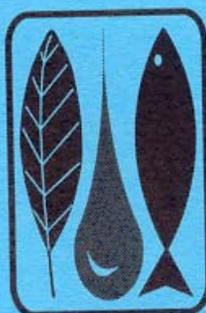


NSRWA Canoe and Kayak Guide

2nd edition, 1997

to:

**North River
South River
Indian Head River**



NSRWA

**The North and South Rivers
Watershed Association, Inc.**

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The Watershed Association

The North and South Rivers Watershed Association is dedicated to the preservation and protection of the river system and the open spaces bordering our rivers and streams. Because the people who care about the rivers and the land are those who know them best, the NSRWA promotes access and recreation on all of the rivers, tributaries, and ponds in the watershed. When one visits these special places, one becomes attached to these waters and the land. Attachment leads to caring, and caring leads to protecting. Please join us on the rivers.

BEFORE YOU GO....

Take Care of the Resources

Our wetland habitats are extremely important for plant and animal wildlife. They are among the most sensitive resources that exist in the natural environment. Go beyond the adage “take only photographs, leave only footprints” and carry out all trash – your and others. Please respect the private lands that surround many of our waterways.

Safety on the Water

1. **Wear your PFD.** The U.S. Coast Guard requires that a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) be carried in all canoes and kayaks for each person in the boat. During the winter season (from October to May), everyone must wear a PFD. A child must wear one at all times. As of May 1995, floatation cushions do not qualify as a regulation PFD.
2. **Be flexible.** In the name of safety, be ready to change plans. If it is blowing a gale, find a protected pond or go hiking instead.
3. **Bring the right stuff.**

| | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| PFD (and make sure you wear it!) | Pump or bailer tied to boat | Knife |
| Drinking water | First aid kit | Tow rope |
| Sun protection (hat, sunglasses, sunscreen) | Appropriate clothing for the weather (dress for getting wet) | Waterproof flashlight and matches |
| Whistle | Self rescue apparatus | Compass |
| Secure buoyancy (fore and aft) | Flare pack in pocket or accessible | Chart and tide tables |
| food and drink | Spare paddle (must be accessible) | A sense of adventure! |

4. **Be aware.** Watch out for poison ivy, poison sumac, and ticks. BE AWARE OF HUNTING SEASON.
5. **Time it right.** Especially in the tidal waters of the North and South rivers, be aware of the direction of the tide and the differences in the time of high tides.

Substation Estimates from Boston (high tide)

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Damon's Point | add 20 minutes |
| Union Street | add 1 to 1.5 hours |
| Route 3 Bridge | add 2 hours |
| Hanover Canoe Launch | add 3 to 3.5 hours |
| Julian Street | add 45 minutes |
| Willow Street | add 1 to 2 hours |

Be aware of distances between rest areas and take-out points:

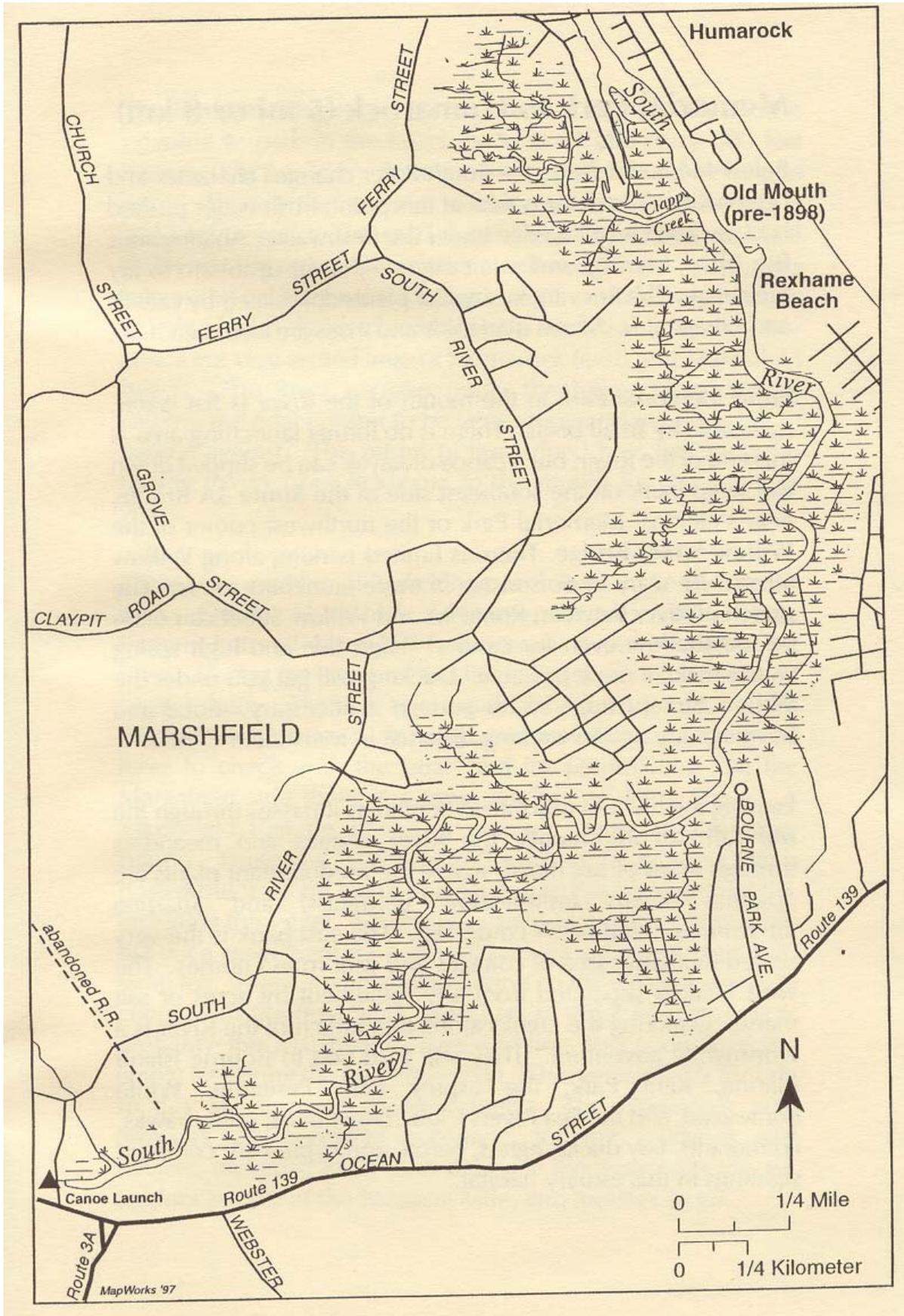
| | |
|---|--------------|
| Mouth of Herring Brook to 3A Bridge | 1 1/8 miles |
| 3A Bridge to Union Street | 2 5/8 miles |
| Union Street to Blueberry Island | 3 miles |
| Blueberry Island to Pembroke Canoe Launch | 3 miles |
| Blueberry Island to Hanover Canoe Launch | 5 5/8 miles |
| Union Street to Hanover Canoe Launch | 8 5/8 miles |
| North River Mouth to Hanover Launch | 12 3/8 miles |
| South River Origin to Willow Street | 6 miles |
| Willow Street to Town Landing | 5 miles |
| Town Landing to Mouth | 3 miles |

GUIDE TO THE SOUTH RIVER

The South River flows 14 miles from its origin in Duxbury to its mouth in Scituate, presenting three very distinct sections: Origin to Memorial Park, Memorial Park to Humarock, and Humarock to the Mouth.

SOUTH RIVER: Origin to Memorial Park (6mi or 9.6 km)

The river rises somewhat mysteriously from swamps and ponds in the northwest corner of Duxbury. Many of us see its origin when we whiz by, heading south on Route 3, just past the Route 14 exit, and look to the west at a large unnamed swamp surrounded by Loring's cranberry bogs. The River services other bogs as it works its way to the South River Reservoir off Congress Street. Passing through some small ponds and more acres of cranberry bogs, it flows into another large swamp where it is joined by Phillips Brook from the west and Harlow Brook from the east. The River, meandering, narrow and swampy, passes under River Street and Route 3, heading for Marshfield. Two dams stop the River's flow to form Chandler's Pond. The River leaves Chandler's Pond in two branches, passes under Route 129, and reunites as it is joined by Furnace Brook, the South River's largest tributary. The two branches and Furnace Brook come into **Veterans' Memorial Park** one river. Above this point there is no regular canoeing or kayaking that we know of. A few old-timers and avid fisherman indicate that they have canod the waters of Chandler's Pond and above in search of fishing grounds. There is no launching area at Chandler's Pond.



SOUTH RIVER: Memorial Park to Humarock (5 mi or 8 km)

Below Memorial Park, the South River changes character and personality. The River is tidal at this point, fresh water pushed back by a salt water wedge under the freshwater. Anadromous fish (shad, herring) and smelt migrate this far upstream to lay their eggs. The flora are freshwater plants dominated by cattails and Phragmites. Marsh marigolds and irises are also seen here.

From Memorial Park to the mouth of the river is flat water, navigable by small boats. There is no formal launching area at this end of the River, but a canoe or kayak can be slipped down the steep bank on the southeast side of the **Route 3A Bridge**, near Veterans' Memorial Park or the northwest corner of the **Willow Street Bridge**. There is limited parking along Willow Street. Be wary of poison ivy in these launching areas. The stretch of River between Route 3A and Willow Street can often be too shallow even for canoes. High tide and high spring waters make it more passable. Ducking will get you under the Willow Street Bridge so no postage is necessary. Food and beverage are within walking distance in Marshfield Center.

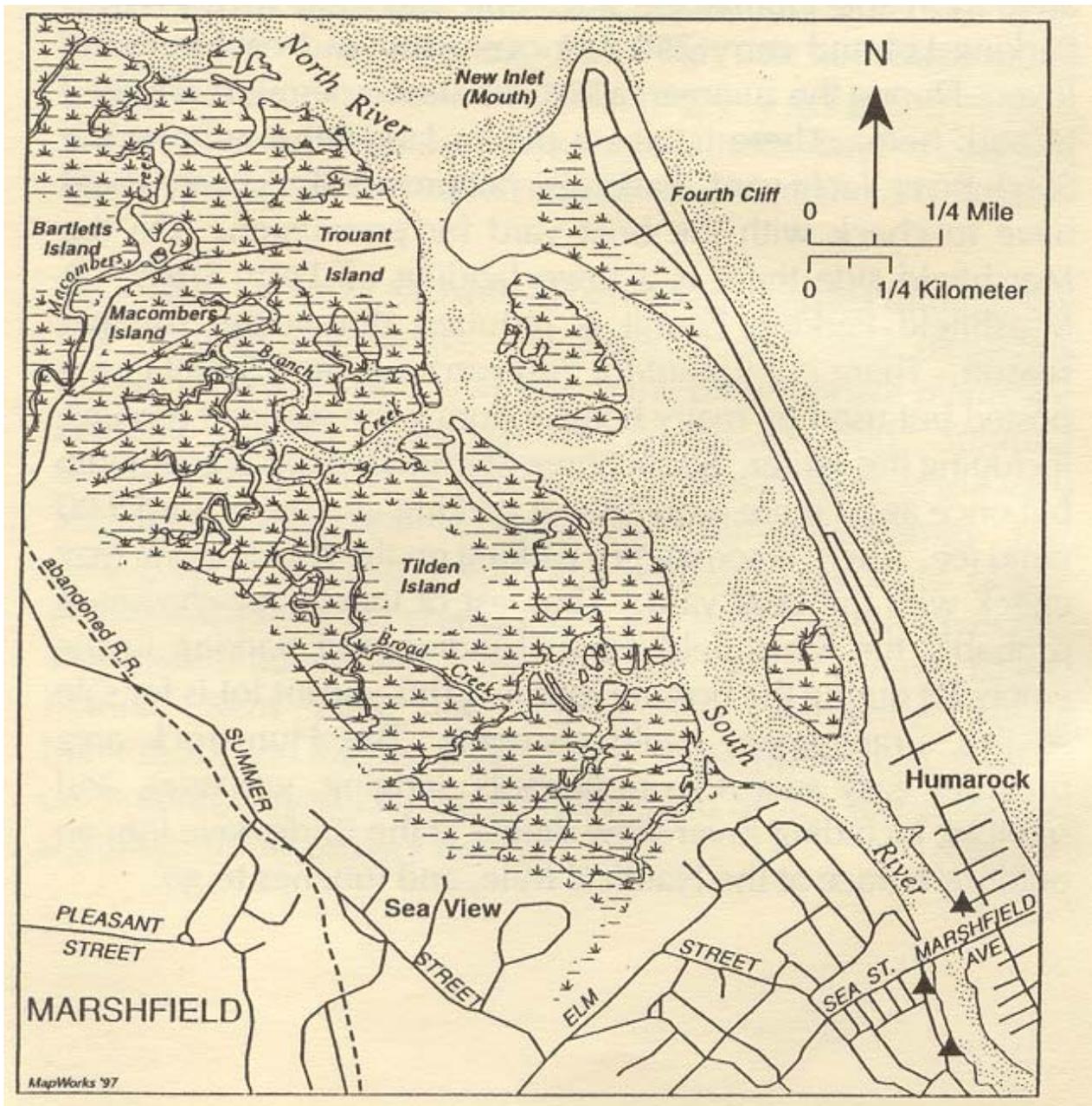
Leaving the town of Marshfield behind as it passes through the **old railroad abutments**, the River widens and meanders through acres of salt marsh where the predominant plants are *Spartina patens* (saltmeadow cordgrass) and *Spartina alterniflora* (Saltmarsh cordgrass). The east bank is the very settled Rexhame area of cottages and year-round homes. The west bank is separated from any settlement by acres of salt marsh. Exploring the creeks along this stretch of the River is a worthwhile adventure. They will lead you to Bourne Island Marina, Kent Park, the osprey nest, Peregrine White homestead, and the Sea Rivers Club. Shore birds, gulls, hawks, cormorants, bay ducks, egrets, heron, and osprey are common sightings in this estuary habitat.

The **Rexhame Dunes** are not an intended launch site, but it is possible to park in the beach parking lot and carry 600 feet over sand to the River. A carrier with wheels would be helpful here. During the summer season, a Marshfield Permit is required to park. The sand dune area, which until an 1898 storm was the mouth of both the North and South rivers, offers interesting habitat exploration, passing from salt water estuary to upland sand dunes to ocean beach. Past Rexhame, the River enters the very settled area of Humarock (east) and Marshfield (west). The River narrows under the **Julien Street Bridge** causing the tidal current to be very strong and very difficult to paddle against. The return of the striped bass has caused a fishing frenzy from Rexhame to the mouth for the past few years.

There are a number of launching possibilities in the **Humarock** area. On the Humarock side, one can park in the Town Parking Lot and carry 250 feet over sand and cobble to the River. During the summer, a Scituate Beach permit is required to park here. There is also a public launching ramp at the South River Yacht yard. Parking is not provided and one would have to check with the boat yard for permission. On the Marshfield side there is a town landing off Ferry Street. A Marshfield Parking Permit is required during the summer season. There is a vacant lot 200 yards up Ferry Street that is posted but used by many boaters during the summer months, including this writer. South Shore Stem Drive has a boat ramp but once again there is no official parking and there is a \$5.00 ramp fee. There is sometimes parking on the street or one may check with the boat yard. The best of these four choices is probably the Marshfield Town Landing and parking in the empty lot during the boating season. (This vacant lot is for sale so this arrangement could change.) The Humarock area provides easy access to restaurants, lodging, groceries and services, including River view dining at the Bridgeway Inn, an outdoor terrace at the Nauticle Mile, and lunches to go.

SOUTH RIVER: Humarock Center to Mouth (3mi or 4.8 km)

Once under the **Sea Street Bridge** the River widens even more and truly becomes an estuary. There continues to be a main river channel but there are also acres of salt marsh around the islands and clam flats. The River is more open and subject to strong winds and rough water on this final stretch. The creeks offer a more protected route and interesting exploration. The South River empties through a narrow gut between **Trouant Island** and a sand spit extension of **Fourth Cliff**. This gut and the River mouth are very dangerous waters and not safe for small boating. It is possible to navigate **Broad Creek** and **Branch Creek** and pass behind both Tilden and Trouant Islands. A portage over the cartway to Trouant Island will take you into Macomber's Creek which flows into the North River and avoids the confluence of the two rivers and the unpredictable mouth.



GUIDE TO THE INDIAN HEAD RIVER

Drinkwater (West Hanover) to Elm Street, Luddam's Ford Fish Ladder and Dam (6.25 mi or 10km)

Springs and marshes are the Headwaters of **French's Stream** in Weymouth and Rockland and the **Drinkwater River** in Hanover. The combined streams flow through Forge and Factory Ponds and become the Indian Head River.

One can access this section by putting in on the Drinkwater River on Route 139 in West Hanover. The River is smooth until **King Street** (1/2 mile) where there is 1/4 mile of easy Class II rapids. At the second King Street crossing, the bridge may be too low for clearance and portage may be necessary on the left.

There is a dam at the outlet of **Forge Pond** which can be run – beware of the debris in the River. There is another one-foot dam that should be lined (from the bank lower the canoe over the dam with a line). Flat water continues to Factory Pond.

There is a bridge across **Factory Pond** just before the Pond hooks around to the left. At the outlet it is necessary to portage the dam on the right. Now the **Indian Head River**, flatwater continues as the stream passes through a swampy area. At the South Hanover dam at **Cross Street**, portage at the culvert on the left. Below this dam there are 100 yards of Class II rapids and flatwater for 1/4 mile then a shorter Class II drop that is runnable if not blocked. After another 1/2 mile of flatwater, there is a Class II drop at an old dam site beside a factory on the left bank. From here it is flatwater to the dam and fish ladder at Elm Street. There is a good take-out site at **Elm Street** dam. Both Hanover and Pembroke have conservation lands at this dam for picnic areas and excellent fishing.

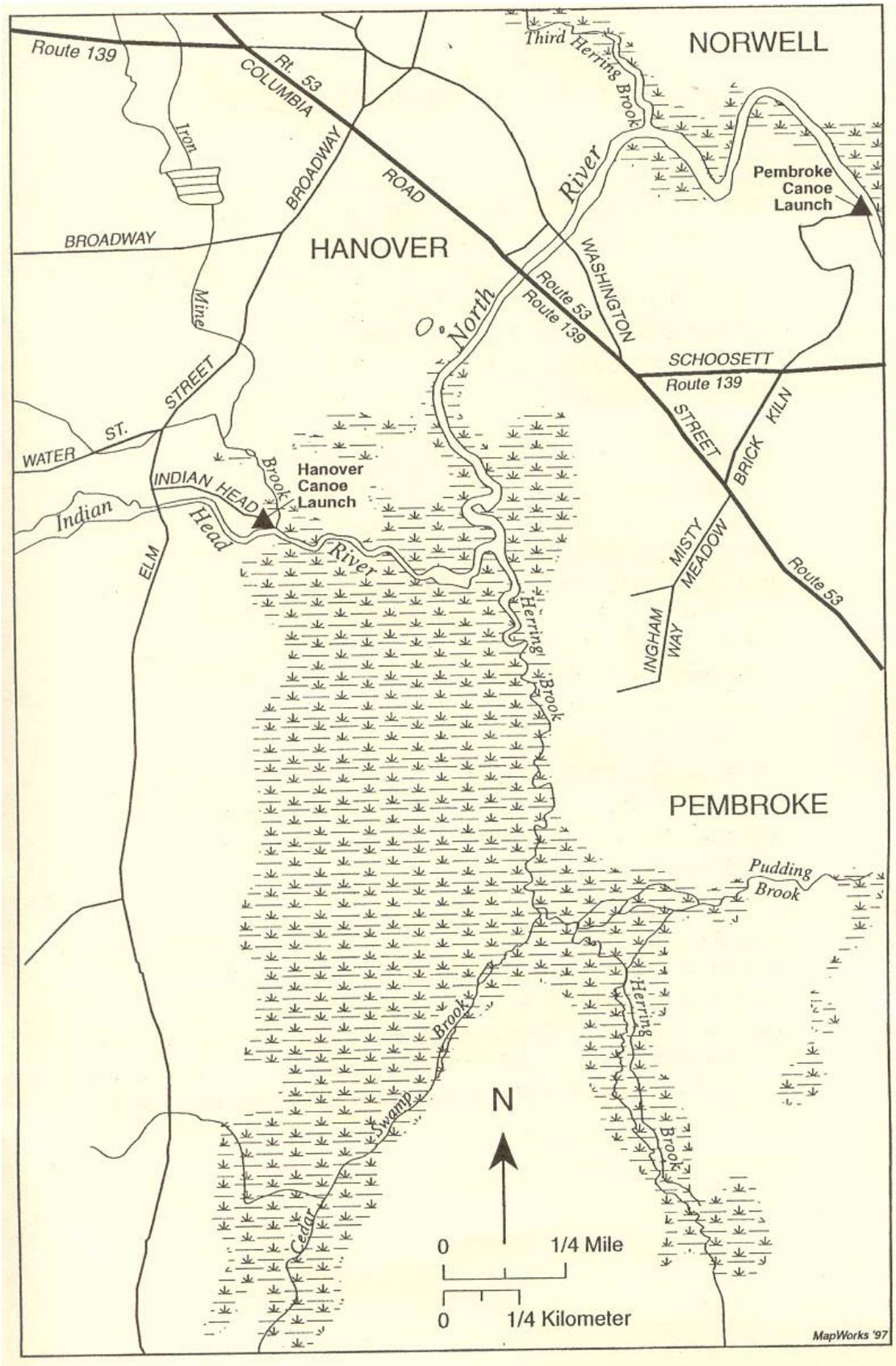
GUIDE TO THE NORTH RIVER

The Indian Head River flowing from Hanover, and Herring Brook flowing from Pembroke, join forces to form the headwaters of the North River. Twelve miles later the River joins the South River and empties into Massachusetts Bay. The River is flat water and navigable by canoe and kayak for its entire length.

The Upper Reaches

The first upriver access is at the canoe launch in Hanover on Indian Head Drive, which runs off Elm Street. The Drive may be unmarked, as is the launch area. When approaching from the north, Indian Head Drive is the last turn off Elm Street before Elm Street crosses the River. There is plenty of parking here and easy access into the Indian Head. A short paddle downriver takes you to the "crotch" where all three rivers meet. The **North River** heads to the left (north) and **Herring Brook** to the right (south). Herring Brook is an active herring run leading to hatchery grounds in the Ponds of Pembroke. This is also the route the Wampanoag took on their journey to the Taunton River and Narragansett Bay. The River and swamp area are very navigable three hours either side of high tide.

The upper reaches have much to offer, each season bringing new and different pleasures. In July the swamp offers a wash of color reminiscent of a Monet painting, with white, orange, scarlet, indigo, and lavender contrasting against a lush background of greens and browns. At the higher points, where the creek meanders close to the pine forest, one will find two wooded places suitable for stopping for a break, to stretch, or to have lunch. These waters provide excellent fishing grounds (shad, trout, pickerel, catfish, eels, and sunfish) and good bird watching. Wild rice and migrating ducks abound in the fall.



MapWorks '97

Hanover to Union Street (8.6mi or 13.8 km)

The next access is 2.5 miles (4 km) in Pembroke. This little-known and poorly-marked launch area is part of **Pembroke Conservation Land** off Brick Kiln Lane (accessible from Route 139). The gravel road to the launch area is ½ mile down Brick Kiln Lane on the right. Drive carefully and watch out for the llamas. There is parking for about six cars at the end of the gravel road and a very narrow (single boat) launch area. This access is not easily spotted from the River.

There is a long stretch of River (6 miles or 9.6 km) with no access point. There are resting points at **Blueberry Island** and **Coach's Beach**, offering picnic spots, swimming, and camping. At this point the change from fresh/brackish water to salt water occurs. A number of tributaries flow into the North River along this stretch and offer opportunity for exploration. Poke your nose into Third Herring Brook, Robinson Creek, Two Mile Brook, Dwelley's Creek, and Second Herring Brook. Also of note are the historic markers along the bank identifying 19th century ship-building sites.

At the base of **Chittenden Lane** in Norwell (off River Street) is another seldom-used town landing with limited (2-3 cars) parking. This area is just around the corner from the most-used launching area on the River.

Marshfield conservation Commission built and maintains the **Union Street** area on the South side of the bridge. This is an excellent launch site for canoes and kayaks with plenty of parking. On the north side of the bridge is the **Norwell Town Launch** which can be used for motor boats as well. The ramp needs some work and a Norwell sticker is required for parking.

Union Street to North River Mouth (3.75mi or 6 km)

Just east of Union Street, an interesting stop is the packet landing on the south bank leading to the **Nelson Forest. Cove Creek** is also a worthy adventure as it changes from salt water estuary to fresh water marsh over the course of one mile. Between Union Street and Route 3A there are three marinas that have ramps with ramp fees. The fees do guarantee parking. **King's Landing**, off Route 123 in Norwell, also rents canoes. **Mary's Boat Livery** is on the south end of the Route 3A bridge and **North River Marine** on the north end. After passing under Route 3A, the River widens and becomes a salt water estuary dotted with islands. There is a narrow passageway through the old railroad bed where the current can be very strong. Beyond this point, there are a number of creeks to explore on both sides of the River. At **Damons Point** is a launch area on the west side of the parking area, about halfway to the River. A Marshfield permit is required to park, especially in summer.

The easternmost access point to the North River is at the **Driftway Conservation Area** on Herring River. This area offers plenty of room, plenty of parking, picnic tables, walking paths, and a fishing pier. This site is a good access point to the "Spit". Otherwise it is advised that small boats head upriver only, avoiding the mouth of the rivers where the currents are unpredictable and dangerous. **Herring River and First Herring Brook** offer a maze of creeks to explore. Macomers Creek is a good safe route to the South River.

