

# NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION: LOWER PETTAQUAMSCUTT RIVER & COVE



MAP LEGEND			
	WATER ACCESS		WETLANDS
	WATER		PORTAGE
	CAUTION		PARKING
	ROADS		WATER TRAIL ROUTE
	WALKING TRAIL		SHALLOWS/SANDBAR

LEVEL	Beginner to Intermediate
START/END	Pollock Avenue Ramp
RIVER MILES	Approximately 5 mile loop
TIME	Approximately 2.5 to 3 hours
DESCRIPTION	Flat Water, Tidal
SCENERY	Saltwater cove, Tidal Flats, Historic, Wildlife Refuge
ACCESS	Pollock Avenue Boat Ramp  Sprague Bridge Launch  Narrow River Kayaks  (\$)

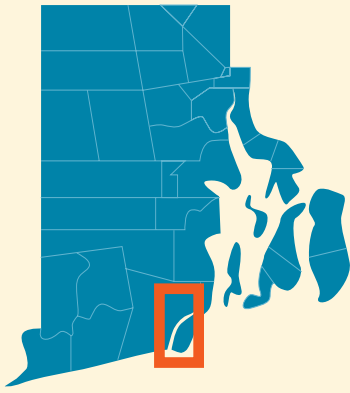
### LOWER NARROW (PETTAQUAMSCUTT) RIVER

The Lower Narrow River offers some of the most scenic paddling Rhode Island has to offer. While this portion of the river becomes especially congested on weekend afternoons during the summer months, it can all be avoided by opting to paddle in and around Pettaquamscutt Cove instead of the more popular beach area at the mouth of the river. This area is part of the John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge at Pettaquamscutt Cove established in 1988 through a bill sponsored by the late Senator, then renamed in his honor in 1995. The refuge is home to a multitude of wildlife including white tail deer, fishers, foxes, otters, osprey, black ducks, willets, marsh sparrows, hawks, herons, egrets, terns, wild turkeys, turkey vultures, Canada geese and mute swans among others. This particular loop starts at the Pollock Avenue boat ramp north of Middlebridge. The loop can be abbreviated by accessing the Cove from Sprague Bridge .

Depart the Pollock Avenue boat ramp and head straight across to the eastern bank of the river. This side is less developed and offers better opportunity to view wildlife and explore the salt marsh. Continue paddling south on the east bank of the river toward Middlebridge. Beware, there is a sandbar just to the north of the bridge. Middlebridge is home to Narrow River Kayaks Paddlers can exit here for a stretch or to grab a snack or drink. Bull Garrison Acres and Bull Garrison Monument are located on the western side of the bridge. Bull Garrison Acres includes a walking trail maintained and established by the Narrow River Land Trust. Jireh Bull built the first European trading post in the watershed, which was later attacked and burned by Narragansett Indians in December 1675 at the beginning of King Phillip's War. This led to the Great Swamp Massacre.

Avoid sandbars and motor boats by staying right and hugging the western shoreline south of Middlebridge. **As a general rule of thumb, all paddlers should stay off to the side in single file, giving motorized boats the right of way.** Stay on the right side to where the salt marsh comes to a point. Remain on the right hand side to enter

*Continued on the back >>>*



## NARROW RIVER

The Pettaquamscutt River – aka Narrow River – forms a natural boundary between the towns of Narragansett, South Kingstown, and North Kingstown. Not truly a river, it is an approximately 7 mile long tidal inlet connected by a narrow channel to a series of kettle basins fed by a small stream. Although mostly shallow, it does have two unusually steep-sided ponds, one of which plunges to a maximum depth of approximately 60 feet.



Pettaquamscutt Cove, staying close to the river’s edge. Entering and exiting Pettaquamscutt Cove ❹ can be especially challenging at low tide due to the presence of shoals in the area around Sedge Island ❺. Protective footwear is recommended due to the presence of razor clams, oyster shells and other sharp objects in the sand. Paddlers should be prepared to exit their kayaks to free themselves from sandbars ⚠️ from time to time.

Continue paddling along the western side of the river to Gooseberry Island ❽. Gooseberry Island was probably named for the gooseberries (which are like currants) found there and is a possible stop-off point. Currants were considered medicinal by Native Americans. Continue paddling south along the western shoreline before turning around and heading north along the eastern shore. Canonchet Farm ❾, U.S. Fish & Wildlife land, and the former Sea View Rail Road occupy the majority of the eastern shore. Canonchet Farm is a 174 acre tract that borders Pettaquamscutt Cove, has walking trails, and is home to the South County Museum ❿.

### NARROW RIVER CULTURE AND HISTORY

The last great ice sheet began to recede from Rhode Island 23,000 years ago, then left the Narrow River Watershed by 20,000 years ago and was gone from Rhode Island by 18,500 years ago. Humans arrived about 10,000 years ago. The ocean waters flooded into the Narrow River Basin about 2500 years ago and filled the freshwater lakes with marine waters. At the time of the arrival of the first Europeans in the early 1500s, the Narrow River Watershed was inhabited by the Narragansett and Niantic Tribes.

European merchants began arriving during the early seventeenth century. At the end of King Philip’s War, settlers began rebuilding their settlements. During this period one of the most important houses in the watershed, “The Glebe”, was originally built as a farm house near the North Kingstown-South Kingstown line then transformed into the rectory of Rev. James MacSparran.

Unlike most areas in Rhode Island, Narrow River was not heavily industrialized because the watershed lacked streams large enough to generate power for large factories. But the main freshwater source, Gilbert Stuart Stream, had enough flow to power the Stuart Family Snuff Mill in 1750. Their son, Gilbert, was born in a room above the snuff mill and is best known for his “Athenaeum portrait” of George Washington seen on the one dollar bill.

In the 1800’s, building of centerboard schooners became a major industry along the river and was home to the Capt. John Aldrich Saunders Shipyard. Agriculture and maritime pursuits remained important aspects of the area’s economy, augmented by growing tourism during the 1900’s. This area remains a popular seaside resort although the 1938 Hurricane and other factors brought an end to the great resort hotel era.

Since the 1950’s, the year-round population in the Narrow River Watershed has grown quickly. Despite the continuing suburbanization of the watershed, residents continue to depend on the Narrow River estuary for a variety of uses. All residents continue to work together to manage resources and protect the long-term health of Narrow 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 NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.**



The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) works to preserve, protect, and restore the natural environment and the quality of life for all communities within the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River Estuary and Watershed. [www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org)

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEPE) protects and preserves Narragansett Bay and its watershed through partnerships that conserve and restore natural resources, enhance water quality and promote community involvement. NBEPE 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).

