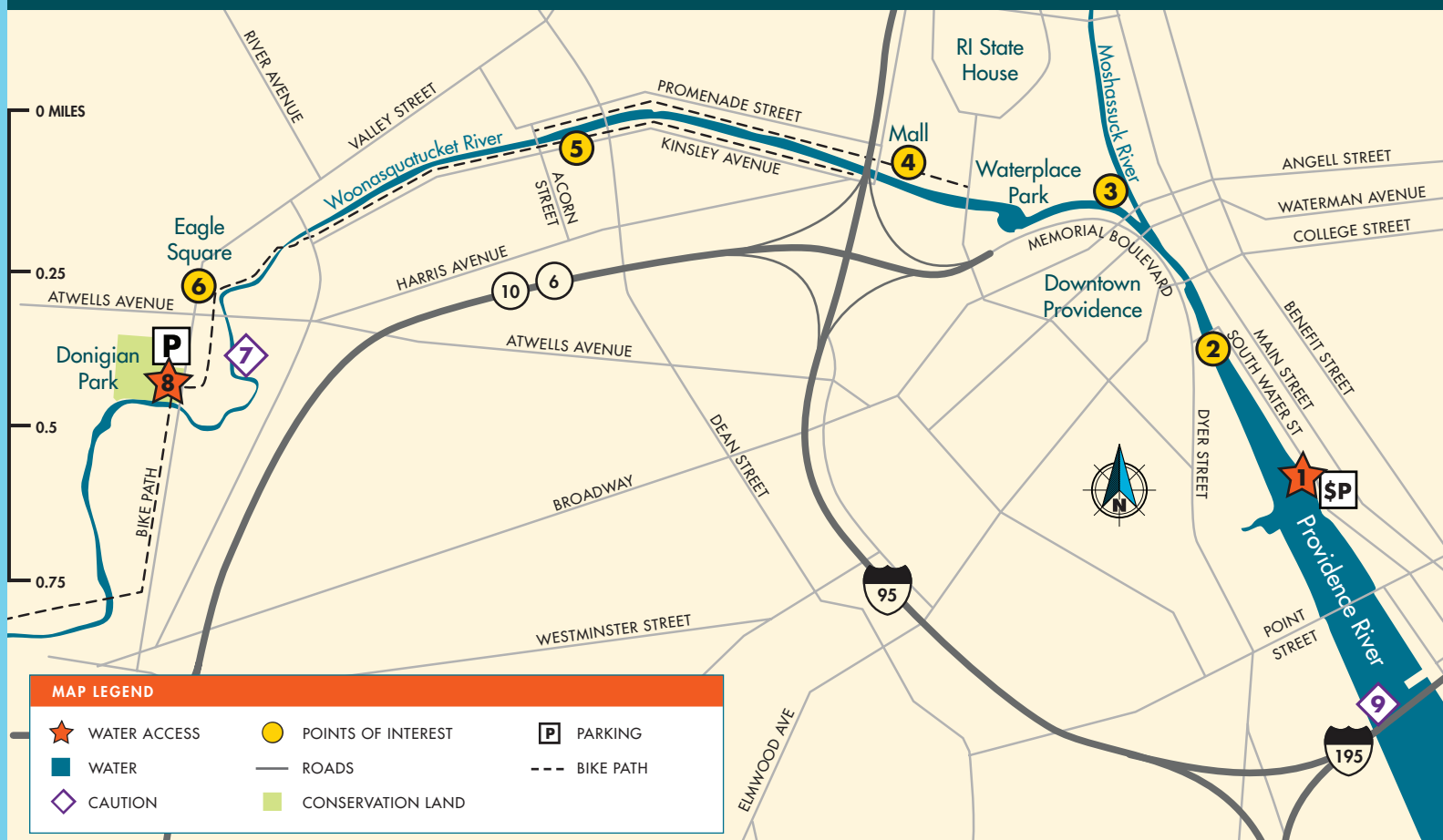


# WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL: WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER IN PROVIDENCE



<b>LEVEL</b>	Beginner/Intermediate (tides)
<b>START/END</b>	South Water Street Landing, Providence
<b>RIVER MILES</b>	4 miles round trip
<b>TIME</b>	1-2 hours
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Tidal, flatwater, urban river
<b>SCENERY</b>	The urban heart of Providence, but with a surprising number of trees along the river west of Dean Street
<b>GPS</b>	N 41° 49' 20.39", W 71° 24' 21.49"

## THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER IN PROVIDENCE

In the urban heart of Providence the Woonasquatucket joins the Moshassuck to form the Providence River, becoming 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. When there is a Waterfire underway the river is closed to canoes, kayaks, and most other boat traffic from the Crawford/South Water Street Bridge ② to the Providence Place Mall, so plan your trip accordingly.

The Woonasquatucket River in Providence is an urban river and after heavy rainfalls bacteria levels can be too high for safe paddling. It is best to stay off the river for two days after heavy rains.

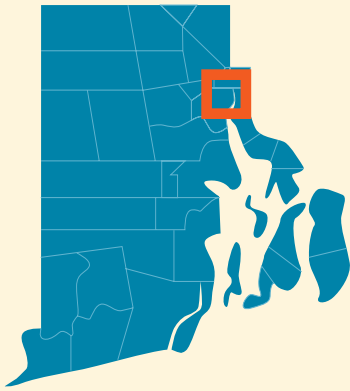
The usual way to paddle this section of the river is to make a

round trip from the South Water Street Landing ① up to Eagle Square ⑥ and back. You can also put in at Donigian Park ⑧ and paddle down to South Water Street. However, above Eagle Square the channel is narrow and winding and there is some quickwater ⑦ so less experienced paddlers should choose the round-trip option from South Water Street. While the tide starts to influence the river in a small way at Donigian Park, it becomes significant below Atwells Avenue and Eagle Square. A shallow area in the river below the Acorn Street bridge ⑤ makes it hard to paddle through this area 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. The ideal plan is generally to set out from South Water Street a little before high tide. If the tide is very high it can also be a tight squeeze getting under the bridge under the mall ④.

Put in at South Water Street landing ①. To get to the Woonasquatucket River, head north, upriver 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, such as the gondolas, 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

*Continued on the back >>>*



## AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVER

In 1998, hundreds of watershed residents joined in the successful effort to have the Woonasquatucket River designated as one of fourteen American Heritage Rivers. The WRWC runs paddle tours every summer and fall on four unique and beautiful sections of the Woonasquatucket River. See the full schedule at [wrwc.org/events.php](http://wrwc.org/events.php)



PHOTO: MYLES DUMAS

the river. When you come to a fork in the river ③, 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 downhill from the State House. Continuing upriver from here takes you under Providence Place Mall, the Amtrak mainline, and Interstate 95, among other things. Once clear of this complex, the river opens out a little for a bit and trees start to line the banks.

Above Acorn Street ⑤ 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 ⑥ 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 the river is usually too shallow or too fast to paddle up. Turn around and enjoy the paddle back down 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 ⑨. 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.

### HISTORICAL NOTE

Just over 375 years ago, Roger Williams paddled his canoe up the Providence River and founded Providence. The first part of the paddling route described on this map follows the route he took that famous day. However, the river has been changed beyond recognition. There was a narrow spot in the river then, near the present day College Street bridge, but above there the river opened out into the Great Salt Cove, which was about 0.3 miles wide and 1.25 miles long. It stretched from the foot of College Hill west almost to Eagle Square, where this paddle ends. Giant oysters, salmon, and sturgeon over five feet long thrived in this cove. Over the years it was slowly filled in to provide more space for roads, buildings and railroads. For decades, up until the early 1990s, much of the river in downtown Providence was decked over and completely hidden. Now the river has started to come back. While it looks very different from when Roger Williams paddled it, the river is once again a place people want to paddle.

### DIRECTIONS

To get to South Water Street Landing ①, 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 takes you across the Providence River. After crossing the river the road makes a sharp right turn. There is 2-hour metered parking on both sides near the landing. There is also a paid parking lot across the street from the landing.

Donigian Park ⑧ is on the west side of Valley Street in Providence, 0.2 miles south of Atwells Ave. The canoe launch is in the SE corner of the park, near the bridge over the river.

**ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET AND CARRY A WHISTLE OR OTHER SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE, PREFERABLY ATTACHED TO YOUR LIFE JACKET. PADDLERS SHOULD CHECK WATER LEVEL AND TIDES, WEATHER, AND WATERWAY CONDITIONS PRIOR TO EVERY TRIP. REMOVE WHAT YOU BRING, CLEAN UP MORE IF YOU CAN. PLEASE RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY. REPORT ANY PROBLEMS YOU ENCOUNTER TO THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.**



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. [www.wrwc.org](http://www.wrwc.org)

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) protects and preserves Narragansett Bay and its watershed through partnerships that conserve and restore natural resources, enhance water quality and promote community involvement. NBEP supports the RI Blueways Alliance which is dedicated to creating a comprehensive water trail network to link Rhode Island's rivers, lakes and ponds to Narragansett Bay and to the rivers in Massachusetts that flow into the bay. The trail will be used to promote safety, conservation, recreation and economic development. [www.ExploreRI.org](http://www.ExploreRI.org)



Watershed organizations throughout the Narragansett Bay watershed showcase paddling opportunities on downloadable paddle maps. The full list of maps is available at [ExploreRI.org](http://ExploreRI.org).

