



WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

A Guide to Paddling in the Woonasquatucket River Watershed

by Bruce G. Hooke



Acknowledgements

This guidebook would not exist without funding the Watershed Council received from the Rhode Island Rivers Council to support this project and without the staff of the Watershed Council who had the original idea for this guidebook and found the funding to make it possible. The board and staff of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council also provided very useful suggestions and guidance on the compilation of this guidebook. Richard E. Greenwood of the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission provided assistance with some of the historical notes herein.

Last but far from least, the Woonasquatucket River itself would not be anywhere near as nice a place to paddle if it were not for the many years of hard work by the present and past staff of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and the many volunteers who have contributed in numerous ways to the Watershed Council over the years!

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2012

Cover Photographs:

Front Top: Paddling near the north end of Woonasquatucket Reservoir.

Front Bottom: Erasmo Valdez, one of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council's River Rangers, paddling with Bruce Hooke on the Woonasquatucket River in Providence, near Eagle Street. The River Rangers are neighborhood teenagers the Watershed Council employs to take care of the parks and bike path along the river, organize events, and teach neighborhood children about the river and its environment.

Back Top: Joe Jamroz, one of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council's regular volunteers, paddling on Greystone Mill Pond.

Back Bottom: A large group of paddlers on a Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council trip on the Providence and Woonasquatucket Rivers in downtown Providence.



WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Paddling the Woonasquatucket River Watershed

From quiet ponds and reservoirs in the northern part of the watershed to urban paddling through the heart of Providence, to even some stretches of quickwater and mild whitewater in-between, the Woonasquatucket River Watershed offers diverse paddling opportunities. One of the surprises in store for paddlers is how much nature can be found in even the more urban parts of the watershed. Right in Providence the river often flows between green riverbanks dense with big trees that overhang the river and enclose it in a tunnel of green. Small wetlands along the river attract birds and other wildlife, and turtles are a common sight.

While paddling in these areas it is interesting to try to imagine the river as it once was, 400 years ago when it was wild and undammed and teemed with huge Atlantic salmon at the right time of year. These salmon and other animals and plants found at the river were an important source of food for the Native Americans in the area. In those days, the low area north of Federal Hill was a large salt-water cove, with giant oysters and other seafood in abundance. Roger Williams and his followers paddled up this cove on their way to settle Providence and found what would become the state of Rhode Island.

The bounty of the river helped sustain Roger Williams and his followers as it had the Native Americans, but in time the river came to be important in other ways to the people who settled along its banks. In the 1800's textile mills were built along the river, using the water of the river for power, for processing textiles, and as a place to dispose of waste. The numerous dams along the river largely date from this era. Most of the "ponds" in the watershed are man-made, built to provide power and water to the mills. Small ponds were also built throughout the watershed by farmers seeking to retain water for their livestock and other uses.

Now we are at the start of the 21st Century, our own era, and it is up to us how we will treat the river. The dams are no longer used to generate power and the old mills have largely been converted to offices, apartments and condominiums, but many signs of the river's industrial past remain. The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and others are working hard to clean up the river and turn it into a new asset to the communities of the watershed. The river is becoming a place for people and wildlife to find a bit of nature and escape the urban and suburban world for a while. In addition to the paddling opportunities on the river there are also parks and paths throughout the watershed, from the Audubon Society of Rhode Island's Fort Nature Refuge at the headwaters of the river in North Smithfield, to the Fred Lippitt Woonasquatucket River Greenway Bike Path in Providence and Johnston.

This booklet is organized into a series of seven "paddles," or places in the watershed to go paddling, starting at Woonasquatucket Reservoir in the northern part of the watershed and working south and east to the mouth of the river in Providence. See the map on pages 4 and 5 for an overview of the paddles and then turn to the individual paddles for more details.

Some of the paddles can be strung together to create a longer trip but at this time it is difficult to make a complete source to sea trip. In the area of Centerdale, in North Providence, there is

an active Superfund site that impacts both Allendale Mill Pond and Lymans Mill Pond. The EPA has deemed that these ponds are safe to paddle on as long as reasonable precautions are taken such as washing your hands after coming in contact with the water and cleaning any mud off your shoes and gear. However, since not many people have paddled in this area recently due to the Superfund site, the portages around the four dams between Greystone and the Manton/Greenville Avenue bridge are not well established. There are also no public access points on these ponds. The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council is working to have this area cleaned up and is also looking into ways to make this part of the river more accessible.

Below this area the river is open to paddling but there can still be water quality issues. During and after heavy rains human pathogen levels (e.g., bacteria) in the river will be very elevated due to overflows from the sewer system, and it can take a few days for this to dissipate. The new sewage tunnel under Providence has reduced but not eliminated this problem. Sewer overflows in dry weather are rarer but can happen due to problems in the sewer system. The river bottom and riverbank sediments in the lower river also have many chemical contaminants in them.

Safety

This booklet cannot teach you safe paddling. Learn before you go! If you are unsure of your paddling skills consider an easier trip, consider taking a paddling classes, or come on one of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council's organized paddling outings, which are open to all skill levels, from complete beginners to experienced paddlers. RIC/KA, the AMC and many other groups also offer opportunities to get out on the water with experienced leaders.

Remember that conditions can change quickly as the result of both natural and human activity. What was safe one day may be dangerous the next, especially on a moving river where it can be hard to stop or back up to get out of danger. Rivers change every day, so *conditions on the river may differ from what is described in this guide*.

Always wear a life jacket and clothing suitable to the weather conditions. Pay attention to the weather and the risks it may present to paddlers. Be especially careful when the water is cold. Cold water kills, even when the air is warm, such as in the spring and early summer.

Fishing (other than catch and release) in the river below the Smithfield–Johnston line, which crosses Greystone Pond, is not recommended due to contamination in the river and the river-bottom sediments.






About the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

This booklet is a project of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, with funding for the project provided by the Rhode Island Rivers Council. The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, a 501c3 non-profit, works closely with federal, state, and local partners in the watershed communities of Glocester, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Johnston, Providence and North Providence to revitalize the river and reclaim it as a natural, historic, recreational, and economic asset for Rhode Island. Your donation will help us continue this work! For more information please visit our website wrwc.org, call us at 401-861-9046, or talk to us at one of our paddles or other events!

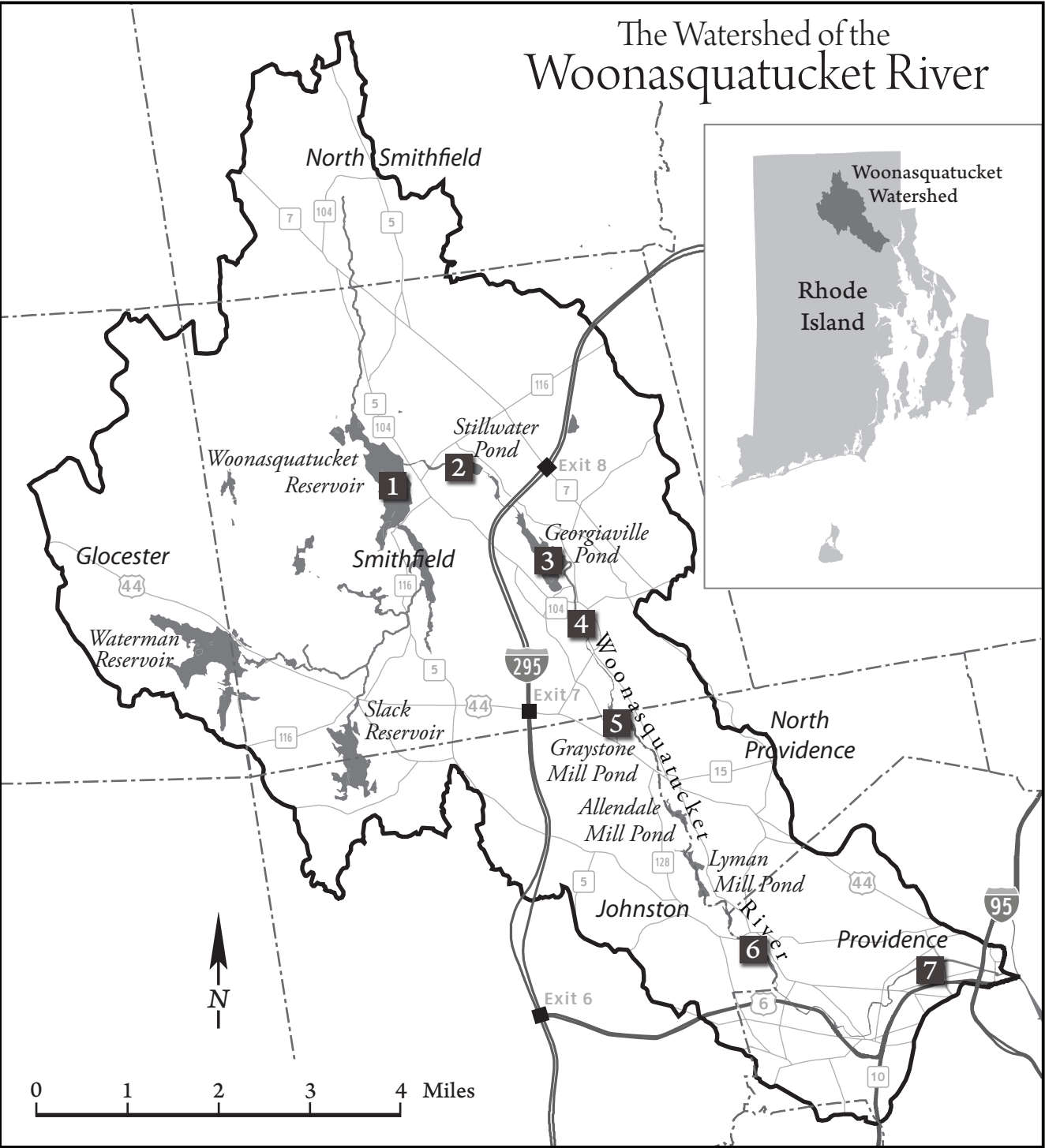
Places to Paddle

1	Woonasquatucket Reservoir (Stump Pond).....	page 6
2	Stillwater Pond.....	8
3	Georgiaville Pond.....	10
4	Georgiaville to Greystone.....	12
5	Greystone Mill Pond.....	14
6	Manton to Atwells.....	16
7	Downtown Providence.....	18

Key For all Maps

-  Boat Ramp
-  Canoe/Kayak Launch
-  Portage
-  Walking Trail or Bike Path
-  Park or Other Protected Land
- P** Parking

The data used to create the maps in this booklet came from RIGIS and other sources.



1 Woonasquatucket Reservoir (Stump Pond)

Overview: At 300 acres and 2.3 miles long, Woonasquatucket Reservoir in Smithfield is the largest water body in the watershed. Paddling here does not involve any moving water but the reservoir can develop large waves if there is much wind. The shoreline in the northern part is largely wooded. The southern part is a bit more suburban. The put-in on the west side is better for launching hand-carried boats.

Getting There: Take exit 8B off I-295 (north or south) in Smithfield. This will put you on Route 7 (Douglas Pike) heading north. In about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, at the second light, turn left onto Washington Highway (Route 116). Go 1 mile to a T-junction. To get to the put-in on the east side of the reservoir turn right here onto Farnum Pike (Route 104) and look for a DEM fishing access parking lot on the left. To get to the put-in on the west side of the reservoir, turn left at the T-junction, go 0.2 miles and turn right into Pleasant View Avenue (Route 116). This will take you across the reservoir on a causeway. At the end of the causeway turn right onto Log Road. In 0.2 miles bear right at the fork to stay on Log Road. In another 0.2 miles look for a parking lot on your right. For launching hand-carried boats, use the second parking lot if possible to leave the first lot free for vehicles with trailers.

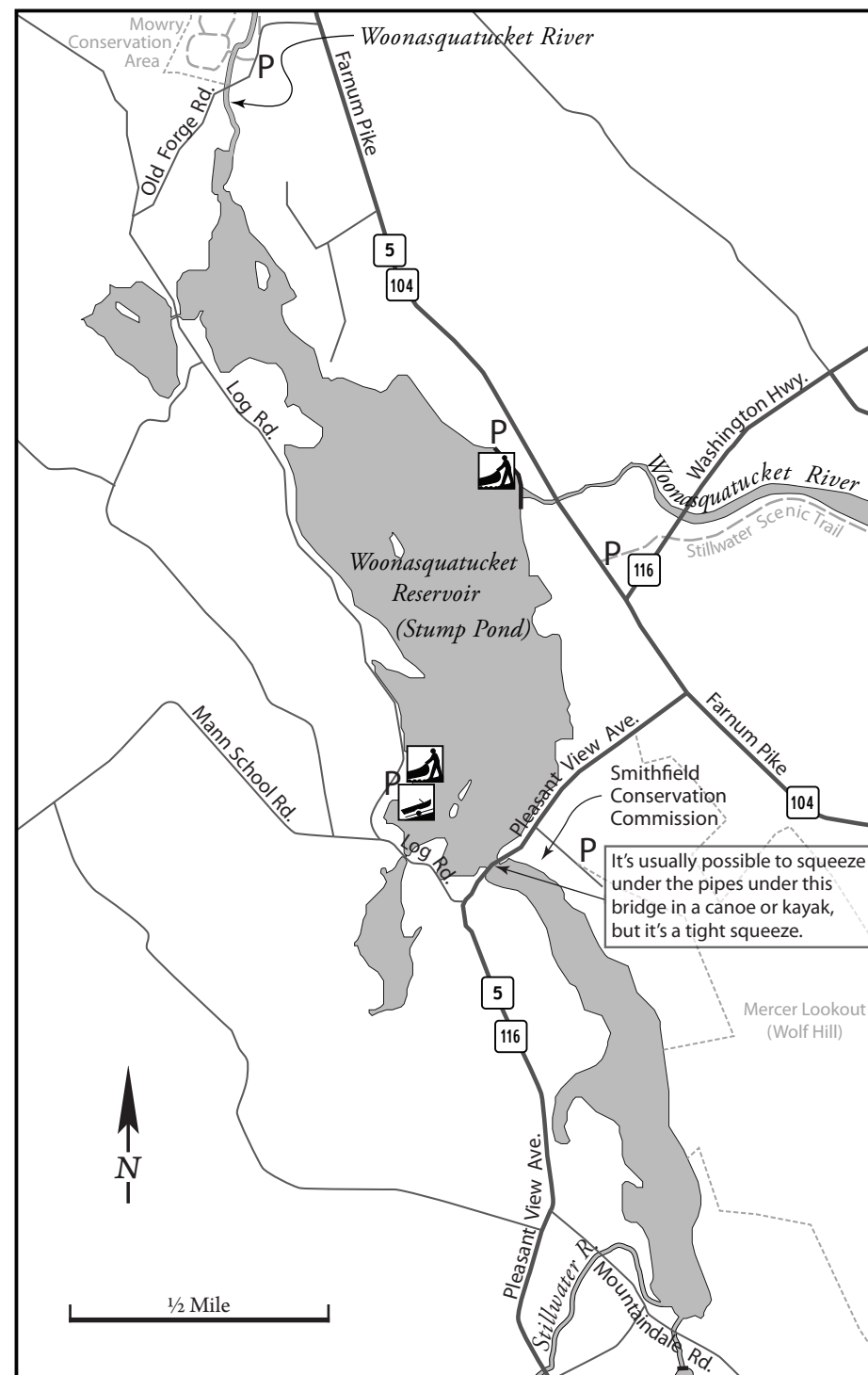
What's There: The shore at the put-in on the west side of the reservoir is sand and gravel very suitable for launching canoes and kayaks. You can put in here and paddle up to the north end, where the Woonasquatucket River flows into the reservoir. The river here quickly becomes too shallow to paddle up but you can land and have a picnic lunch on the big rock next to the mouth of the river and walk up an informal trail on the east side of the river to Mowry Conservation Area. Watch out for poison ivy!

The southern arm of the reservoir is also an interesting paddle, but be prepared for a tight squeeze getting under the two pipes that run under the Pleasant View Avenue bridge. The southern arm is narrower than the main body of the reservoir and the wetlands along the shore are a good place to look for birds.

Woonasquatucket Reservoir was built in 1910 to provide a reliable water supply through the summer for the mills down river. It was never a drinking water reservoir. The local name of "Stump Pond" comes from the tree trunks that remained standing in the water for many years after the dam was built.

Rules: 10 hp limit on motors used on the reservoir.

Also in the Area: Mowry Conservation Area, at the north end of the reservoir, is a beautiful natural area with walking trails and a very scenic section of the Woonasquatucket River. Mercer Lookout, also called Wolf Hill, and the Stillwater Scenic Trail, also offer pleasant options for walking. The latter follows an old RR grade along the river.



Stillwater Pond

Overview: The paddle down the Woonasquacket River to Stillwater Pond and back is not a long trip but it takes you through the remotest section of the Woonasquacket accessible to canoes and kayaks. Before reaching Stillwater Pond the river cuts through a long north-south ridge, so the middle section of this paddle is between steeply sloping, rocky hills. Unless the water is high, the river is slow and quiet.

The put-in below the dam at Woonasquacket Reservoir is on rock rip-rap. Be careful! The footing is unstable and the rocks are sharp. For the first $\frac{1}{4}$ mile the river is narrow and overhung with trees, and then it slowly opens out into Stillwater Pond. At the southern corner of the pond, a mile from the put-in, there is a good place to get out and take a walk along the Stillwater Scenic Trail.

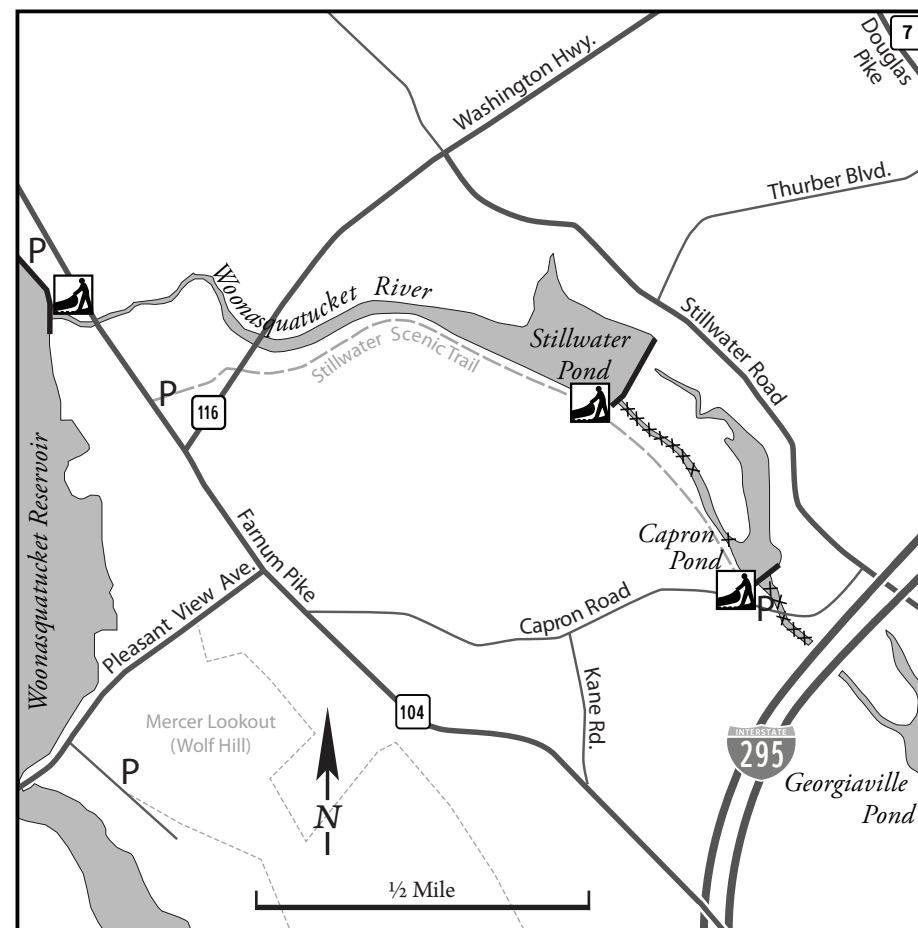
Getting There: Take exit 8B off I-295 (north or south) in Smithfield. This will put you on Route 7 (Douglas Pike) heading north. In about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, at the second light, turn left onto Washington Highway (Route 116). Go 1 mile to a T-junction. Turn right here onto Farnum Pike (Route 104), go $\frac{1}{3}$ mile and look for a DEM fishing access parking lot on the left. To get to Stillwater Pond put in below the dam.

What's There: The paddle to Stillwater Pond starts below the dam at Woonasquacket Reservoir. From the parking lot for the DEM fishing access site off Farnum Pike follow the concrete path down to the base of the dam and put in from the rock rip-rap there. After passing under Farnum Pike the river is narrow and overhung with trees. If the water levels are low, some areas here will be rocky. If it is unusually high there can be enough current to make the paddling more challenging. In $\frac{1}{3}$ mile you will pass under the high arch of the Stillwater Viaduct, built by the WPA during the Great Depression. Here the river slowly starts to open out until you reach Stillwater Pond, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the put-in. Since it is small and has no major roads near it, Stillwater Pond is generally peaceful and calm.

Paddle to the southern corner of the pond and you will find a good place to take out just a little before the dam. The Stillwater Scenic Trail runs close the shore here. Heading southeast along the trail takes you through the woods near the spillway that drains Stillwater Pond (except when water levels are very low when all the water leaves the pond via the other channel). Look for side trails heading down towards the river and follow these to get a closer look at the pretty but rocky and turbulent river. Watch out for poison ivy.

The dam that creates Stillwater Pond has a vertical face on the down river side so the northeastern arm of Capron Pond is not accessible from Stillwater Pond.

Once you have explored Stillwater Pond, turn around and paddle back up to the put-in. For the last $\frac{1}{3}$ mile, from Stillwater Viaduct to the put-in, you will be paddling against some current but usually not a lot. However, if the river is high



there can be too much current to paddle against. In that case take out at the south end of the viaduct, walk under it up to the Stillwater Trail, turn right and follow the trail back to Farnum Pike. Turn right and go $\frac{1}{4}$ mile up the pike to the put-in.

Also in the Area: A put-in off Capron Road that provides access to Capron Pond, which is even smaller than Stillwater. The marshes that border it make it a good place for birds.

Paddling the river from Capron Pond to Georgiaville Pond is not recommended because of the short, steep drop in the river as it enters the tunnels under I-295 and the potential for “strainers” under I-295 and Capron Road.

The mile-long Stillwater Scenic Trail parallels this paddle, running on the route of the former Providence & Springfield Railroad, which ran beside the river. There are small parking areas at both ends of the trail, but the end at Farnum Pike is the recommended starting point since the parking area there is larger and easier to find. The trail is broad and level so the walking is easy. The scenery is pretty, with views of the river, Stillwater Pond and Capron Pond.

3

Georgiaville Pond

Overview: Georgiaville Pond is a pretty, suburban pond covering about 100 acres, with a town beach, boat ramp and park at the south end, and two pine-tree clad islands in the southwest corner. Houses line much of the shoreline but the houses are largely set back a bit from the shore and surrounded by trees, so the pond feels more rural than it is. Motorboats and personal watercraft ("Jet Skis") are permitted on the pond so on a warm summer weekend the pond can be a busy place. See the rules section below for information on the required passes and permits.

Getting There: Take Exit 7A off I-295 (north or south) in Smithfield. This will put you on Route 44 (Putnam Pike) heading east. At the first traffic light turn left onto Esmond Street. Go 0.8 miles on Esmond and then turn left onto Route 104 (Waterman Avenue). Go 0.7 miles northwest on Route 104, which turns into Farnum Pike. Turn right onto Stillwater Road and go 0.2 miles and turn left into the town park.

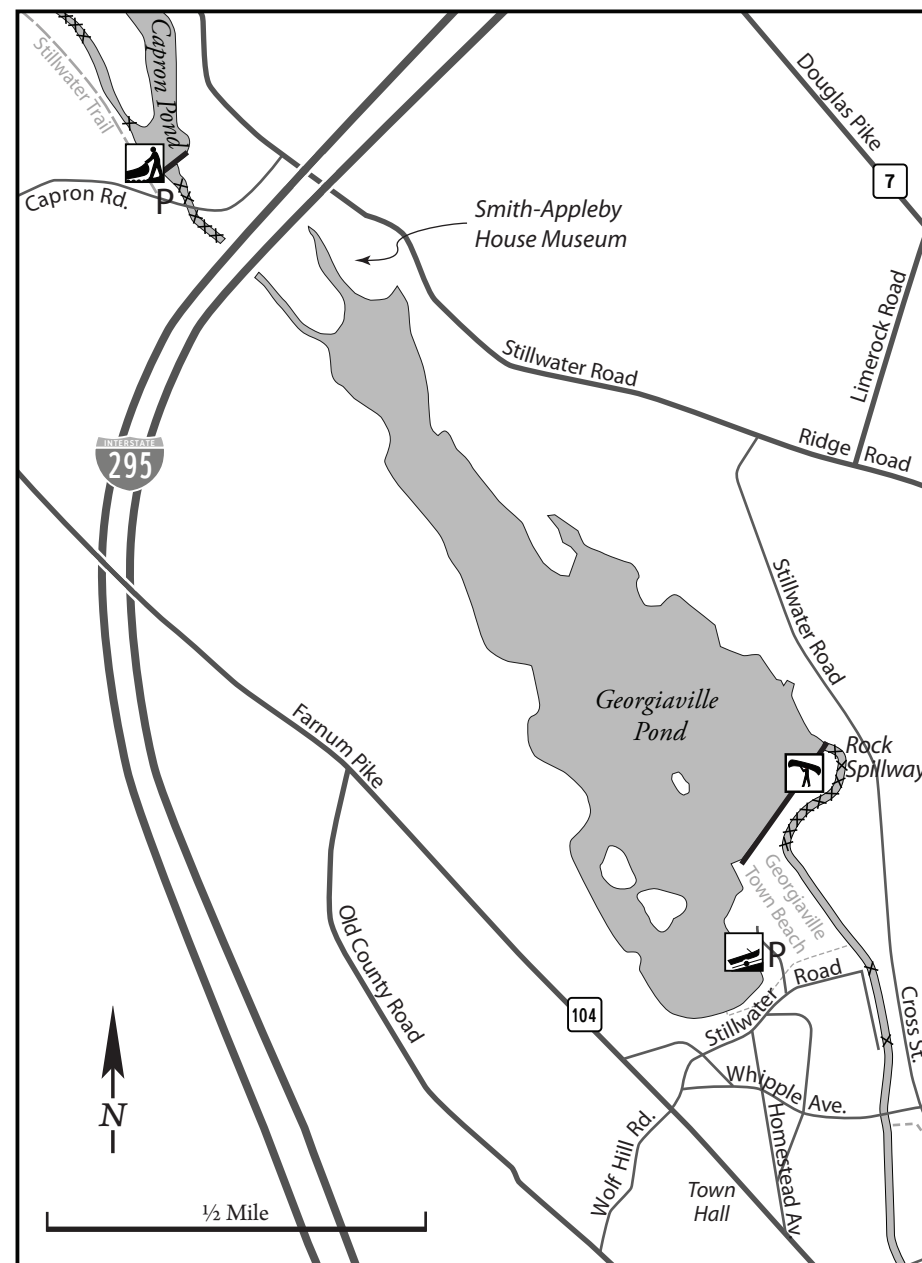
What's There: A circuit around Georgiaville Pond makes for a nice evening paddle. Put in at the boat ramp and go clockwise or counterclockwise around the pond, going behind the pine-tree clad islands. Stop at the small landing at the east end of the earthen dam that creates the pond and walk up on top of the dam for views of the scenic, rock-lined spillway. If you are planning to paddle down the Woonasquatucket River below the pond this is the place to portage around the spillway to the river.

At the north end of the pond, if the current is not too strong, you can explore up the Woonasquatucket to where it flows out from under I-295. The old river channel, east of the current channel, is now a backwater next to the Smith-Appleby House Museum.

Rules: The town beach, park and boat ramp are open to the public and not limited to town residents, but all users must pay for either a day or seasonal pass and boaters must also purchase a sticker for their boat. For more information contact the Smithfield Recreation Department at 231-1051 or visit them at the Smithfield Ice Rink, 109 Pleasant View Avenue to purchase your stickers and passes.

Also in the Area: The town beach and park are pleasant places to visit even if you are not going paddling. There are picnic tables shaded by huge old trees, rest rooms (open in the summer), and you can walk along the dam to see the scenic spillway.

The Smith-Appleby House Museum at the north end of the pond preserves one of the few 17th century homes still standing in Rhode Island. The oldest part of the house was built circa 1696 by Elisha Smith, grandson of one of the six men who accompanied Roger Williams when he left the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636 to settle Providence. The house is on the National Register of Historic Places and is run as a museum by Smithfield Historical Society. More details are



available on the website smithapplebyhouse.org. The house is only open during scheduled events so check the website before planning a visit.

The Georgiaville neighborhood, just south of the town park, is a historic mill village with houses built to resemble English housing to attract English mill workers.

Georgiaville to Greystone

Overview: Paddling the Woonasquatucket River from below Georgiaville Pond to Greystone Mill Pond is an interesting 2½ mile run for experienced paddlers. The river in this area is a mix of flatwater, quickwater and class I whitewater. The scenery ranges from dense forest to parks and playing fields to old mill buildings to suburban houses. There are a number of places where you can put in and take out. The longest trip involves putting in at the Georgiaville Town Beach boat ramp, portaging the dam and spillway and paddling down river to the south end of Greystone Mill Pond, portaging around Esmond dam on the way; but you can also put in or take out at Whipple Field and below the dam at Esmond Park.

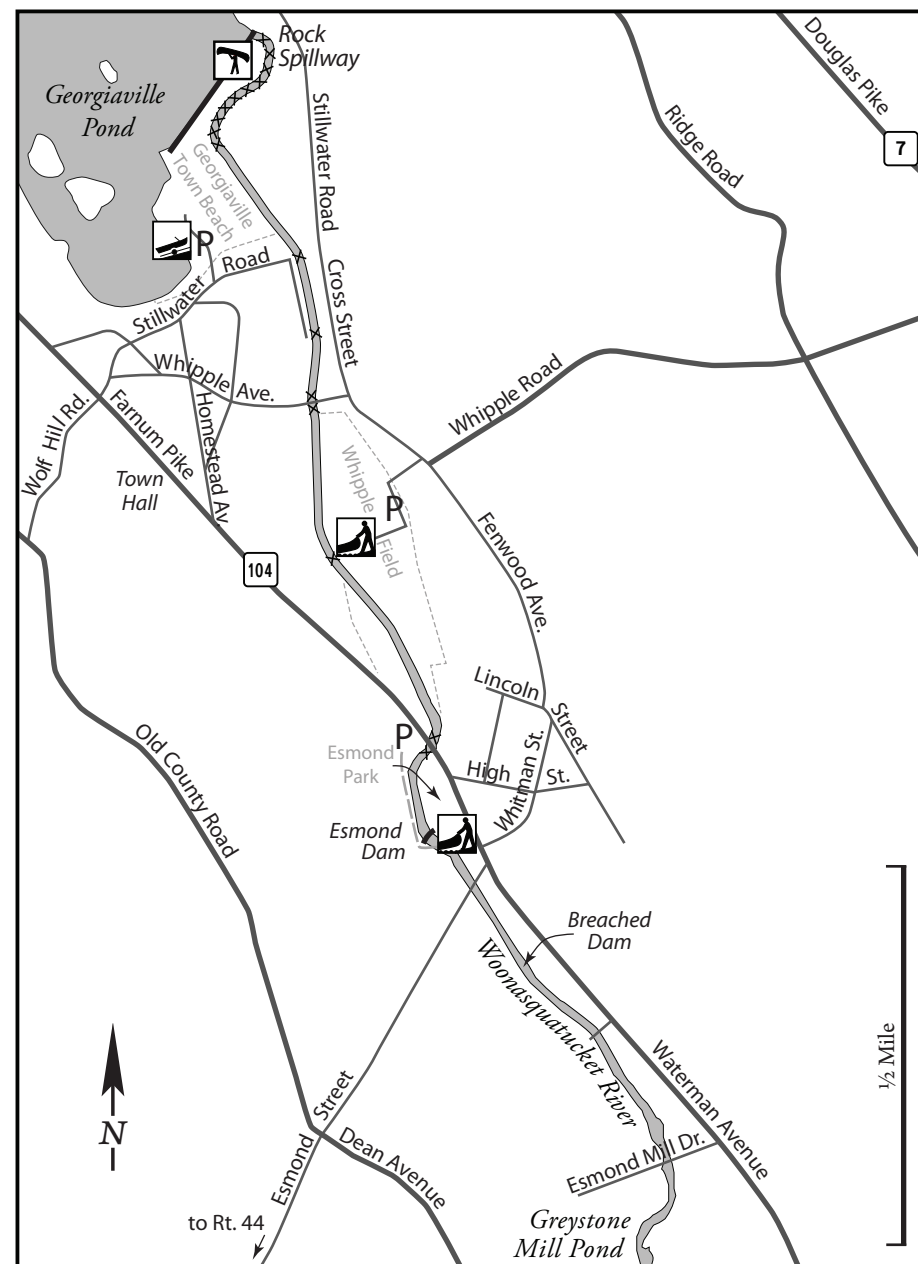
The river level is critical for this paddle. At 75 CFS on the USGS gauge at Centerdale* you will be hitting rocks fairly regularly and will have to get out and lift your boat over rocky areas occasionally. At 200 CFS the rapids will be getting washed out, the current will be swift but smoother than at lower water levels, and the dam at Esmond may even be runnable. However, at this river level you will also have less time to dodge obstacles, and “strainers” (trees down in the river that can trap and drown paddlers) can present a serious hazard. *Before paddling at any water level, stop at Esmond Park and decide how you plan to handle the low Esmond dam, just above the footbridge over the river.* When the river is high it can sometimes be run. At medium to lower water levels it will usually need to be portaged, which involves some bushwhacking. From Georgiaville Pond all the way to Greystone Mill Pond you should be ready for trees down across the river.

Getting There: For directions to Georgiaville Pond see paddle #3. For directions to Greystone Mill Pond see paddle #5. Esmond Park and Whipple Field may be found using the map at right. The parking area for Esmond Park is ¼ mile north of the junction of Esmond Street and Farnum Pike.

What’s There: Starting from the Georgiaville Pond boat ramp, paddle north and east until you reach the small landing near the spillway. Take out here and carry your boat up the steps to the top of the dam and the look to the right for the trail leading down to the river below the unrunable spillway. Watch out for poison ivy. Below the spillway there is about 500 feet of class I whitewater. After a sharp bend in the river, the current slows down a bit. From here to Esmond the river alternates between slower reaches and short riffles or rapids.

The low bank at Whipple Field, 0.6 miles below Georgiaville Pond, offers the first good take-out. At 0.9 miles you will see a marsh opening up on your left. This is a sign that the Esmond Dam and Esmond Park are just around the corner. At most river levels this dam must be portaged, which is sometimes difficult due to the lack of a good takeout above the dam.

* The USGS river gauge data from the Centerdale station are available on-line on a near real-time basis at: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ri/nwis/uv?01114500>



From the Esmond Dam it is about 0.2 miles to the remnants of a low, breached dam in front of the Benny's buildings. If the river is high this area can be run. At lower levels you will likely have to stop and lift your boat over the rocks. Once past this dam a short section of quickwater takes you the head of Greystone Mill Pond. The take-out is 0.7 miles ahead at the south end of the pond. For more on Greystone Mill Pond see paddle #5.

Greystone Mill Pond

Overview: Greystone Mill Pond is a narrow, winding pond created by the dam at Greystone. There are a number of small wetlands along the pond. Houses line both sides of the pond but the wetlands keep the houses set back a bit in many areas, so they are less visible from the water. Cricket Park, at the south end of the pond, has a canoe and kayak launch. In 2012 this launch is to be upgraded to make it handicapped accessible. A handicapped accessible fishing dock is being built nearby, along with a boardwalk overlooking the pond.

The pond is all of about 300 feet across at the south end, and this is by far the largest open area on Greystone Pond. Above here it quickly narrows down to a winding channel and becomes a river again, but it is often possible to paddle upriver as far as the Benny's complex.

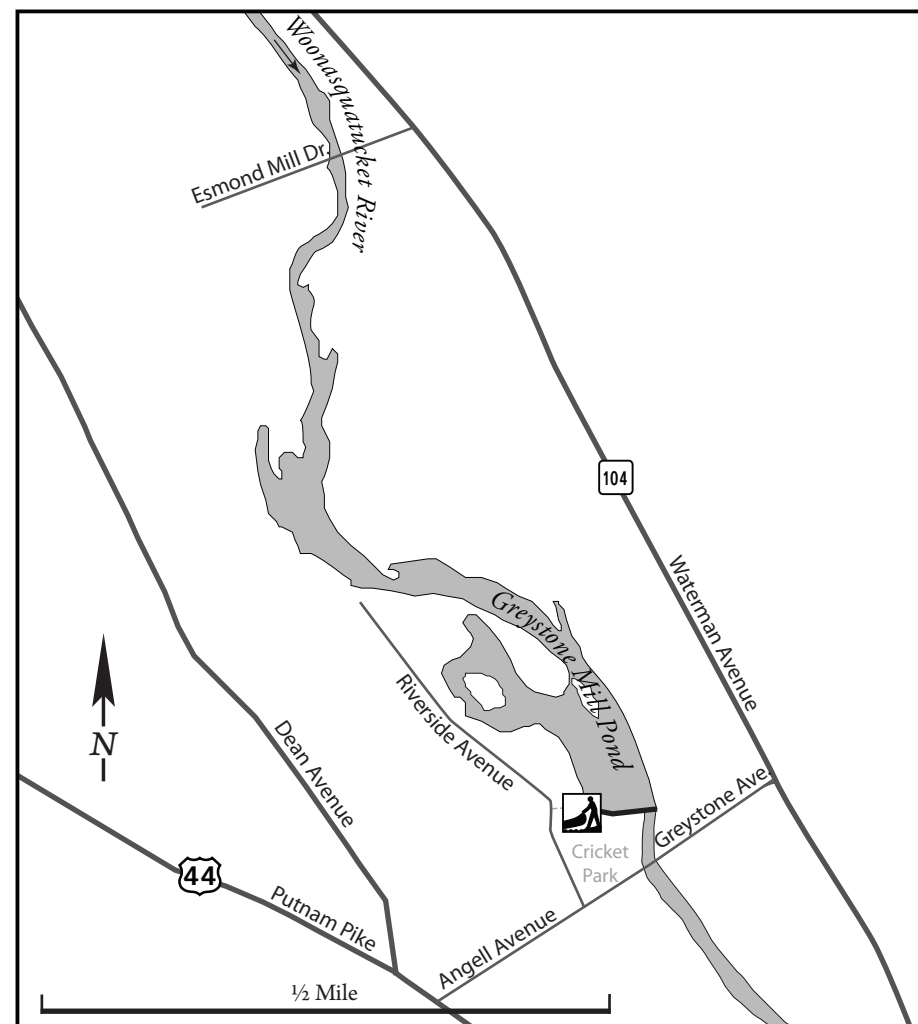
The Smithfield sewage treatment plant discharges treated sewage into the pond ½ mile above the put-in. While the treated sewage normally meets water quality standards you should wash your hands after coming in contact with the water.

Getting There: From I-295 (north or south) take exit 7A for Route 44 and North Providence. This will put you on Route 44 east (Putnam Pike). Go 1 mile and turn left onto Angell Avenue at the blinking light. Go 0.2 miles on Angell Avenue and turn left onto Riverside Avenue at the stop sign. At this turn Cricket Park will be in front of you. After turning onto Riverside Avenue the parking lot for the park will be on your right. You can also park along the Riverside Avenue, but please be careful not to block traffic. It is too narrow in places to allow for safe parking.

What's There: From the put-in at Cricket Park, head towards the far (east) shore to get to the main channel and then turn left. Stay away from the dam in the southeast corner of the pond because a canoe or kayak could get swept over this dam! Once in the main channel it is easy to see where to go and you have only to paddle and enjoy the scenery. In 0.7 miles you will come to a bridge (Esmond Mill Drive). Around here you will start to notice more current pushing against you but it is generally possible to paddle another ¼ mile to the bridge at the Benny's Complex. Here you will find a stronger current pushing against you and there is also a breached dam not far up the river from here. For information on paddling the river above here see paddle #4.

Once you have gone as far up the pond and river as you want to or can, turn around and paddle back to the put-in, stopping along the way to explore the coves and backwaters, if you want to.

Paddling on the Woonasquatucket River below Cricket Park is difficult until you get to the Manton Avenue/Greenville Avenue bridge. Not far below Cricket Park there is a mill building that straddles the river and debris often hangs up



here, blocking passage down river. Below this building the river enters a Superfund site that includes Allendale and Lymans Mill Ponds, the next two ponds on the river. The EPA has deemed these ponds safe to paddle on as long as reasonable precautions are taken such as washing your hands after coming in contact with the water and cleaning any mud off your shoes and gear. However, since not many people have paddled in this area recently the portages around the four dams between Greystone and the Manton/Greenville Avenue bridge are not well established. There are also no public access points on these ponds.

Also in the Area: Cricket Park is so named because the English mill workers who lived in the area used to play cricket here. However, the crack of the cricket bat is no longer heard echoing over the pond. Instead, walking trails and a gazebo are scheduled to be built in 2012, along with a better canoe and kayak launch, and a fishing dock.

Overview: The Woonasquatucket River from Manton Avenue to Atwells Avenue is an urban river, with attendant water quality issues, especially after a heavy rain. However, it offers some interesting paddling for experienced paddlers and the first half is surprisingly wooded. The river is a mix of flatwater, quickwater and occasional mild whitewater, with various reminders along the way of the river's industrial history, some of which create additional challenges for paddlers.

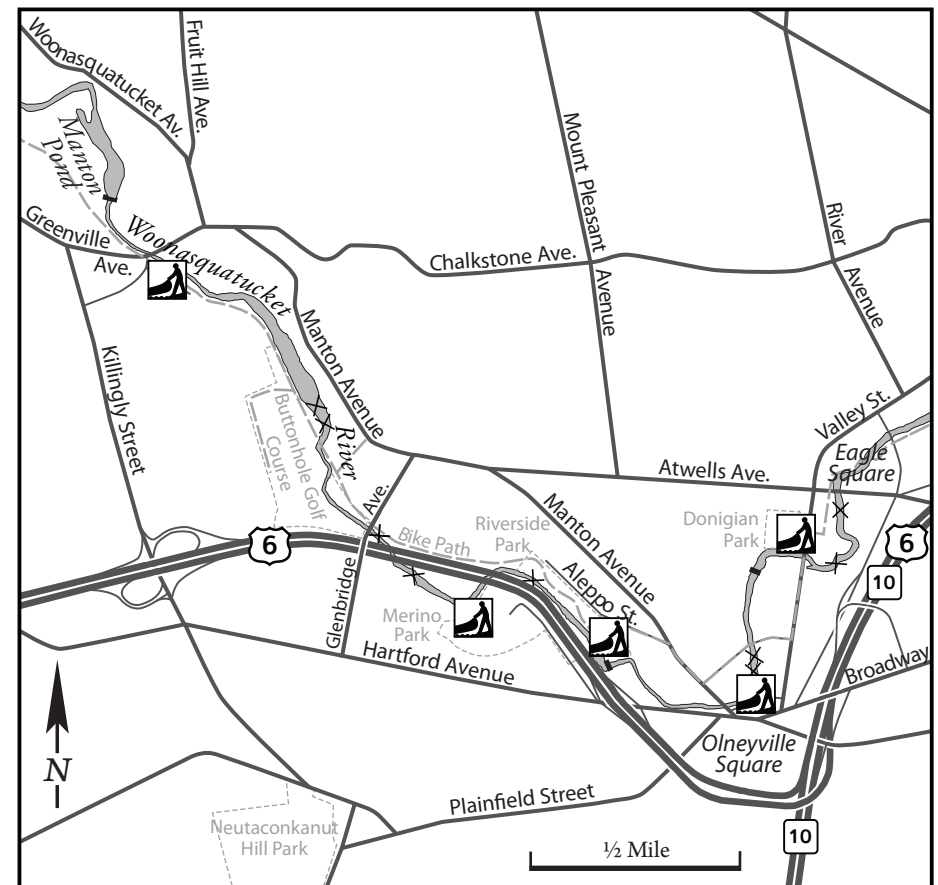
Getting There: To get to the put-in at the Manton Avenue/Greenville Avenue bridge take Route 6 west out of Providence. Take the Killingly Street exit and bear right off the ramp onto Killingly. Go 0.8 miles and turn right onto Greenville Avenue. In 0.2 miles, turn right onto Traver Avenue and then take an immediate left onto Hillside and park near the bike path. The map at right should help you find the other put-ins.

What's There: At Hillside Avenue there is no formal boat launch. The best access as of this writing is not far below the bridge, near the historic marker. Watch out for poison ivy! The next ¼ mile of river is largely quickwater with occasional slower stretches. As you approach the site of the former dam at Dyerville, ½ mile below the put-in, the river opens out and slows down. There was just enough of this old dam left to catch debris and block fish passage so in 2009 a section was removed leaving a clear passage for fish and boats. Watch out for remnants of the old dam.

Below Dyerville the river's pace picks up a bit, with a stretch of more significant quickwater followed by a slower section, followed by some mild class I rapids below Glenbridge Avenue. If the water level is low this is a section where you will really notice it. At 50 CFS on the USGS gauge at Centerdale* you will hit an occasional rock but if you are good at spotting and dodging rocks in whitewater you should not have to get out too often to lift your boat off the rocks.

After going under Route 6 for the first time there is another section of class I whitewater. Just below this rapid look out for the remnants of an old bridge across the river. Brush often accumulates here creating the potential for dangerous "strainers." In another 400 feet the river takes a sharp bend to the left at Merino Park, 1¼ miles from the put-in at Manton Avenue. After passing Merino Park, the river goes under Route 6 again and then bends to the right and passes under a high footbridge, just below which is the most difficult rapid on this section of the river. At most water levels the river pushes you straight towards a tree that projects out into the river. If you are not confident of your ability to dodge this tree, portage over the (slippery) rocks to the left.

After these rapids the river enters another quiet section leading up to the dam at Riverside Park. There is a canoe launch here next to the bike path, which makes a good place to take out, or you can portage around the dam and fish ladder and keep going down the river. Below the dam the river runs between vertical walls



through the Atlantic Mills complex. There is a pipe under one of the bridges in this complex that at most water levels you can duck under easily but at high water can be a dangerous trap!

After passing Atlantic Mills you will quickly come to Olneyville Square, 2.1 miles from the Manton Avenue put-in. 400 feet downriver from Olneyville Square is the site of the former Paragon Dam. This dam was removed in 2010 to allow fish and boats to travel this section of the river again. The area is now a rapid. Scout before attempting to run it. Since this is a "new" rapid as of this writing it is not yet clear what conditions will be like at different river levels.

A quarter mile below here is the Rising Sun Dam, the last dam on the river. This dam must be portaged. There is a good take out on the left. You can either carry downriver 250 feet to a steep put-in or continue another 450 feet to where there are steps down to the river near Valley St.

Below Donigian Park the river winds through a dense urban neighborhood, often between vertical walls, but with trees overhanging much of the river. The quickwater in this section is the last challenge before you get to Atwells Avenue and the Eagle Square complex, where the river becomes strongly influenced by the tides, 2.9 miles below the put-in at Manton Avenue.

For more on paddling from here to the mouth of the river, see paddle #7.

* The USGS river gauge data from the Centerdale station are available on-line on a near real-time basis at: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ri/nwis/uv?01114500>

Overview: In the urban heart of Providence the Woonasquatucket joins the Moshassuck to form the Providence River, which in turn becomes the head of Narragansett Bay. Paddling here provides a new perspective on the city: the rush of traffic is a little more distant and you are free to float along the river at your own pace. This section of the river is also home to Waterfire. When there is a Waterfire underway the river is closed to canoes, kayaks, and most other boat traffic from the Crawford Street Bridge to the Mall, so plan your trip accordingly.

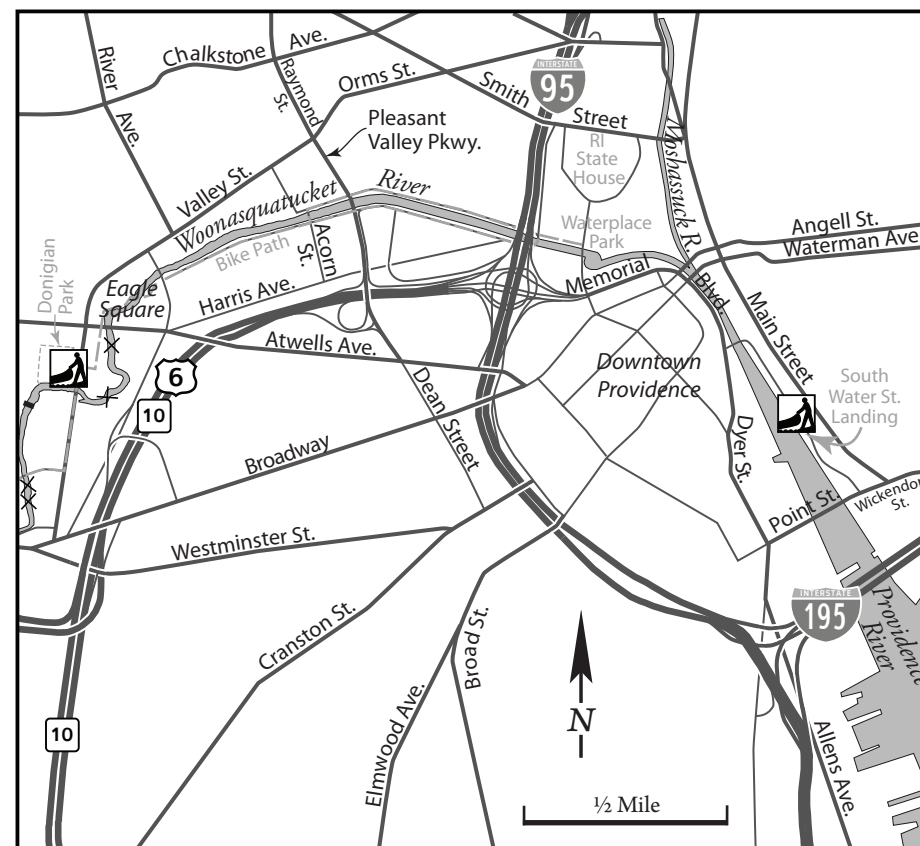
There are two ways to paddle this section of the river. For a round trip you can put in at South Water Street Landing, paddle upriver to Eagle Square, and then turn around and paddle back to the put-in. Another option is to put in at Donigian Park and paddle down to South Water Street. There is some quickwater between Donigian and Eagle Square so less experienced paddlers should choose the round-trip option from South Water Street. For more details on the river above Eagle Square, see paddle #6.

Getting There: To get to South Water Street Landing, from I-95 (north or south) take exit 22A in downtown Providence. At the first light, go straight onto Memorial Boulevard. At the sixth light, turn left onto South Water Street, which will put you on a bridge across the Providence River. After crossing the river the road makes a sharp right turn. The landing is about 0.2 miles ahead on your right, near the round gazebo and the circular silver sculpture. There is on-street parking on both sides of the street near the landing. Bring quarters for the parking meters.

What's There: While the tide starts to influence the river in a small way at Donigian Park, it becomes significant below Atwells Avenue and Eagle Square. There are shallow areas in the river both at Eagle Square and above the Dean Street/Pleasant Valley Parkway bridge that make it hard to paddle these areas at low tide. So high tide is generally the better time to paddle this section of the river. Also, it can be hard work paddling upriver against a strong ebb tide. If the tide is *very* high it can be a tight squeeze getting under the first bridge above Providence Place Mall.

Putting in at South Water Street landing, to get to the Woonasquatucket River head north up the Providence River towards the low arch bridges. There is often other boat traffic on the river in this area so be ready to get out of the way of larger boats that may not have much ability to maneuver.

The river in this area is lined with stone walls, with plantings and walkways along much of the river. When you come to a fork in the river, 0.4 miles from the put-in, stay left to go up the Woonasquatucket. Going right here would take you up the Moshassuck River, which quickly becomes too shallow to paddle. Going up the Woonasquatucket, you will quickly come to the circular basin of Waterplace Park, just down the hill from the State House. Continuing upriver from here



takes you under Providence Place Mall, the Amtrak rail line, and Interstate 95, among other things. A paddler can feel very small here amidst all the concrete and steel. Once clear of this complex, the river opens out a little for the next half mile and trees start to line the banks, although busy roads are never far away.

Above Acorn Street the river's character changes again. From here to Eagle Square the river is narrow and overhung with trees and while still urban, feels more peaceful. The riverbanks are largely vertical stone walls, so access in and out of the river is difficult or impossible. Old mills, now largely rebuilt, line the river and signs of old industry are evident.

As you enter the Eagle Square complex the riverbanks start to open out again and trees become fewer. If the tide is high enough and the river's current not too strong you can get to a point where the river takes a sharp bend to the left around a small gravel bar, 2 miles from the put-in. In an emergency it would be possible to take out here. Above here, if the river's flow is low it will be too shallow to paddle, and if the river is high there will be too much current to paddle against. So, here is where you must turn around and head back down river to the put-in.

From South Water Street Landing you can also head south under the Point Street bridge and out to the hurricane barrier. Large boats, strong currents, wind and waves are common in this area, especially near and outside the hurricane barrier, where you are in the Port of Providence.