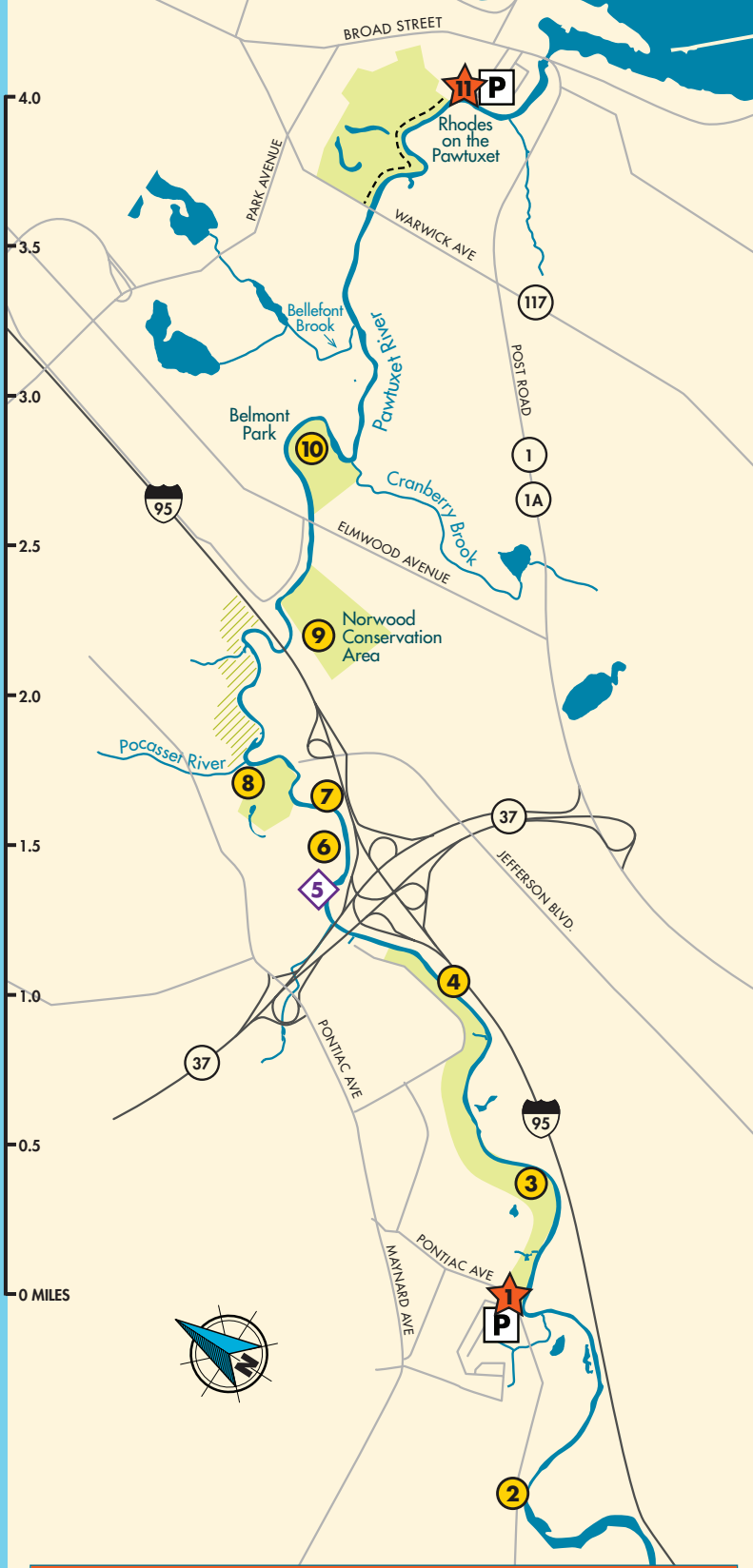


# PAWTUXET RIVER AUTHORITY & WATERSHED COUNCIL

## LOWER PAWTUXET RIVER



LEVEL	Beginner to Intermediate
START	Pontiac Canoe Launch, Warwick
END	Rhodes on the Pawtuxet, Cranston
RIVER MILES	6.5 miles
TIME	2.5 to 3 hours
DESCRIPTION	Flat water, a few fast sections, no portage at normal levels
SCENERY	Dense wooded areas, neighborhoods, commercial
GPS	N 41° 43' 54.95", W 71° 27' 37.48"

### THE LOWER PAWTUXET RIVER: FROM WARWICK TO CRANSTON

Before heading down river, you might paddle upriver 0.8 miles to view the historic Pontiac Mills and dam that powered these mills in the 1800s (2). Downstream from the launch (★), you'll pass on your left the Howard Conservation Area where a river trail is being planned by Pawtuxet River Authority / Watershed Council (PRAWC) (3). On your right, New England Tech's wind turbine looms high above the river. Before reaching the Route 37 overpass, you will go through a section of the river that was moved during construction of I-95. Here the river runs parallel to the highway where it was under water during the 2010 flood, illustrating how high the river rose (4).

Just beyond the second span of Route 37, there is a large sandy shoreline on the right from which you can assess two sections of fast water just ahead. Remnants of two dams create the fast water (5). They were part of the original public water supply for Providence and vicinity from 1871 until replaced in 1926 by the Gainer Dam upriver in Scituate. At most river levels, you can float over the first abutment. Stay toward the center left section for the smoothest ride, then move to the right to pass through the next fast water section where it is deepest.

On the left bank, you will see a USGS river gage station (6) that transmits water flow and height data you can reference online in advance of your trip: <http://tinyurl.com/usgspawtux>.

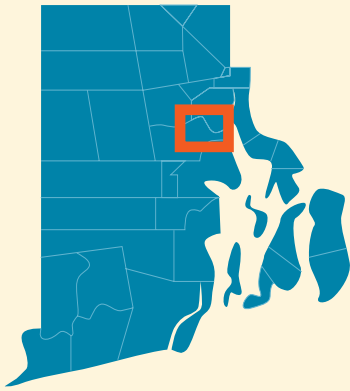
Just 0.3 miles further is a large cell tower on the right – an annual spring-summer home for osprey (7). For the next mile to your left you will pass the confluence with the Pocasset River, open space, and conservation land that serve as wildlife habitat and flood plain (8). Especially during the spring, this heavily wooded area is alive with song birds, great blue and other herons, cormorants, geese, and ducks. While found all along this trip, this area is abundant with deer, fox, turtles, muskrat, and occasional river otter.

Once you pass under I-95, and the Amtrak RR trestle bridge, you will see to your right the

*Continued on the back >>>*

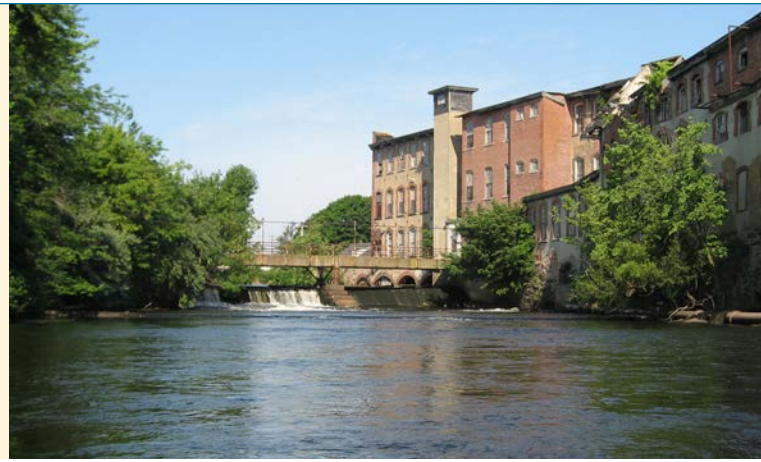
**MAP LEGEND**

★ WATER ACCESS	● POINTS OF INTEREST	▨ WETLANDS
■ WATER	— ROADS	Ⓟ PARKING
◇ CAUTION	■ CONSERVATION LAND	- - - WALKING TRAIL



## PAWTUXET RIVER

The Pawtuxet River watershed is the largest of Rhode Island's watersheds within the state's boundaries. With its headwaters in the hills of western Rhode Island, the river's North Branch flows generally west to east for 17 miles from the Gainer Dam in Scituate, and enters Narragansett Bay at Pawtuxet Cove.



Norwood Conservation Area, a new open space to be improved with a walking trail by the PRAWC 9. Next you will pass under the Elmwood Avenue Bridge and find Belmont Park on your right 10. On the far side of the park, when the river is low, the water can be very shallow and fast moving. You may need to step onto a sandbar and walk your boat until the water deepens.

From Elmwood Avenue to the mouth, paddlers can see the results of the 2011 dam removal in Pawtuxet Village. There are new sections of fast water, exposed river banks and paddlers can now see wood pilings from an old trolley bridge. Paddlers also see evidence of the 2010 floods: shifts in the river channel, downed trees, and other debris still in need of removal. PRAWC's flood recovery and clean-up efforts are on-going, and volunteers are always welcome.

After passing under the Warwick Avenue Bridge, stay to your right around a large sandbar and through fast water. The next 0.6 miles is a calm and wooded paddle, with walking trails on either side of the river until the take out at Rhodes 11.

### HISTORICAL NOTES:

During the 19th century, the Pawtuxet River was an important engine of textile manufacturing. Dams along the Pawtuxet and its tributaries provided water power to a large number of mills that developed along its banks. Over the years, industrial uses of the river led to significant declines in water quality and fish populations. During the past 40 years, investments in water

quality improvements, open space conservation, and river restoration are returning the lower Pawtuxet to its full capacity as a significant habitat for wildlife and an important passive recreational asset for Rhode Island.

The summer of 2011 saw the removal of the Pawtuxet Falls dam at the mouth of the river, restoring anadromous fish runs to the Lower Pawtuxet. In the spring of 2012, RIDEM began a multi-year stocking program for river herring and American shad to help re-establish their migratory cycle.

### DIRECTIONS:

The Pontiac Launch is at the intersection of Pontiac Avenue, Cranston and Knight Street, Warwick. Depending upon traffic, this put-in is 20 minutes by car from the take out at Rhodes. From I-95 North or South take exit for Route 37 West. From Route 37 West, take Exit 3 for Pontiac Avenue. At end of ramp turn left onto Pontiac Avenue for 0.9 miles. Turn left to stay on Pontiac for half a mile. The launch and parking lot are on your left at the bottom of the hill.

If you are shuttling between the Rhodes take-out and Pontiac put-in, the quickest way to Rhodes is I-95 Exit 14A to Rte. 37 East. Follow 37 East to Post Road North. Take Post Road North for 2.75 miles into Pawtuxet Village. Take a left at light on to Narragansett Pkwy. Proceed over bridge and through the Pawtuxet Village for 0.4 miles. Take a left on Rhodes Place at the Gazebo and proceed downhill to back parking lot and 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 PAWTUXET RIVER AUTHORITY AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.**



The Pawtuxet River Authority was established by statute in 1972, has 501(c)(3) status, and maintains designation as the Pawtuxet River Watershed Council by the RI Rivers Council. PRAWC engages in open space conservation and restoration projects, develops trails and river access points, and sponsors environmental clean-ups, flood response, and advocacy efforts throughout the watershed. [www.pawtuxet.org](http://www.pawtuxet.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).

