

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.

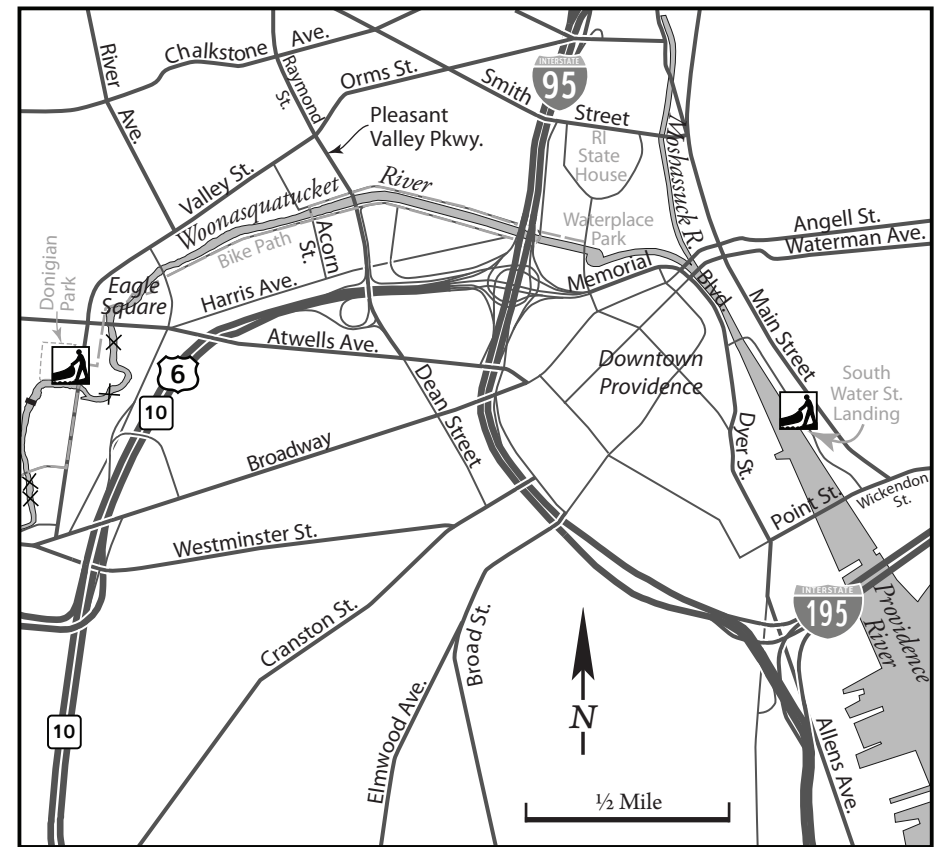
There are two ways to paddle this section of the river. For a round trip you can put in at South Water Street Landing, paddle upriver to Eagle Square, and then turn around and paddle back to the put-in. Another option is to put in at Donigian Park and paddle down to South Water Street. There is some 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.