

Shawsheen River Watershed, MA



For additional information on the Shawsheen River Watershed and the recreational opportunities in and around the river, try the following resources:

Additional Information:

- **Shawsheen River Watershed Association Website**
<http://www.shawsheen.org/>
- **Biking, Hiking and Rail-Trails**
Bay Circuit Alliance
<http://www.baycircuit.org>
Bay Circuit Trail Maps
<http://www.serve.com/baycircuit/maps.html>
- **MassBike Online**
MassBike Online
<http://www.massbike.org/bikeways/>
- **Andover Trails Committee**
<http://www.town.andover.ma.us/community/trails/trails.htm>
- **MA Department of Environmental Management (DEM) Trail Maps**
<http://www.massbiketrails.com>
- **Town of North Andover Trails**
<http://home.at.net/~stephen.manning/natrails.htm>
- **Minuteman National Historic Park, Online Visitor's Center**
<http://www.nps.gov/mino/visitorcenter.htm>
- **The Trustees of Reservations**
<http://www.trustees.org>
- **Save our Heritage**
<http://www.saveourheritage.com>
- **The Appalachian Mountain Club Andover Committee**
<http://www.thecompass.org/amcandover/>
- **The Appalachian Mountain Club Boston Chapter**
<http://www.amcbooston.org/>
- **Andover Village Improvement Society (AVIS)**
<http://www.state.ma.us/envt/mvl/shawsheen.htm>

Contact Information:

- **MA Riverways Program**
DFWLE
251 Couseway Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1540
http://www.state.ma.us/dfwle/River/riv_toc.htm
- **Shawsheen River Watershed Association**
Bob Rouseo
682 Chandler Street
Tewksbury, MA 01876
(978) 851-9505
<http://www.shawsheen.org/>
- **Geosyntec Consultants, Inc.**
Project Consultants
Seven Roy, Associate
629 Massachusetts Avenue
Boroxnough, MA 01719
(978) 263-9588
<http://www.geosyntec.com>

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Cover photo courtesy of Mike Vincequere, Hanscom Air Force Base

Office of Environmental Affairs (EOA) program. For more information, contact the Shawsheen Watershed Team leader:
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<http://www.shawsheen.org/recmap> to view photos of the watershed, peruse historical sites, download a printable version of the map, learn about the best canoe trips and find recreational opportunities for you and your family.

► **The Shawsheen River Watershed** has a drainage area of approximately 78 square miles, including about 60 miles of named rivers and streams, and encompasses part of 12 Massachusetts municipalities.

► The main stem of the Shawsheen River flows for approximately 25 miles, losing 70 feet in elevation from its headwaters at Hanscom Military Base to its confluence with the Merrimack River in Lawrence.

► Approximately 4.5% of the watershed area is covered by wetlands or open water. The watershed supports a population of approximately 250,000 people.

► According to legend, the name "Shawsheen" is actually a Native American word, meaning "serpent" or "serpentine," which refers back to the meandering nature of the river.

► The river was given the name "Shawshin" by the General Court of Massachusetts on May 1644. In 1636 Matthew Craddock, governor of the Colonial Company in England, wrote to Governor John Winthrop in America expressing a desire to obtain a grant of two thousand acres of land "at a place called Shawe Shymn."

From Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
William Dunn, Watershed Team Leader
<http://www.state.ma.us/envt/mvl/shawsheen.htm>
From Bedford Historical Society

The Shawsheen River Watershed

Help Protect Your Watershed

Here are some basic tips on how to help keep your watershed clean:

1. Be sure to clean up after your pet.
2. If you wash your car, let the pros do it.
3. Dispose of hazardous products properly.
4. Do not dump or litter.
5. Use environmentally-friendly lawn care practices.
6. If you have a septic system, be sure to maintain it.
7. Report dumping.

Commercial car washes recycle, which saves water, and prevents grease and other pollutants from running off your driveway and into surface or ground water.

When possible, avoid purchasing hazardous products for your home. If it is necessary to dispose of any, be sure to contact the proper authorities and ensure that the materials are disposed of safely. Take advantage of hazardous waste collection days scheduled by your city/town.

Dumping in lakes or rivers can be harmful to plants and animals, as well as reducing the recreational benefits to others. Garbage in the streets can be harmful to surface wetlands as well. Stormwater from rain events carries other yard waste should be composted and turned into soil.

The use of pesticides, fertilizers and weed killers can pollute lakes and rivers. To reduce your use of these chemicals, try:

- Airing your lawn in spring and fall to control weed growth
- Using an organic fertilizer, available at most garden centers
- Pulling weeds by hand or using boiling salt water on weeds between
- Watering your lawn only as needed (if at all)
- Using good bugs to control bad ones (ask your local nursery for more information)

Septic system failures can be a major source of nutrients and bacteria in waterbodies. Have your system checked regularly in order to ensure that it is properly functioning.

Report dumping, contact the Department of Environmental Protection, Northeast Regional Office: (978) 661-7600

The Shawsheen River Recreational Map and Website:

The Shawsheen River Recreational Map highlights the many recreational opportunities in the Shawsheen River Watershed, including boating, hiking, biking, fishing and sightseeing. This map displays the vision of the community and is designed to provide both visitors and local residents with the resources they need to take full advantage of this rich watershed.

This brochure complements the **Shawsheen River Recreational Maps website**, through which users can access specific information on recreational resources through an interactive map. Access this interactive on-line map from <http://www.shawsheen.org/recmap> to view photos of the watershed, peruse historical sites, download a printable version of the map, learn about the best canoe trips and find recreational opportunities for you and your family.

Access to this website is provided by the Shawsheen River Watershed Association.

Recreational Opportunities In and Around the Shawsheen River Watershed

Canoeing:
There are a number of great opportunities for canoeing on the Shawsheen River. When planning a canoe trip, it's important to carefully consider the ease of access and, as with all outdoor recreational activities, to take extra care with regards to personal safety. Before you go, access real time stream gage data from the Middlesex Canal by connecting to http://mass1.er.usgs.gov/rt-cgi/gen_stn_pg?station=01100600. The Shawsheen River Recreational Map (see reverse) includes specific information on canoe access points and portages along the river.

The Shawsheen River Watershed Association has selected its favorite canoe trips, listed below:

<p>Trip A: Dale Street (#17) to Central Street (#18) Short Trip (2 Miles)</p> <p>This is a popular trip with good public access. Most of the land on either side of the river is protected open space. The first half of this trip is wooded before opening into marshland. Be careful of short drops at beaver dams.</p>	<p>Trip C: Route 38 (#9) to Ballardvale Dam (#16) Long Trip (6 Miles)</p> <p>This is a slightly longer trip, which includes the stretch of river covered in Trip B. The first section of the trip is primarily meadow, eventually becoming woods. At the end of the trip, you'll come to "the flats," a large, wide impoundment above the Ballardvale Dam.</p>
<p>Trip B: Shawsheen/Mohawk (#11) to Lowell Junction Road (#14) Medium Trip (4 Miles)</p> <p>Access to the river is good at both ends of this trip; however, be sure to take caution about 1/4 mile from the start of the trip, at Mill Street Culverts, where it may be necessary to take a short portage. Keep your eyes open at the large meadow just upstream from Route 93 where you may encounter great blue heron, red tailed hawk, Canadian geese, wood duck, mallard duck, red winged blackbird, kingfisher and cardinals.</p>	<p>Trip D: Route 3A (#5) to Route 38 (#9) Long Trip (6 Miles)</p> <p>Throughout the length of this trip, you will encounter meadows and wooded sections successively. Take caution at the abandoned bridge near Buckingham Road, and be on the lookout for beaver activity. This route passes through the scenic ruins of the Middlesex Canal Aqueduct.</p>

Group Outings
The Shawsheen River Watershed Association plans group canoe outings. For more information, access the SRWA events calendar from <http://www.shawsheen.org>.

Fishing:
There are a number of good fishing spots on the Shawsheen River. Many are accessible by canoe or by wading from the river access points, included on the Recreational Map (see reverse). For information on fish stocking and fishing licenses, contact the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife at (617) 626-1590 or access MassWildlife's recreation page at <http://www.state.ma.us/dfwle/dfw/dfwrec.htm>. Find information on select fishing spots in the Shawsheen River Watershed from David Kaplan's **Fishing Guide to Middlesex County Rivers** by accessing the interactive recreational map, located at <http://www.shawsheen.org/recmap>, or checking out the book from your local library.

Biking:
There is currently one paved off-road bike route passing through the Shawsheen river Watershed:
The Minuteman Bike Trail passes through Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, and Cambridge. Bicycling, walking, jogging, in-line skating, and cross-country skiing are permitted on this 11-mile trail. Visit <http://www.minutemanbikeway.org> for maps and other information. Local roads suitable for bicycling can be found on Andy Rubel's Eastern Massachusetts Bicycle Map, <http://www.bikemaps.com>. Information on off-road bicycling opportunities in the watershed can be obtained from the New England Mountain Bike Association at <http://www.nemba.org>.

Hiking:
Many of the open space lands in the Shawsheen River Watershed have trails available for hiking, walking and jogging. Trail maps can be obtained from many of the towns upon request. The Department of Environmental Management maintains online information and downloadable trail maps. Select trail maps are accessible via the online Shawsheen Recreational Map, at <http://www.shawsheen.org/recmap>.

The Bay Circuit Trail stretches from Plum Island to Kingston Bay and runs primarily north-south in this section, spanning most of the length of the watershed. Detailed information can be found at <http://www.baycircuit.org>.

Swimming:
Berry Pond, Harold Parker State Forest, Andover: Berry Pond has a sand beach and new washhouse with flush toilets and changing stalls set against a beautiful backdrop of trees reflected in the surface of the pond. Lifeguards are on duty from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. 978-686-3391.

Spring Brook Park, Bedford: This park on Springs Road in Bedford has a bathhouse, volleyball, basketball, picnic area, and grills. It is open 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. until 8/10; 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. 8/11 - 9/1. 781-275-1392.

Micozzi Beach/ Nutting Lake, Billerica: Off Middlesex Turnpike, this facility includes a bathhouse, volleyball, basketball, and a picnic area. 978-671-1304.

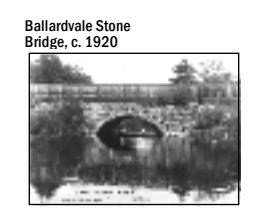
Pomp's Pond, Andover: Recreation Park features swimming at this pond, along with tennis, softball, picknicking and canoeing. The pond is open 6/15 - 8/18, 12 noon to 7 p.m. Season tickets for residents are \$25, day pass for visitors \$10. (978) 475-9732.

Parks and Conservation Areas:

- Minuteman National Park, Lexington, MA:** This park consists of approximately 750 acres in the towns of Lincoln, Lexington and Concord located along Battle Road, the route traversed by the British troops on the morning of April 19, 1775, on their way to and from the town of Concord. It was along this route that the colonial militia and Minutemen took up arms in defense of their property and freedom and began the chain of events which led to the creation of the United States of America.
- Harold Parker State Forest, Andover, MA:** Harold Parker State Forest, which lies in Andover, North Andover, North Reading and Middleton, comprises just over 3000 acres of Central Hardwood-Hemlock-White Pine forest. The forest is twenty miles north of Boston and within one hour's drive of three million people. Recreational opportunities include hiking, mountain biking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming, camping and picnicking.
- Harold R. Rafton Reservation, Andover, MA:** This conservation area has a number of marked hiking trails. Maps are available from the Andover Village Improvement Society (<http://www.avisandover.org>).
- Shawsheen River Conservation Area, Bedford, MA:** The Shawsheen River Conservation Areas together consist of 28.3 continuous acres forming a protected greenway along the north side of the Shawsheen River corridor between Middlesex Turnpike and Route 3. In this location the river winds in a natural channel between extensive open marsh and shrub swamp to either side. The river is accessible to small boats, and is partially accessible via a trail established over an upland conservation restriction.
- Vine Brook Conservation Area, Burlington, MA:** The Vine Brook Conservation Area is 22 acres. The parcel includes wetlands, woodlands, and bordering the land on the west side is the brook. Access to the park is available at the end of Fowler Terrace Avenue.
- Wilderness Park, Bedford, MA:** This large tract of land supports a varied wildlife population, including pileated woodpecker, barred owl and fisher. Parking is available at the VA Hospital parking lot south of Fawn Lake. The trail system at Wilderness Park is well-maintained, and current improvements include the construction of additional trails to connect existing pathways.
- Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, Bedford, MA:** This is a 3400-acre wildlife refuge known as one of the best birding sites in Massachusetts. There are trails available for hiking, cross-country skiing and wildlife observation (<http://www.freedomsway.org>).
- Mill Pond Conservation Area, Burlington, MA:** The largest conservation area in Burlington, the Mill Pond Conservation Area includes over 400 acres of rolling and steep terrain. Numerous marked and unmarked trails cross through the conservation area, allowing for long enjoyable hiking or bicycling experiences. The land has numerous access points, including the corner of Winter and Chestnut Streets (next to the water treatment plant); through a gate at the end of Hansen Avenue; and through a gate at the end of the offshoot from Town Line Road.
- Costello Park, Lawrence, MA:** This park, in addition to providing canoe access, is home to the Shawsheen River Bike Trail. For a trail map, see http://www.mvpc.org/Trail_maps/lawcostello.pdf.

Historic Sites:

- Middlesex Canal Aqueduct, Billerica, MA:** Construction on the old Middlesex Canal was started in October of 1794 and was completed on schedule on December 31, 1803. The canal started at the Merrimack River in Lowell and ran to the Mill Pond in Charlestown, a distance of twenty-seven miles. For the next forty years, the canal represented the most economical means of transporting goods between Lowell and Boston and was directly responsible for the development of Lowell as the first industrial city in Massachusetts - Middlesex Canal Association, <http://www.middlesexcanal.org/>.
- Shawsheen House or the "Shawshine House," Bedford, MA** (137 Shawsheen Road, east bank of the Shawsheen at the intersection of Page Road.): This structure is reported to be the first house in Bedford, one of two possible locations of an Indian Trading Post along the Shawsheen River as early as 1642. The trading post probably remained in operation until 1665, when the Pawtucket Indians abandoned their agricultural village on the shores of Nutting's Lake. By 1730 Benjamin Fanforth operated an inn at this location (shown below).
- Boston and Maine RR Ballardvale Stone Arch Bridge** (shown above right): In the 1840's the B&M RR found it necessary to reroute the Shawsheen River to go under the railroad stone arch bridge that connected the Lowell Junction and Ballardvale Stations. This caused the creation of what now is considered the Ballardvale flats, in the area where Allen's Brook empties into the river.



Painted Turtle Middlesex Canal Aqueduct Ballardvale Dam, Andover Shawshine House, Bedford Bay Circuit Trail Winter on the Shawsheen



Shawsheen River Recreational Map

Legend:

- Hiking and Biking Trails
- Shawsheen River
- Tributary Streams
- Shawsheen River Watershed
- Lakes and Ponds
- River Access Point
- Hazard
- Bike Trail
- Hiking Trail
- Swimming
- Canoe Access
- Fishing
- Portage

Access
<http://www.shawsheen.org/recmap>
 for more details, a printable map, photos of the river and the canoe access points.

Water Flow and Quality in the Shawsheen:

Water flow in the Shawsheen is extremely variable and river conditions change significantly following rainfall events. Development in the watershed has changed the hydraulics such that rainfall rapidly flows from impervious surfaces making the river very flashy. Flooding is a major concern in the Shawsheen and its larger tributaries. In addition to these issues are water quality concerns from stormwater runoff. Bacteria from pet waste, illicit discharges to stormwater systems, failing septic systems and periodic sewerline breaks are constant sources of bacteria. For more details on water quality in the Shawsheen contact Bill Dunn, Watershed Team Leader, EOEa or access the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report for the Shawsheen River at <http://www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/wm/files/shawsheen.doc>.

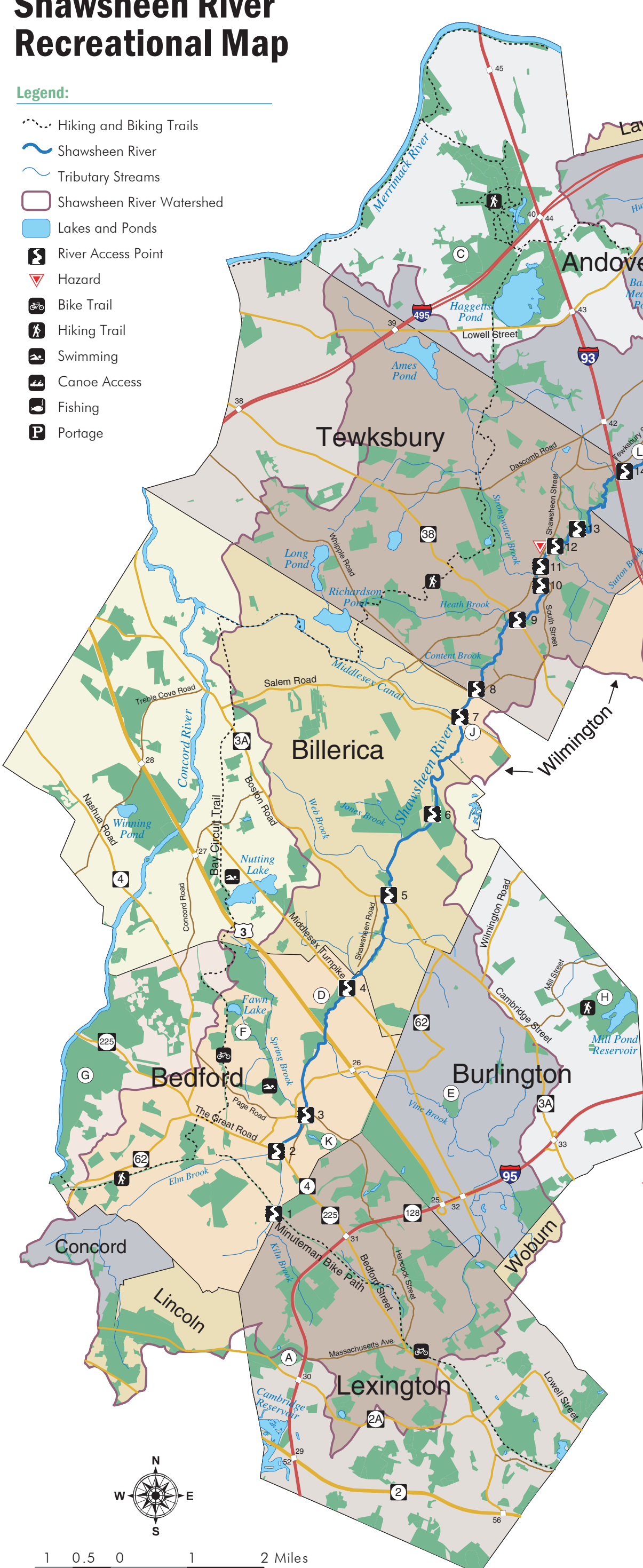
Real-time water level data for the Shawsheen River are available at http://mass1.er.usgs.gov/rt-cgi/gen_stn_pg?station=01100600. See the interactive recreational map at <http://www.shawsheen.org/recmap> for more information on interpreting water levels and how this data will affect your canoe trip.

Additional information regarding parks, conservation areas, and historical sites lettered A-L can be found on the reverse side of this brochure.

River Access Points

- High Suitability for Access
- Moderate Suitability for Access
- Low Suitability for Access

- 1. Wiggins Ave and Summer Street, Bedford:** Lat: 42.473901, Long: -71.263928, off-street parking available for up to 5 cars. This portion of the river is very shallow, and thus not frequently used.
- 2. Great Road, Bedford:** Lat: 42.48664, Long: -71.261863, parking is available for up to 5 cars. Improved access is planned for the future.
- 3. Page Road, Bedford:** Lat: 42.493481, Long: -71.256487, parking is available for up to 3 cars. Improved access is planned for the future.
- 4. Middlesex Turnpike, Bedford:** Lat: 42.51797, Long: -71.245024, parking is available for up to 2 cars about 100 yards northwest of the bridge, in front of the Shawsheen Conservation Area sign. There is a very long carry, busy road and guard rails and cables make for difficult access to the river. This is a very scenic area, but there is noise pollution from the road and a nearby shooting range. However, there is good fishing and a hiking trail.
- 5. Boston Road (Route 3A) by Akeson Field, Billerica:** Lat: 42.535511, Long: -71.232927, parking usually available in large business lot directly off the street. This access point, officially designated by Billerica Town Park, is also a good fishing point. This is the start of Canoe Trip D (see reverse for more information). Portage may be necessary at the Route 3A bridge in moderate to high water.
- 6. Churchill Street and Buckingham Drive, Billerica:** Lat: 42.54992, Long: -71.222831, parking available for up to 5 cars on Buckingham Drive, there is a long carry (100 yards). A muddy, low slope makes for an easy put-in here.
- 7. Grace Drive, Wilmington:** Lat: 42.569253, Long: -71.214581, parking is available for up to 5 cars on this quiet, residential cul-de-sac, and it's about 40 yards to the river down a path.
- 8. Whipple Road, Billerica:** Lat: 42.573228, Long: -71.211818, parking is available for up to 2 cars off the road and on the left side of the river. There are also some potential access points across the street. In high water, this low bridge may be impassable. Portage 50 yards upstream on the left.
- 9. Main Street (Route #38), Tewksbury:** Lat: 42.587439, Long: -71.199265, plenty of parking in the Knights of Columbus parking lot. This is one of the 3 most popular access points. This is the start of Canoe Trip C and the end of Canoe Trip D (see reverse for more information).
- 10. Bridge Street, Tewksbury:** Lat: 42.594557, Long: -71.195328, not used very often. This is more of a fishing spot than a canoe access point.
- 11. Shawsheen Street, opposite Mohawk Drive, Tewksbury:** Lat: 42.595802, Long: -71.19543, dirt parking is available for up to 6 cars about 20 yards from the river. This is one of the 3 most popular access points and the start of Canoe Trip B (see reverse for more information).
- 12. Mill Street, Tewksbury:** Lat: 42.599804, Long: -71.192865, parking available for up to 2 cars along street, not usually used as a canoe access point. This is better used as a fishing area. There is a hazardous drop-off just before a set of square culverts and it may be necessary to portage left. In addition, fifty yards past the culverts there is a small island at an old mill site. The best passage is on the right side of the island.
- 13. Shawsheen Street opposite Lowe Street, Tewksbury:** Lat: 42.602963, Long: -71.191648, This access point leads to the footbridge over the Shawsheen, which traces an old railroad bed.
- 14. Lowell Junction Road, Andover:** Lat: 42.615559, Long: -71.172872, parking is limited now, but more improvements are planned for the future. This access point is located in a scenic park with picnic benches. It is currently being redesigned as park/river access by the town of Andover. End of Canoe Trip B (see reverse for more information).
- 15. River Street, Andover:** Lat: 42.620725, Long: -71.156216, parking available for up to 3 cars along River Street. This access point is located in an area known as the flats. It is commonly used by fishermen with small motor boats to access the ponding above Ballardvale Dam.
- 16. Ballardvale Mill Pond, Andover:** Lat: 42.626857, Long: -71.157793, parking available in a private lot alongside the river on weekends only. This is one of the three most popular access points. There is an easy, scenic place to take out just below the Ballardvale Dam, which is intact and cannot be canoed. To continue on, portage 1/4 mile down Dale Street.
- 17. Dale Street, Andover:** Lat: 42.630365, Long: -71.157879, room for up to 10 cars to park at the end of the dirt road. There is a steep entry. Adjacent to the access point, there is a hiking trail that runs along the river from Ballardvale to the Shawsheen Reservation, about 2 miles long. Start of Canoe Trip A (see reverse for more information).
- 18. Abbott Bridge Drive and Central Street, Andover:** Lat: 42.6473, Long: -71.150889, room for up to 6 cars to park along Abbott Bridge Drive, next to "don't park on grass" signs. There is a 50 yard carry. This stretch of river has about 1/4 mile of quickwater and can be bumpy in low to moderate water. End of Canoe Trip A (see reverse for more information).
- 19. Red Rocks Dam, Andover:** Take out just above the rocks on the right bank and bring the canoe down over them to where you can easily put in again below the "dam". The portage here is short (20 yards) but strenuous. **CAUTION, DO NOT PADDLE!**
- 20. Essex Street Bridge, Andover:** There is a low hanging pipe under this bridge, which may make it necessary to portage in moderate to high water.
- 21. Stevens Street, Andover:** Lat: 42.661564, Long: -71.145878, no public or street parking is available, but weekend parking is available in the small lot across from the post office. This is the last chance to take out before the Marland Dam, and the last access point before Lawrence. The stretch of river between the Marland Dam and the Balmoral Dam is dangerous and there are no suitable take out points before the Balmoral Dam.
- 22. North Main Street Bridge, Andover:** There are low bridge supports here. Use caution in high water.
- 23. Balmoral Step Dam, Andover:** This is an extreme hazard, as the dam is an arched concrete step dam with high walls on both sides that prevent portaging. **CAUTION, DO NOT PADDLE!**
- 24. Breached Dam, Andover:** Portage here is necessary in high water conditions.
- 25. Turnpike Street (Route 114), Lawrence:** Lat: 42.685168, Long: -71.138578. Plenty of public parking is available. This spot can be used for hiking access to Den Rock Park.
- 26. Greene Street, North Andover:** Lat: 42.692458, Long: -71.137151, there is plenty of parking, improved access is planned for the future. There is access to a hiking trail here that runs from Route 114 to Greene Street. Watch out for abutments from Poor's Bridge. The best passage is on the right side, or you can portage right.
- 27. Shawsheen Road at Costello Park, Lawrence:** Lat: 42.698632, Long: -71.146056, parking available for up to 6 cars off the street, there is a long carry (100 yards) around tennis courts. Put in here for access to the Merrimack River. About 15 yards from the river is the Shawsheen River Bike Trail in Costello Park.
- 28. Merrimack Street, Lawrence:** Lat: 42.703262, Long: -71.142531, parking available in a private lot across from 360 Merrimack Street, with ample parking on weekends, but low suitability for access due to moderately steep, overgrown bank. Use this spot to access Merrimack River, but take caution at the culverts. You will enter a long tunnel, where there is plenty of headroom except in high water conditions. In low water conditions, the tunnel may be clogged with branches.



Vegetated Riparian Areas in the Shawsheen help provide flood control:

Vegetated riparian areas help reduce the volume of floodwaters by increasing the opportunity for water to be retained and absorbed by vegetation. As the water flows over the floodplain, it is absorbed by the soil and slowed vegetation in its path. Riparian areas thus provide natural flood control by reducing the volume of water that would otherwise be discharged into streams and rivers (Russell Cohen, Fact Sheet #1, Riverways Program, Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife Quick Facts: <http://www.state.ma.us/dfwle/River/rivstoc.htm>)