hand bend in the river. Note that there are exposed rocks near the shore on both river right and left. The landing is a small beach-like area but it can be tricky and paddlers must take care approaching the landing. Depending on water levels, stay in the middle/right of the river approaching the landing, then paddle hard left across the current to the beach and landing area. Sprague River Park is a very popular small park with picnic benches, grills, and a portable restroom available during the warmer months.

River Mile 12.8

Baltic/Sprague CT

Access: Sprague River Park Canoe & Kayak Launch

24-78 North Main Street (Route 97), Baltic, CT 06330

Lat/Long 41.618819°, -72.083852°



Directions

Sprague River Park is located 3.7 miles north from the Occum exit on I-395. Take exit 18 off I-395 North to Route 97 to Occum. At stop light, Route 97 goes left then right and Sprague River Park is 2.5 miles from Occum.

Parking & Access to the River

If water levels are not too low, launch your boat just under the Route 97 bridge instead of launching from the picnic and beach swimming area. The river is wide at this location and you may find the launch area a bit "bony" depending on water levels.



Padding Conditions to Occum Dam

The Occum Dam and portage is just over 2.5 miles from the launch location at Sprague River Park. Paddling this section of the river, you will pass several homes located on the western side (river right) of the river as well as mostly wooded and open land on the eastern side (river left). There are picturesque coves, inlets and excellent locations to explore and enjoy wildlife and river habitat. Eagles, hawks, cormorants, swans, ducks, blue heron, green heron, turtles, muskrat, and otter are common to this area.

Paddlers should stay clear of Occum Dam, which has a 14 foot drop. Approach the dam and portage on the eastern side of the river (river left). In season, Norwich Public Utilities has warning signs, buoys and cabling stretched across the river.

River Mile 15.4



Occum Dam - DANGER - Do Not Paddle!

Lat/Long: 41.597367, -72.049580



Occum Dam has a very good portage on the eastern side (river left) of the dam. Paddlers arriving from Sprague River Park can take out here, or if paddling downstream launch from below the dam. The portage was built and is maintained by Norwich Public Utilities. There is a carry of approximately 150 feet from the landing area to a launch area below the dam. The trail is well maintained and has riprap stone and rocks to help prevent erosion.

River Mile 15.4 Baltic/Sprague CT

Access: Occum Dam Boat Landing and Launch

23 Church Street, Baltic, CT 06330

Lat/Long: 41.598036°, -72.048251°



Directions

Occum Dam is located 1.2 miles north from the Occum exit on I-395. Take exit 18 off I-395 then go north on Route 97 to Occum. At the stop light take a right on Main Street, cross the Shetucket River bridge, and then take the first left onto Church Street.



Parking & Access to the River

Parking is on the left adjacent to the Dam and across from the Versailles United Methodist Church. Please note that the church uses the parking area adjacent to the landing and launch site for Sunday services. Please do not leave your car here on Sunday morning between 10 am - noon; instead, move it to Red McKeon Park, a half mile south of Occum Dam on Route 97.

Padding Conditions Upstream from Occum Dam

Paddlers wishing to enjoy a leisurely paddle may consider launching at Occum Dam, paddling upstream towards

River Mile 15.4 continued on next page

Sprague River Park and then back to the Occum Dam landing. This section of the river, especially the western side, has several inlets with abundant wildlife. Eagles, hawks, cormorants, swans, ducks, blue heron, green heron, turtles, muskrat, and otter are common to this area. Depending on water levels it may be difficult to paddle the entire distance to Sprague River Park, but you can turn around and float back at any time.

Padding Conditions Downstream to Taftville

From here you can also launch to paddle downstream for almost 7 miles, with 2 portages, to Howard T. Brown Memorial Park in Norwich. As an alternative, there is a newer and easier launch at Red McKeon Park, a half mile south on Route 97.

River Mile 15.7

Occum/Norwich CT

Access: Red McKeon Park Boat Launch

30 Taftville-Occum Road, Route 97, Occum, CT 06360

Lat/Long: 41.594646°, -72.049496°

Directions

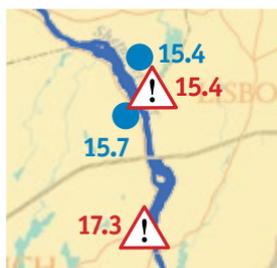
Red McKeon Park is located a half mile south from the Occum Dam portage on Route 97. It is the preferred launch location for paddling from Occum to Taftville Dam.

Parking & Access to the River

Red McKeon Park has plenty of parking. You will need to carry your boat approximately 300 feet to the boat launch area located down the paved path and to the right of the picnic tables.

Padding Conditions to Taftville Dam

This stretch is mostly flatwater due to the large impoundment at the Ponemah Mill and Taftville Dam. It is an easy paddle with only a slight current. For the first half mile of paddling, the river has houses on the western shore (river right) and woods along the eastern shore. The river then passes under the I-395 bridge and past a large trash incinerator plant on the eastern shore (river left). This is a popular stretch for fishing and there are several small coves and a large island in this impoundment. On the western shore you'll see the large and imposing Ponemah Mill complex with beautiful towers.



River Mile 17.3

Taftville Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!

Lat/Long: 41.572594, -72.045487



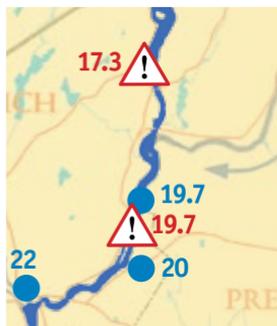
The Taftville Dam is a large and imposing structure and stretches more than 500 feet across the river.

Note that the portage at this location is one of the longest and most difficult on the Shetucket River.

River Mile 17.3

Taftville/Lisbon CT

Access: Taftville Dam Boat Launch and Landing
Riverview Drive and Boat Launch Drive, Lisbon, CT
Lat/Long: 41.566774°, -72.042942°



The take out and landing is on the eastern shore (river left) in Lisbon and is located above the Taftville Dam. Taftville Dam is a large and imposing structure and stretches more than 500 feet across the river.

Note that the portage at this location is one of the longest and most difficult on the Shetucket River.

Directions

The take out is located on Boat Launch Drive and is accessed from Riverview Drive (also the entrance to Wheelabrator Technologies Lisbon). Riverview Drive is accessed from Route 169 at 41.566774, -72.042942. Note that the boat landing is closed to vehicle access from November 1 to April 1.

Parking & Access to the River

Access to the river below the Taftville Dam is provided via a portage on the eastern side (river left) of the river. There are several steps from the top of the dam to a rocky put in location below the dam. There is a handrail next to the steps. From the boat landing and parking area it is a long carry of over 700 feet to the steps and the launch below the dam.

Note that this segment is not recommended for most paddlers. Paddling conditions below Taftville Dam vary greatly and can be very rocky. Water levels change dramatically and the paddling can be very "bony" as you approach downtown Norwich.

Paddling Conditions to Greenville Dam

From the Taftville Dam launch it is 1 mile to the Route 12 bridge. Just past the Route 12 bridge is the confluence with the Quinebaug River (river left) that marks the end of the majestic, 60-mile long Quinebaug River. From there it is another 1.4 miles to the landing and portage or takeout at Greenville Dam. The landing is located on the eastern shore (river left). Be careful when you take out at the landing since this area can be muddy. It is a long carry of approximately 300 feet from the landing area to the launch location below the Greenville Dam. This section of the river has pretty habitat on the eastern shore (river left) and is a popular location for fishing.



River Mile 19.7

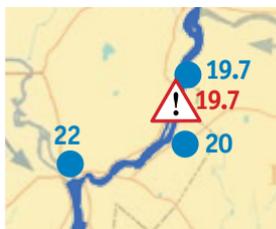
Greenville Dam – DANGER – Do Not Paddle!
Lat/Long: 41.539035, -72.050883

Portage this dam by landing on the eastern shore (river left). Be careful when you take out at the landing since this area can be muddy. It is a long carry of approximately 300 feet from the landing area to the launch location below the Greenville Dam



River Mile 20

Norwich CT



Access: Greenville Dam Landing and Launch

2-14 Roosevelt Ave, Norwich, CT 06360

Lat/Long: 41.534746°, -72.050947°

Directions

The launch below the Greenville Dam is located just off Roosevelt Avenue. Access is from 501 North Main Street (Route 12) and the 8th Street Bridge over the river where it intersects with Roosevelt Ave. Take an immediate left onto the dirt access road adjacent to the river (eastern shore).

Parking & Access to the River

There is room for a few cars and there is an information kiosk. Access to the river can be made through the woods to the edge of the river or by carrying almost 1,000 feet to the launch area below the dam.

Paddling Conditions to Norwich Harbor

From the Greenville Dam it is 2 miles to the boat launch and landing at Howard T. Brown Memorial Park in downtown Norwich. This is also a popular fishing area and the Greenville Dam has a fish lift for migratory fish moving upstream from Long Island Sound and the Thames River into the Shetucket River.

This section of the river passes through the City of Norwich and is approximately 2 miles long. At about 1 mile is the East Main Street Bridge, and at 2 miles you'll see Brown Memorial Park on river right, a short distance from where the Shetucket River enters the Harbor. This is the confluence with the Yantic River; the Yantic and Shetucket combine to form the Thames River.

From Norwich Harbor you can explore the [Norwich Harbor Water Trail](#) network.

River Mile 22

Norwich CT

Access: Harold T. Brown Memorial Park Boat Launch

11-99 Market Street, Norwich

Lat/Long: 41.523195°, -72.078159°

Directions

Howard T. Brown Memorial Park is located on the Harbor in downtown Norwich. From I-395 take exit 11 for Route 82 Salem Turnpike and head east towards downtown Norwich. At 2.2 miles take a right at the light and intersection with Chelsea Harbor Drive, then at 450 feet on the right is the entrance to the Howard T. Brown Memorial Park.

Parking & Access to the Harbor

There is usually plenty of parking at Brown Memorial Park, or you can use the municipal lot across Chelsea Harbor Drive from the park.

Paddling

From here, you can explore the [Norwich Harbor Water Trail](#) network, paddling not only the Shetucket but the Yantic and Thames Rivers as well.

Appendix

Paddle Guide and NRT Water Trail Contributors

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And to anyone we neglected to mention, we apologize. Let us know and we'll fix the oversight.

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Photo Credits

Lois Bruinooge, Alan Dabrowski, Larry Diamond, Jim Hayes, Cynthia MacDonald, John Monroe, Paul Pribula, Meg Reich, Bill Reid, G. Leslie Sweetnam, Vicki Wetherell

Internet Addresses, or URLs, Embedded in Text

American Canoe Association: www.americancanoe.org
American Whitewater: www.AmericanWhitewater.org
American Whitewater Safety Code: www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Wiki/safety:start
Appalachian Mountain Club: www.outdoors.org
Collinsville Canoe & Kayak: www.cckstore.com
Connecticut Boater's Guide: www.ct.gov/deep (search for Boater's Guide)
Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection: www.ct.gov/deep (search for state park name)
Eastern Mountain Sports: www.emsoutdoors.com
French River Connection: www.frenchriverconnection.org
Google® Earth: www.google.com/earth
Joshua's Trust: www.joshuastrust.org
LL Bean: www.llbean.com
Massachusetts Boater Safety Handbook: www.mass.gov/eea (search for Boater Safety)
National Park Service – Rivers & Trails Program: www.nps.gov/rtca
Norwich: www.norwichct.org (search for Norwich Harbor Water Trail)
The Last Green Valley: www.thelastgreenvalley.org; email mail@tlgv.org
US Army Corps of Engineers, New England District: www.nae.usace.army.mil (search for East Brimfield Lake, West Thompson Lake, Mansfield Hollow, Westville Lake and other USACE properties from the central website)
USGS Stream Gages: www.waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/rt (search by river & stream gage name)
Webster Lake Association: www.websterlakeassociation.org
West Thompson Lake Campground Reservations: www.recreation.gov
Willimantic River Alliance: www.WillimanticRiver.org; info@willimanticriver.org
Willimantic Whitewater Partnership: www.willimanticwhitewater.org



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