

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.

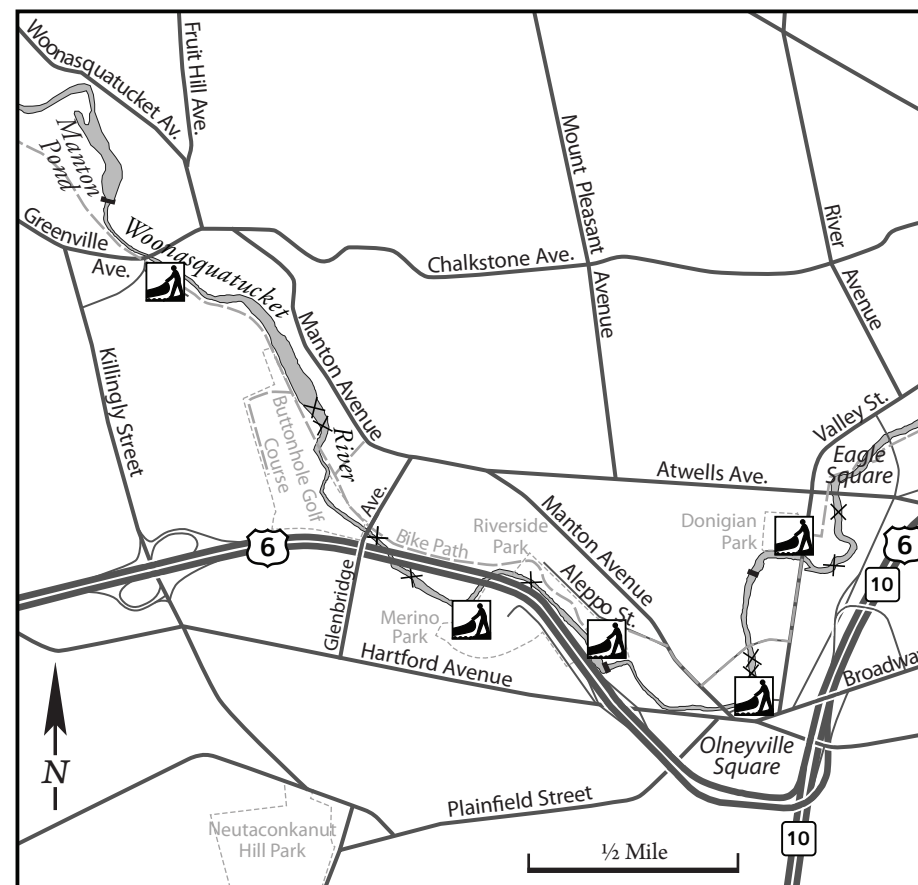
Getting There: To get to the put-in at the Manton Avenue/Greenville Avenue bridge take Route 6 west out of Providence. Take the Killingly Street exit and bear right off the ramp onto Killingly. Go 0.8 miles and turn right onto Greenville Avenue. In 0.2 miles, turn right onto Traver Avenue and then take 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>