

**Kayak Rentals**



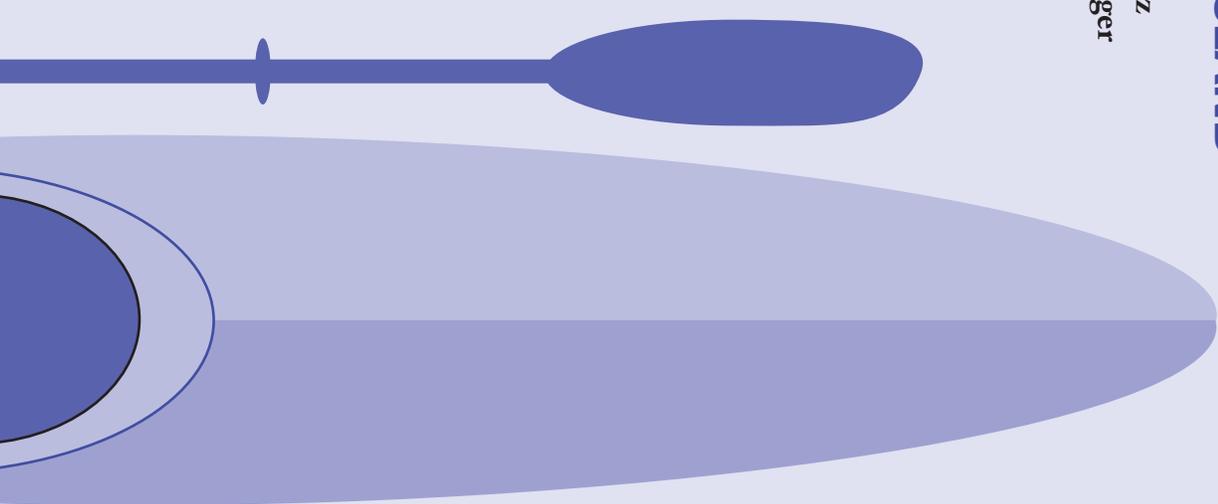
**Salt Ponds Coalition**  
[www.saltpondscodition.org](http://www.saltpondscodition.org)



# KAYAKER'S GUIDE

**A KAYAKER'S GUIDETO  
THE COASTAL SALT PONDS  
OF SOUTH COUNTY,  
RHODE ISLAND**

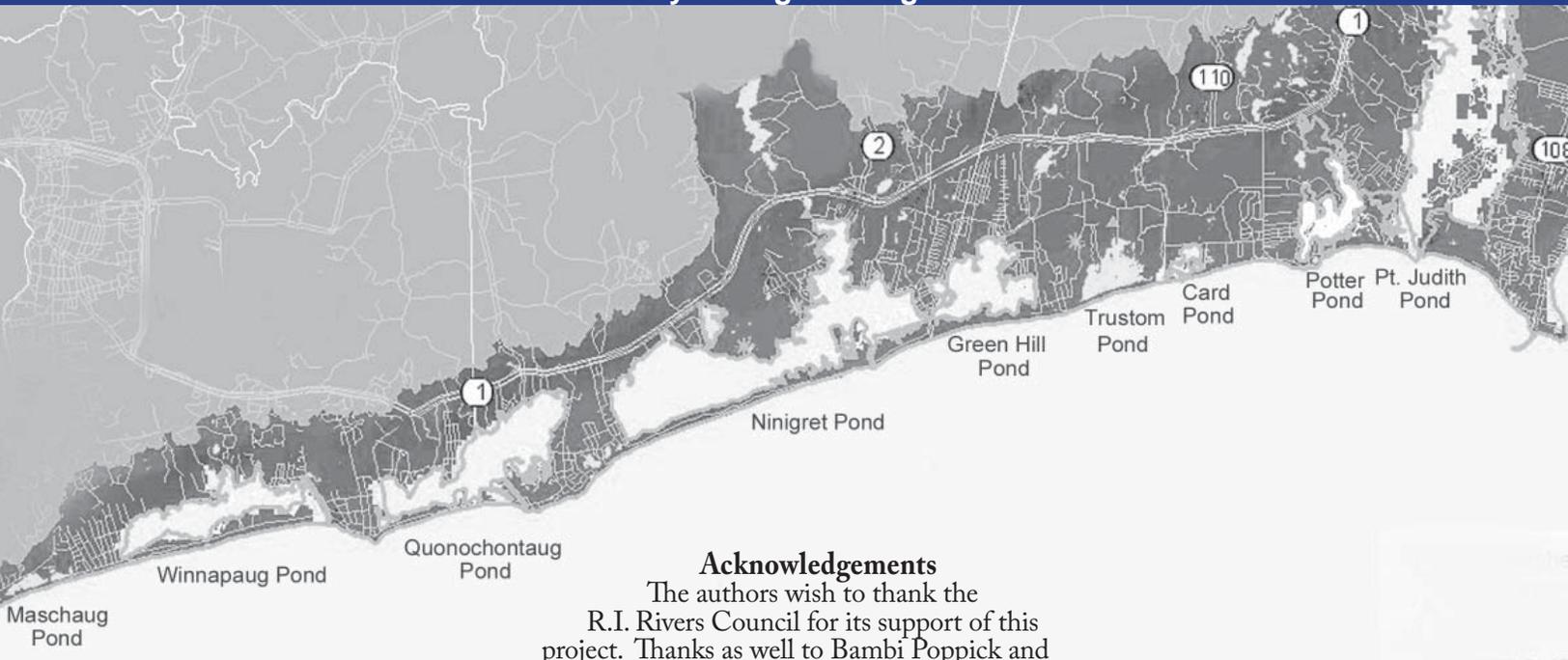
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**Salt Ponds Coalition**  
*Stewards for the Coastal Environment*

# South County Salt Ponds

Westerly through Narragansett



## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

The salt ponds are a string of coastal lagoon estuaries formed after the recession of the glaciers 12,000 years ago. Piled sediment called glacial till formed the rocky ridge called the moraine (running along what is today Route One). Irregularities along the coastline were formed by the deposit of the glaciers, which form peninsula-shaped outcroppings, which are now known as Point Judith, Matunuck, Green Hill, Charlestown Beach, Quonochontaug, Weekapaug and Misquamicut.

Sand from the ocean floor was carried along by the waves and deposited along these peninsula-like areas and shoreline. Energy from the wave action scuffed-up the sand and held it in suspension, and as waves broke, sand settled out creating beach areas. Long-shore currents deposited sand across the outcroppings forming sand bars, which ultimately separated the salt ponds from Block Island Sound.

Today, most areas of the salt ponds are protected by the dunes of the barrier beaches, making them gentle water-

ways of natural beauty, ideal for relaxed paddling enjoyment.

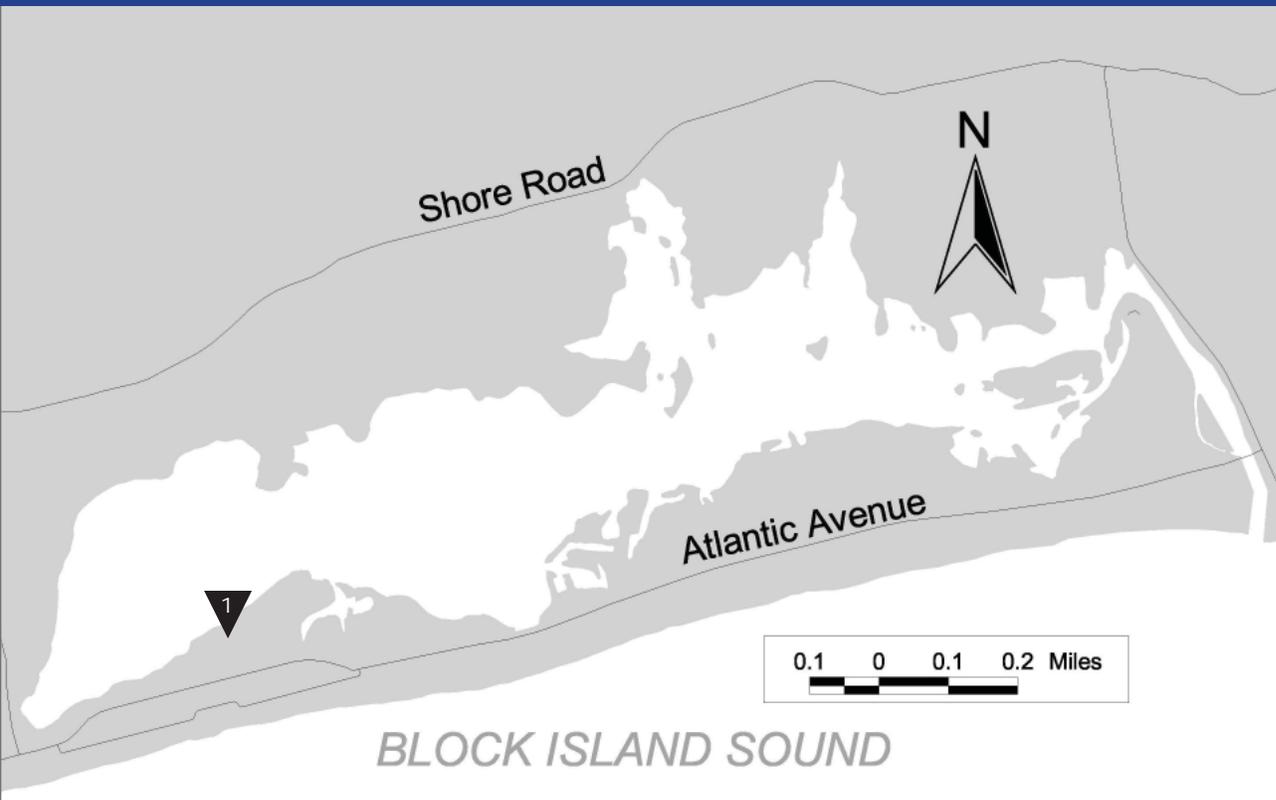
## Safety

Like every outdoor activity, proper preparation and safety are the key components of an enjoyable outing. Please consider the following precautions.

- Always wear a proper life saving device and visible colors
- Check the weather forecast. The ponds can get rough
- Dress for the weather
  - Sun block, hat, sun glasses
  - Rain gear, dry clothes, suitable insulation layers
- Don't forget water and energy food
- Insect repellent
- Be sure your craft is in good condition
- Know your capabilities - even on a calm day wakes from large power boats can really rock a kayak
- Travel with a buddy or group
- Carry a cell phone and/or a portable VHF radio
- Take care around the breachways. Currents intensify in these areas and can pull a kayaker out to sea. Be particularly cautious venturing into sections that are lined by stone walls - pulling over and getting out becomes problematic in these areas. Surging water can compromise stability and boating traffic can also be concentrated in these passages.
- Paddling at night or in cold weather requires greater planning and preparation
  - File a float plan
  - Proper lighting is required
  - Carry a compass & charts
  - Exposure equipment is a must
- Keep an eye on where you put in. It's easy to lose track of where you left the car when paddling on the larger ponds.

# Winnapaug Pond

Westerly



## Fast Facts:

Length - 2.4 miles

Perimeter - 6.5 miles  
paddle

Acres - 476

Boating traffic - moderate

## Launch Sites:

State Beach -   
right-of-way  
(free off season)

### Winnapaug Pond, Westerly, RI.

Winnapaug, known as Brightman Pond by the locals, is one of the smallest and shallowest of the breached salt ponds. It is located behind the Misquamicut barrier beach, which is highly developed. Set back from the houses, restaurants and amusements that line the barrier along Atlantic Beach is a beautiful salt pond rimmed with salt-marsh along the south shore. Most of the northwestern end of the pond is held in trust by a variety of land trusts and conservation groups. For generations, this was the site of the Winnapaug Day Camp, where many learned to swim, sail and appreciate the salt pond ecosystem.

Midway down the pond is the state's third largest aquaculture farm. Oysters, quahaugs and scallops are cultivated there. Passing kayakers can get a free tour if the owner is on site. There are many small islands to cruise around

and shallows where you can hop out and stretch you legs.

Winnapaug Pond is shallow with many sand bars that can trip up motor boats and sailboats. Because of this, you are less likely to encounter heavy boating traffic than you might in the other ponds. It is, however, one of the few salt ponds to permit personal watercraft, so keep an eye (and ear) open to avoid speeders. Most of the pond has gentler currents, but the tides and currents in the breachway should be handled with caution - particularly south of the bridge where the channel is lined with rock walls on both sides and the currents accelerate.

#### Access:

The only public access to the pond is down a path to a state owned, but not developed clearing across Atlantic Avenue from Misquamicut Beach. Kayaks may be dropped off on the pond side of the street for launch, but all parking must be done at the State Beach Lot. State Beach pass or day parking is required during the beach season, otherwise parking is free. Off-season (Labor Day through Memorial Day weekend) parking is allowed at the old Westerly Town Beach north lot, but unlikely during the busy beach season. Town parking passes will be required.

#### Contact Information:

Westerly Police 401-596-5299

DEM Marine Patrol 1-800-498-1336

Westerly Recreation 348-2628

DEM Burlingame Headquarters  
322-7337

# Quonochontaug Pond

Westerly and Charlestown



## Fast Facts:

Length - 2.6 miles  
Perimeter - 7.7 miles  
paddle  
Acres - 746  
Boating traffic - moderate

## Launch Sites:

Free state launch **1**

## Quonochontaug Pond, Westerly and Charlestown, RI.

Quonnie Pond, as it is affectionately known, is a mostly pristine coastal lagoon shared by the Town of Charlestown (eastern) and the Town of Westerly. Quonnie contains a variety of pleasures for kayakers.

The Quonochontaug Breachway is a prime fishing area for blues and striped bass. The Quonnie saltmarsh immediately to the east of the breachway contains a maze of channels from which you can get up close and personal with a great variety of waterfowl and shore birds that seasonally migrate through this important corridor of the Atlantic Flyway. Just west of the breachway is a shallow channel which leads to the remains of the U.S. Life Boat station, that was destroyed by the Hurricane of '38. This also is a great pullout for a refreshing ocean swim a few steps away. Quonnie also has an expansive

barrier beach to the south which can be accessed via paths through the dunes. The beach was once lined with houses and the original Weekapaug Inn, but after the '38 hurricane building was curtailed and now practically all of the barrier beach is owned by private land trusts and conservation interests.

At the far western end of the pond is the lovely community of Weekapaug, with "Judges Rock" sitting prominently in front of the Weekapaug Inn. Sightseers will enjoy looking at the beautiful Victorian summer cottages of a bygone era. Along the northern shore are the summer colonies of Haversham, Shelter Harbor and Shady Harbor. The rock formation in front of Shady Harbor is appropriately named "Picnic Rock".

Kayakers are urged to use extreme caution in the breachway area. It is advisable after launching to paddle north

to the reduced current. Caution should be maintained to avoid larger boats transiting the area. Most of the rocks are either clearly visible or marked, otherwise Quonnie is a relaxing and picturesque paddle.

### Access:

Public access is limited to the State-run Quonochontaug Breachway at the end of West Beach Road. Parking is free but space may be limited due to competition with pleasure boaters. Most of the more convenient access points are restricted for use by the various neighborhood associations and Fire Districts.

### Contact Information:

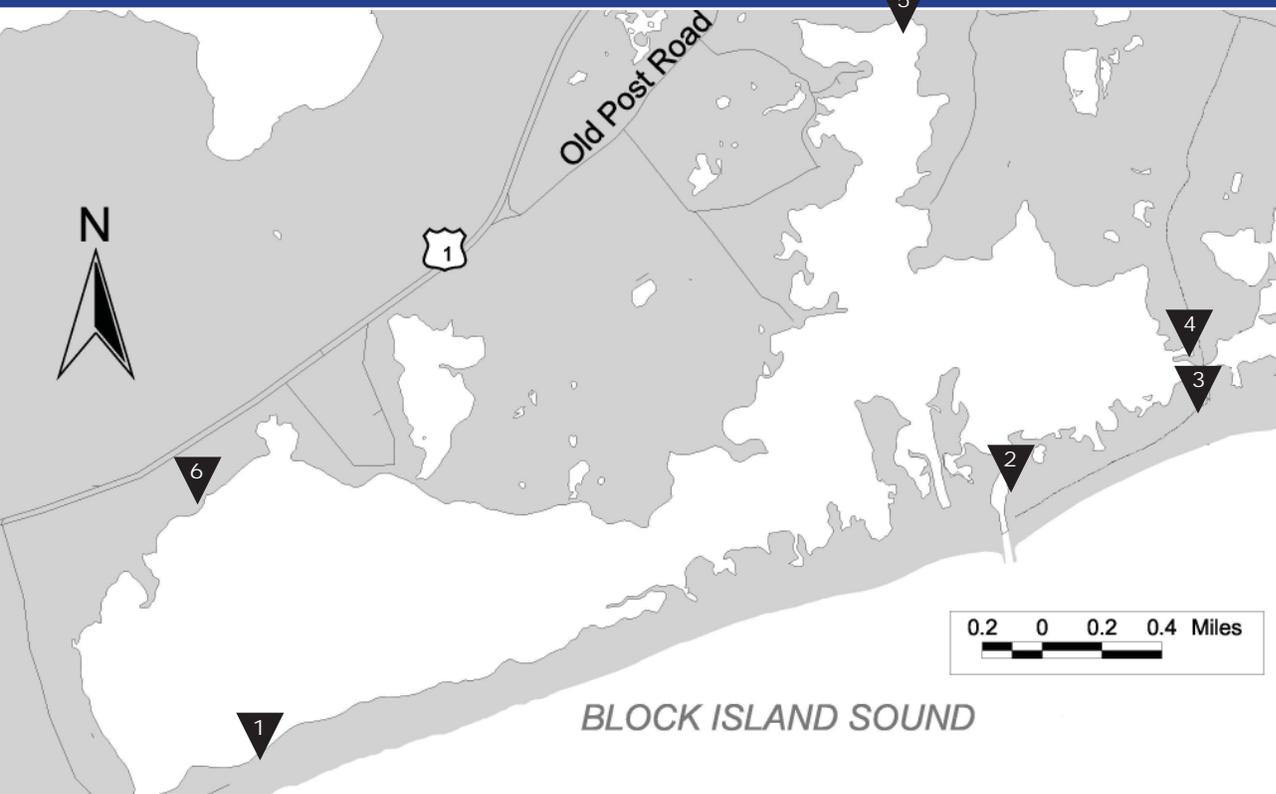
Charlestown Harbormaster  
401-364-6610 (VHF Ch 16)

DEM Marine Patrol 1-800-498- 1336

Westerly Police 401-596-5299

# Ninigret Pond

Charlestown



## Fast Facts:

Length - 3.75 miles

Parimeter - 12.5 miles  
paddle

Acres - 1,600

Boating traffic - Heavier

## Launch Sites:

- Ninigret conservation area 1
- Charlestown breachway 2
- Town beach 3
- Kayak center 4
- Ocean House 5
- Lavin's Landing 6

## Ninigret Pond, Charlestown, RI.

Also known as Charlestown Pond, this 1600-acre coastal lagoon is located entirely within the Town of Charlestown, and is South County's largest salt pond. A small channel under the Creek Bridge connects Ninigret to Green Hill Pond in South Kingstown. The pond is bordered on the south by barrier beaches, to the west by Quonochontaug, and on the east by Charlestown Beach. The Charlestown Breachway in the southeastern end connects the pond with Block Island Sound.

Ninigret Pond offers kayakers a multitude of opportunities for exploring, fly-fishing and just paddling along its sheltered waters. Areas around the breachway channel are popular with anglers fishing for striped bass and bluefish on light tackle. The pristine barrier beaches along the south shore provide miles of undisturbed sandy beach for walking, swimming or sightseeing. Practically all of the barrier beach is

designated as conservation area for passive recreation. The western end is the Ninigret Conservation Area, controlled by the R.I. Department of Environmental Management. The areas further east are part of the Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also controls over 600 acres on the north shore of the pond. Refuge property on both sides of the pond are spectacular sites for birding.

Except for a few well marked rocks at "the Narrows", the pond is relatively safe for kayaking. The south shore area is very shallow. Kayakers are advised to keep away from the Breachway area, which has swift tidal currents and congestion from pleasure boaters.

## Access:

There are no free public access areas on Ninigret Pond.

- State Beach passes or day parking is required both at the Ninigret Conservation Area (East Beach Road) and Charlestown Breachway D.E.M. facilities (Charlestown Beach Road)
- Town Beach parking fees are required for the launch behind the Town Beach Lot on Charlestown Beach Road
- Pay to park and launch at Ocean House Marina, Shelter Cove Marina and Lavin's Landing Marina.

## Contact Information:

Charlestown Harbormaster  
401-364-6610 (VHF Ch 16)

D.E.M. Burlingame Park  
401-322-8910

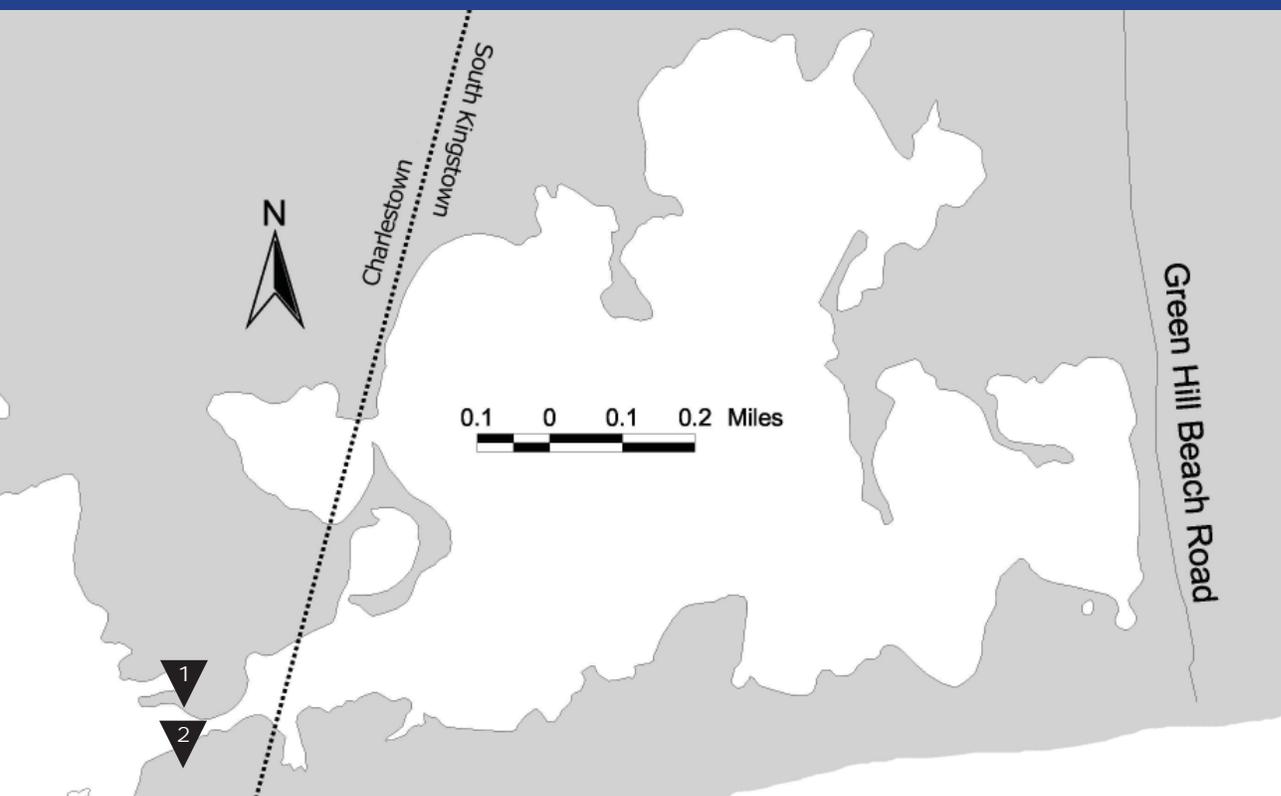
U.S.F.W.S. Kettle Pond Center  
401-364-9124

D.E.M. Marine Patrol 1-800-498-1336

D.E.M. Burlingame Headquarters  
401-322-7337

# Green Hill Pond

## Charlestown and South Kingstown



### Fast Facts:

Length - 1.3 miles  
Perimeter - 6 miles  
paddle  
Acres - 420  
Boating traffic - Light

### Launch Sites:

Kayak Center **1**  
Town beach **2**

### Green Hill Pond, South Kingstown, R.I.

Green Hill Pond is a 439-acre enclosed lagoon located principally in South Kingstown, although access is in Charlestown. Green Hill Pond is located between the coastal communities of Ocean Ridge (Charlestown) and Green Hill (South Kingstown). It connects with Ninigret Pond through a narrow, shallow channel under the Creek Bridge.

Green Hill Pond is quite shallow with many small islands, rocky outcroppings and interesting creeks. It is a combination of wooded areas and summer colonies along the shore. It is bordered along the south by a barrier beach, much of it fringed by extensive salt marshes, providing a great opportunity for birding.

Due to its enclosed nature, it is usually calm and easy to paddle. Caution should be taken traveling under the Creek Bridge during changing tides.

#### Access:

Although public access is limited along the pond, there are several private rights of way. The best launch area is behind the Charlestown Beach parking lot where a fee is charged "in-season". Shelter Cove Marina and the Kayak Centre across the creek have pay to launch and park.

You enter Green Hill Pond by a short paddle under the Creek Bridge.

#### Contact Information:

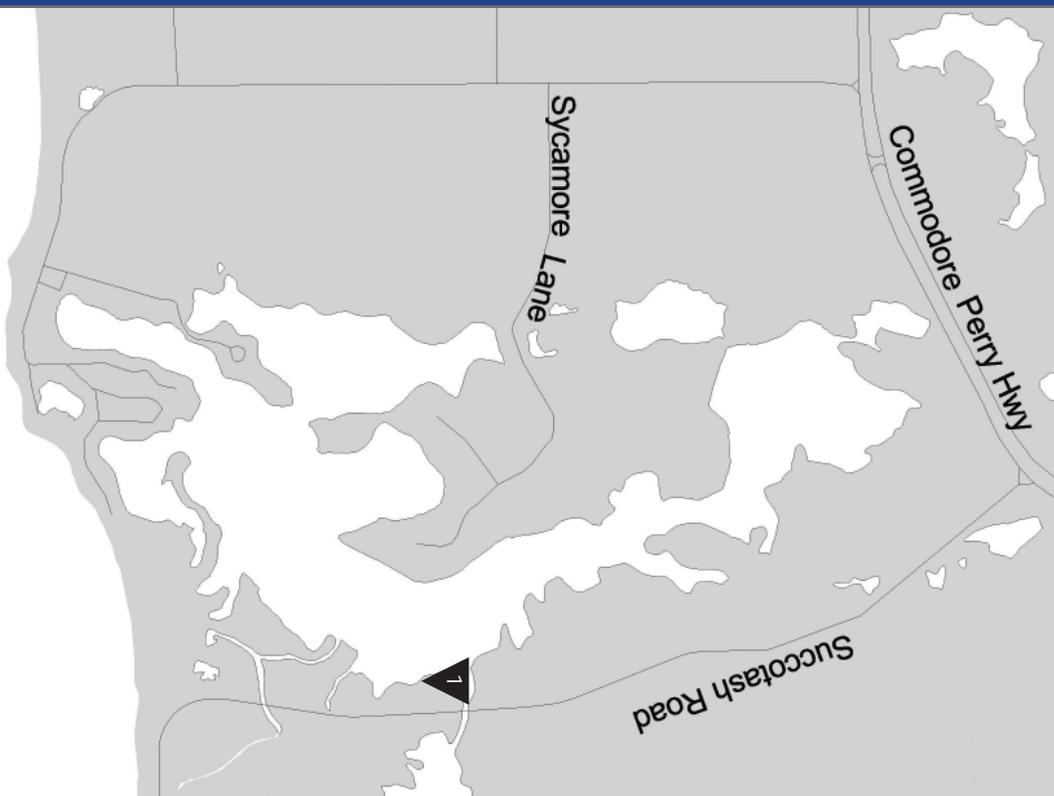
D.E.M. Marine Patrol 800-498-1336

# Potter Pond

South Kingston



BLOCK ISLAND SOUND



## Fast Facts:

Length - 1.6 miles

Parimeter - 6.3 miles  
paddle

Acres - 322

Boating traffic - Light

## Launch Sites:

Wakamo Park

1

## Potter Pond, South Kingston, RI

Potter Pond is accessible through a channel running from Snug Harbor under the Succotash Road Bridge. Tidal current under the bridge and into the pond is extremely strong; no place for a novice. Potter Pond is a picturesque place with a contrast of beautiful woodlands and several exclusive homes tucked in along the pond. The foliage in

the upper pond is particularly beautiful in the Spring and Fall. The lower end of the pond has several coves such as Segar and Sycamore to explore.

Potter Pond is a gentle paddle. Currents in the Potter Pond Channel should be avoided

### Access:

The best access to Potter Pond is Wakamo Park (697 Succotash Road), which provides pay parking and a safe access to Potter Pond.

### Contact Information:

South Kingstown Harbormaster  
783-3321, Emergency 783-3341

# Point Judith Pond

## South Kingston and Narragansett



### Fast Facts:

- Length - 3.5 miles
- Parimeter - 10 miles paddle
- Acres - 1500
- Boating traffic - Heavy

### Launch Sites:

- Marina Park 1
- Long Cove 2
- Snug Harbor 3
- Galilee launch 4

### Point Judith Pond, South Kingston, RI

Point Judith Pond, the second largest salt pond in South County, is actually the Saugatucket River estuary, where the river empties into the sea. The state's largest fishing port, Galilee, forms the mouth of the estuary.

The upper estuary is more conducive to kayaking since there is less large boat traffic. Traveling along the upper pond you can pass numerous marinas and restaurants. Paddling south, one passes Long Cove, Billington Cove and Whaley's Pots making for a pristine paddle beside secluded wetlands and forested shorelines. You can pass several small islands along the way, some of which have the remains of small fishing shanties from a past era.

Harbor Island is on the eastern shore. A careful passage by Ram Point provides access to Champlin Cove and East Pond. East Pond is separated from the main pond by Jonathan Island and Great Island. It extends to Bluff Hill Cove, and the state launch ramp. One nice "trail" would be to launch at Marina Park and haul out at the State ramp.

Along the western basin kayakers pass large wooded areas around Spring Brook Cove. South of Crown Point is Camp Fuller, a YMCA camp enjoyed by generations of young people. To the

east of the Camp are three islands, Beach, Plato and Gardiner's Islands. Each provides a nice spot to enjoy a picnic and a cool swim. Along the east side of the islands are Harbor Island and Jonathan Island. The state's largest aquaculture operation inhabits seven acres. "Moonstone oysters" as well as quahaugs and bay scallops are grown there in submersed cages. If you see the workers cleaning cages, you might ask for a tour.

South of Camp Fuller narrows, the pond widens. Larger boats pass along a narrow and well-marked navigation channel. East of the channel is very shallow and popular for shellfishermen. Kayakers are advised to avoid the channel and stick to the shallow less trafficked area. The west shoreline becomes more developed as you go south from Jerry Brown Farm and High Point to Snug Harbor. From this area south, Kayakers are advised to avoid busy boat traffic and wakes. Tidal current is very strong from this point on.

The eastern shore along Great Island provides a safer kayak trip. South of Great Island is the Great Island channel and just under the bridge is the state launch ramp. Kayakers should avoid the Jerusalem and Galilee port areas due to strong currents and large vessels. The upper pond make for a more peaceful paddle.

### Access:

- The northern part of the pond is accessed by the town launching facility at Marina Park, with free parking and easy highway access.
- Pay to park access is available at the end of Pond Street at Billington Cove Marina and also Long Cove Campground, off Route 108.
- The town also has a launch without parking at the end of Gooseberry Road in Snug Harbor. In addition, many of the marinas in Snug Harbor may let you park.
- The State has a free public launch in Galilee. (turn north off the Escape Road, before Great Island Bridge)

### Contact Information:

South Kingstown Harbormaster  
783-3321, Emergency 783-3341

Narragansett Harbormaster 789-1091,  
Emergency 789-1011