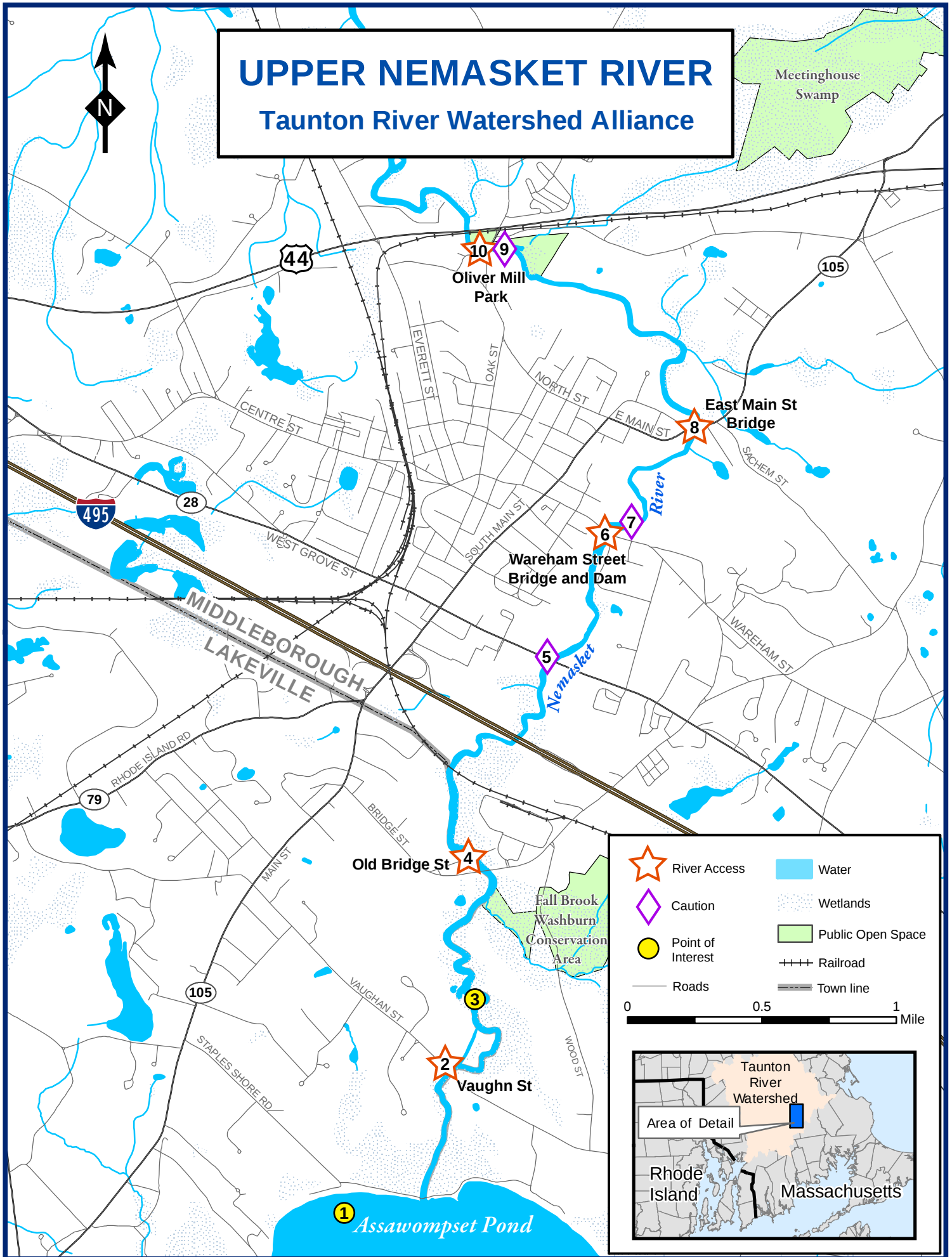


UPPER NEMASKET RIVER

Taunton River Watershed Alliance



Upper Nemasket River: Assawompset Pond (Lakeville) To Oliver Mill Park (Middleborough)

The Nemasket River offers a pleasant, meandering trip through forests and meadows. Around every turn in the gently flowing river, birds and other wildlife abound. With its clear water and absence of houses, this segment of the Nemasket offers one of the most enjoyable trips in the Taunton River watershed. There is one section of quickwater and whitewater between Wareham Street and East Main. The Nemasket is passable for canoes and kayaks at all normal water levels. It is the largest alewife run in Massachusetts and one of the state's most productive warm water fisheries. Early settlers used the river to transport shellfish from New Bedford. "Nemasket" is a Wampanoag Indian word for "the fishing place."

Distance: 5.4 miles

Estimated Trip Time: 3-4 hours

- 1) **Assawompset Pond** is the largest natural freshwater lake in Massachusetts. A pair of naturally established **Bald Eagles** has been spotted at the south end. The pond has been the water supply for the City of Taunton since 1895 and as a public water supply it is closed to boating. It was formerly noted for abundant bog iron, which was used in colonial times to make iron. **Assawompset** means "**the place of the white stone**" in Wampanoag, probably a reference to its sandy shores. In 1675 the body of John Sassamon, a Harvard-educated Ponkapoag Indian, was found under the Pond's ice. Three men from Metacomet's (King Phillip's) entourage were hung for Sassamon's murder, the spark that began King Phillip's War. **Betty's Neck** (private property), on the southeast side of the Pond, is the former site of Sassamon's home. Here there are two rocks with hand imprints and other marks that are supposed to have been made by Indians, and a foot imprint said to be made by Sassamon's daughter, known to the Puritans as Betty, thus the name Betty's Neck.
- 2) The **Vaughn Street Bridge** provides the first public access to the river below Assawompset Pond. There is a parking lot with space for about eight cars and a short path leading down to the river below the bridge. When the river is high the path can be a bit muddy. **Mile 0**
- 3) **The large wetland** below Vaughn Street is a good place to look for birds and other wildlife. Just below the put-in the river forks. You can take either fork as they rejoin not far down the river. The left fork is straighter but may be brushy. The right fork winds through the open marsh.
- 4) The **Old Bridge Street** landing at the 1.7-acre **Stephen A. Kelly Conservation Area** provides excellent access to the river. There is parking for about 12 cars and a gravel shoreline that is great for launching canoes and kayaks and can also be used to launch trailered boats. **Mile 1.3**
- 5) The **East Grove Street Bridge** is not recommended as a put-in or take-out due to the poor access to the river, lack of parking and heavy traffic on East Grove Street, but it can be used as a take-out in an emergency. **Mile 2.5**
- 6) At the **Wareham Street Dam and Bridge** there is river access and parking for 10 cars. Do not go under the bridge! Take out 200 feet to the right of the bridge, next to the fish ladder, for the 50-yard portage. Re-launch below the dam and fish ladder, across the street, in Thomas Memorial Park. To travel upstream, launch from the low bank at the top of the fish ladder next to the Middleborough DPW building. Thomas Memorial Park was built in memory of two local residents and offers picnic tables but no tap water or restrooms. The park and fish ladder are a good place to watch the alewife run in early April. **Mile: 3.2**
- 7) **CAUTION!** Below Wareham Street there is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of quickwater with a more difficult (Class I) whitewater drop where the river goes through a breached canal wall. At low water a short carry may be necessary at the breached canal wall.
- 8) At the **East Main Street (Route 105) bridge**, unless the river is quite low, you will have to portage around this low bridge. **CAUTION:** Approach this bridge carefully because the current will want to push you into the bridge! Take out just before the bridge on the left. Carry across the bridge and the road (watch for traffic) and put in down the short steep bank on the right side of the river. Due to the limited parking this is not recommended as the starting or ending point for a trip, but it could be used as an emergency take-out. **Mile 3.9**
- 9) At the **historic Nemasket Street bridge** use caution when going through the narrow openings under the bridge. **Mile: 5.3**
- 10) **Oliver Mill Park** is just beyond the bridge. Take out on the right before the dam and fish ladder. Do not attempt to run the fish ladder! There is parking for 50 cars and good access to the river above and below the dam. There are picnic tables but no restrooms or drinking water. In 1740, Peter Oliver, a well known Tory, bought land and water privileges here. Despite objections from many residents, he built a dam, forge and various mills. This area became the center of the town's activities, manufacturing hollowware, heavy ordnance, nails and cotton products. An iron foundry named Oliver's Furnace was located below the dam. Oliver laid out the surrounding area in the manner of an English park or garden. The Nemasket Indian tribe's principle settlement, known as Muttok, was on the west (left) side of the river, across from Oliver Mill Park. Below Oliver Mill the river continues for another 4.75 miles to the Taunton River above Titicut Street and is a nice paddle. **Mile: 5.4**



Always wear your life jacket. Remove what you bring, clean up more if you can. Please respect private property. Report any problems you encounter to TRWA and local authorities if appropriate. Thank you! Enjoy!

This map and guide was created through a partnership between:

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