

# WOOD-PAWCATUCK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION





## LOWER WOOD RIVER









LEVEL	Intermediate
START	Hope Valley Fishing Access, Main Street, Hope Valley
END	Alton Pond Landing, Woodville-Alton Road, Hopkinton
RIVER MILES	9 miles
TIME	4 to 5 hours
DESCRIPTION	Flat Water, Class I Rapids, 2 Portages
SCENERY	Sinuous river, forests, wetlands, historic mill ruins
ACCESS	Unimproved natural access









### LOWER WOOD RIVER: HOPE VALLEY TO ALTON POND

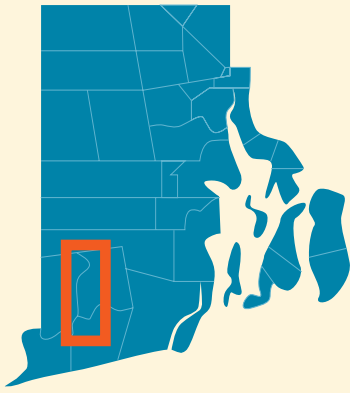
The Lower Wood River offers lots of scenery, with steep wooded banks covered in mountain laurel, swamp azalea, silky dogwood, and swamp rose. There is very little industry on the river, but the paddler will get to see two mill ruins and three dams. It's a great area to see wildlife, with osprey nests, beaver lodges, and the ubiquitous painted turtles.

Put in at the Hope Valley Fishing Access  located off Rt. 3 in Hope Valley, behind the Dow Little League Baseball Fields. In about one mile, several large boulders in the river indicate the approach to the Hope Valley Dam . With the current breach in the dam you can take-out either river left or right. To continue downstream, put-in across the bridge on river left, down a step bank. Use caution – this short section is rocky with some quick water. The USGS gaging weir  can usually be run at higher water levels. Be prepared for the abrupt drop. Portage on the right if water level is too low. The Rt. 95 Overpass  provides great nesting sites for barn and cliff swallows.

The Switch Road Fishing Access  is the recommended put-in for this section of the river. From here the river passes under the road and winds through mostly forested areas until it enters a large marsh complex at about 5 miles. Black Farm State Management Area  has a wide diversity of habitats for many forms of wildlife. An old railroad bridge abutment  is at the end of the extensive wetland and the beginning of the pond above the Woodville Dam. It remains from a spur line that served the mills. The Woodville Dam is the last dam to be portaged. Cautiously take-out on river right onto Woodville Road  through a small opening in the vegetation on the riverbank. Cross the Woodville Bridge and put-in on river left through a small clearing. The river double backs on itself in 0.5 miles before continuing south. Take a sharp left to continue in the main channel or continue straight to an old mill race and the remains of the former Tefft Sawmill . From this point the river again winds through primarily forested area until it comes out to another marsh and the head of Alton Pond. This section of the river has large populations of the invasive plant Variable Milfoil, which can make paddling difficult in mid-summer. Take out at the Alton Pond Landing  on river right.

#### MAP LEGEND

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  WATER ACCESS |  POINTS OF INTEREST |  PORTAGE |
|  WATER        |  ROADS              |  PARKING |
|  CAUTION      |  CONSERVATION LAND  |   |



## WOOD RIVER

The Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) was established in 1983 in response to a groundswell of interest generated by a National Park Service study conducted that year, which identified the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers as "...unique and irreplaceable resources."



### WOOD RIVER

The Wood River is Rhode Island's premier river for fishing and paddling. According to a study by the National Parks Service, the Wood River has the highest biodiversity of any river in New England. It has been recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Lower Wood River is a better choice to paddle in low water because it is wider and has more flow than the upper section. The challenges on the Lower Wood River are the three dams that need to be portaged. Mountain laurel is particularly scenic along the river in June. River conditions related to blowdowns can be found on-line at [www.wpwa.org/river.php](http://www.wpwa.org/river.php).

### HISTORY

Native Americans first occupied the area soon after the retreat of the glaciers, about 25,000 years ago. In the winter they used in-land areas such as the Tomaquag Valley, not far from Alton Pond, and migrated to the coast in warmer months. European settlement began in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, primarily with farms and small villages. Dams along the river provided power for sawmills, gristmills and carding mills. In the nineteenth century railroad lines provided more efficient transportation required by increasing industrialization, such as textile and machine tool production. Many of the small mills were converted into larger industrial complexes. A good example of this is the Hope Valley Mill, where a marker at the dam reads "Old Stone Dam Circa 1765. This dam, typical of those found in

some areas of the English countryside, was erected about 1765. Later, two mills, one on either side of the river, used the waterpower to turn wheels for manufacturing. The remains of one of the sluiceways are still visible immediate to this sign. Originally called Carpenter's Mills, the dam now sits between the towns of Hopkinton on the West and Richmond on the East."

### ECOLOGY

The intermixing of various cover types along the Wood River, ranging from open water to marsh to shrub and wood swamp are highly attractive to wildlife, particularly waterfowl and other wetland birds which use the corridor extensively during migration. The riparian habitats of the Wood River and its tributaries provide excellent habitats for a diverse group of animals including beaver, otter, raccoon, mink, muskrat, coyote and fox. Ruffed grouse, woodcock, turkey, cottontail rabbits, squirrels, and white-tailed deer utilize upland areas. Numerous song birds, such as warblers, wrens, thrushes, vireos, swallows and sparrows nest along the river corridor. Birds of prey, including hawks, osprey, and herons feed from the river. Dragonflies, mayflies, freshwater mussels, crayfish and other insects and invertebrates form the basis of the food web. At any time in the summer numerous flowering plants, such as fragrant white water lilies, pickerel weed, cardinal flowers, native rhododendron, and arrowhead, can be seen. The extensive wetlands complex along the Wood River is one of the most diverse and valuable wetlands for wildlife in the entire state.

**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 WOOD-PAWCATUCK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.**



Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association's mission is to promote and protect the integrity of the lands and waters of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed. The Watershed encompasses a 300 square mile area of land in southern RI and southeastern CT. [www.wpwa.org](http://www.wpwa.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).

