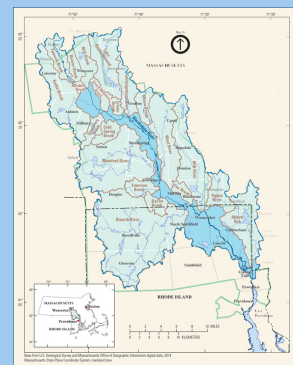




Paddling in the
Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

Blackstone River - River Island Park to Manville Dam



95 Bernon Street, Woonsocket, RI
GPS Coordinates: N41 59.977 W071 30.814

This segment travels through the heart of downtown Woonsocket in the first half, and then through forested city-owned land in the western part of the city. Water becomes shallow during summer months. After putting in at River Island Park, go under the Bernon Street Bridge and you enter a section of the river lined with historic mills on both sides. On the right just after the bridge is the Bernon Mills complex. The oldest building in the complex, the 1827 stone mill in the center, is the earliest known example of slow-burning mill construction in America that used noncombustible walls, heavy timber posts and beams and double plank floors to resist burning if it caught fire.

Starting before the Court Street truss bridge (1895) is a stretch of about 1000 feet of Class I and II rapids, with plenty of rocks that require skillful maneuvering. The Blackstone River drops sharply through the City of Woonsocket and water levels play an important part in determining how to navigate this section of the river.

The river moves quite swiftly through the first mile of this section of the river during high water. In high water, most of the ledges and the rocky river bottom is covered. Care is needed to avoid these obstacles. During low water, it is quite easy to get stuck on a rock or ledge. Read the river carefully to pick your way through this rock garden. Once below the Fire Station high on river-left, the river gets lazy and takes its time getting to Manville. This is actually one of the sections of the river that is held back by a large dam creating a wide millpond effect.

The next 3/4 mile section has been significantly altered over the years by the Army Corps of Engineers for flood control. After going under the Hamlet Avenue bridge, the river becomes broad and placid. The 2 1/2 mile stretch between Hamlet Avenue and Manville features mostly forested banks that are a strong contrast to the earlier urbanized part of this segment. A short distance below the bridge on river right you will see a long section of the riverbank that is the redevelopment of a former landfill into athletic fields and the Blackstone River Bikeway. Another interruption of the natural setting is the large tanks of the Woonsocket drinking water treatment plant on the right bank about 2 miles down from the Hamlet Bridge. Just before the Manville Dam (1868) is a large wetland on the left bank; it's a great place to spot waterfowl. Paddle into the wetland area and you will see the canoe ramp, just past the granite wall along the side the dam. The Manville Dam has an 18 foot drop, one of the highest on the river. This overlook area for Manville Dam is a good place for a picnic.

Skill Level.: Intermediate

River Miles: 4.2 miles one-way

Start: River Island Park, 95 Bernon Street, Woonsocket, RI; End: Manville Dam, Manville Hill Rd., Cumberland, RI *(under construction summer 2020)

Portage: None

Shuttle Option: End: Manville Dam, Manville Hill Rd., Cumberland, RI

Scenery: Urban, Forested

Parking on site: 16 parking spaces

Restrooms: None

Access: steps and small crushed stone

Boat carry to water: 100'

Supervising Entity: City of Woonsocket

Find more paddle trips at
BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org

