

MILLERS RIVER
BLUE TRAIL
UPPER MILLERS/
LOWER OTTER
SEGMENT

Padding Options

The Millers River flows from Winchendon towards Birch Hill Dam and is met by the north flowing Otter River. The various Upper Millers and Otter River segments included in this guide are generally suitable for paddlers of all ages and skill levels, but do vary in the level of exertion required, for example; portaging may be required around downed trees, debris, and beaver dams.

Trail segments can be enjoyed in various combinations and directions to create multiple routes. Some suggestions (distances/times approximate):

Baldwinville to Birch Hill Dam
5.5 miles, 2 hours. This trip down the Otter River to its confluence with the Miller River runs through a peaceful marsh like area. Good birding with a number of meanders. It is possible a few beaver dams may be encountered near the Millers.

New Boston Road to Birch Hill Dam
3 miles, 1 hour.

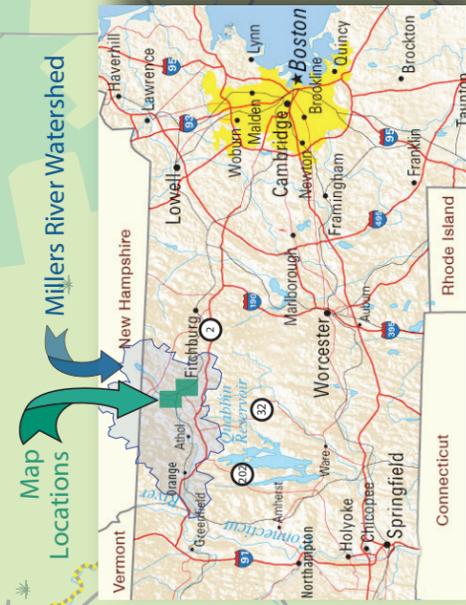
River Street to New Boston Road
6.5 miles, 2.5 hours. This paddle runs through a very wooded area offering a sense of being in the wilderness.

Baldwinville to New Boston Road
5 miles, 2 hours

Priest Brook above Burgess Road
Venture upstream when water levels are high enough.

This is a DRAFT Map.
Your feedback is requested
Reply: council@millersriver.net

MRWC
100 Main Street
Athol, MA 01331
Thank you.



MILLERS RIVER
BLUE TRAIL
GUIDE

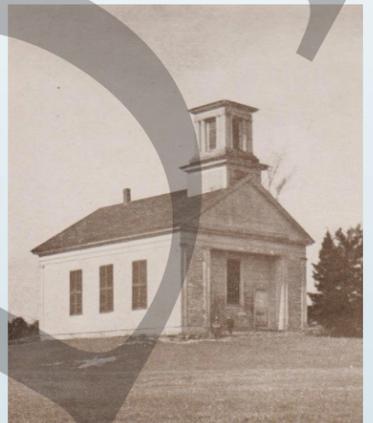
UPPER MILLERS & OTTER RIVER SEGMENTS

A guide to the natural, recreational and historical points of interest along the Millers River and Otter River between Templeton, Winchendon, Gardner and Royalston

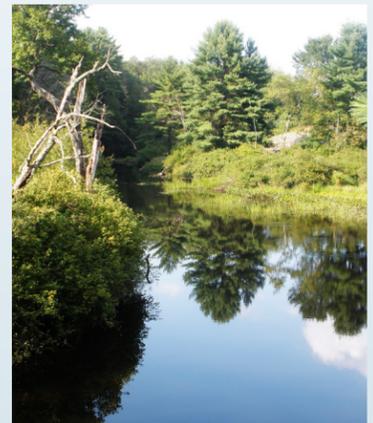
DRAFT



King Phillip's Rock



New Boston Baptist Church



Millers River Upstream



Otter River Paddle



Paddling Options

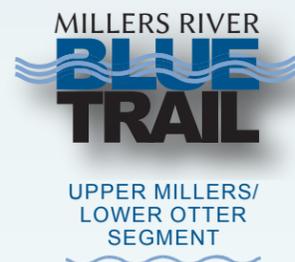
Plant Road to Otter River Conservation Area
 This 1.5 mile one-way paddle wanders upstream through a grassy marsh area which is a good area for wildlife viewing and escaping the city. Be prepared to carry over a beaver dam or two and venture through the Routes 101, 2A, and 2 overpass tunnels. The trail meanders from Plant Road to the discharge from the large ponded area of the Otter River Conservation Area. Return and make this a fine 3 mile trip; about 2.5-3 hour round trip, or portage into the ORCA and explore further.

Otter River Conservation Area (ORCA), Gardner
 This large ponded area, near the Gardner airport, is a great place to view waterfowl and other birds and wildlife. Explore up to the old Whitney Street crossing or beyond, then return to the airport access area.

Plant Road to Cummings Conservation Area
 This winding section brings paddlers to a paddle stop which makes a fine place for a picnic. Round trip is about 4 miles. The hearty could pull out well above the old Shotty Mill dam and carry out to Bridge Street (1/3 mile carry).



Approaching Birch Hill Dam



1 Birch Hill Dam. Operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and completed in 1941 to prevent flooding in response to the devastating floods of 1936 & 38, the area can hold up to 16.3 billion gallons of flood water.

2 Trolley Bridge. Used from the mid 1800s till 1940, the bridge was part of the trolley/railroad system operating in the New Boston Area.

3 King Phillips Rock. Lore has it that King Phillip (Metacombet) held tribal councils here during King Phillip's War, which raged between colonists and native tribes between 1675-76.

4 Priest Brook Area. A significant local tributary with limited water-power supported a small sawmill and cider mill; founded by a Baptist community in the early 1800s.

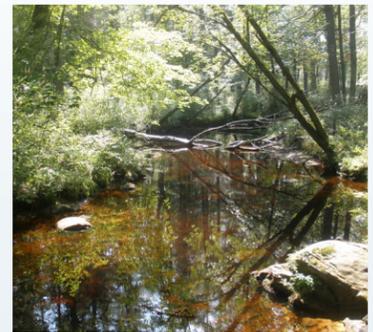
5 Old Farmstead. One of the oldest farmsteads in the area, dating back to before 1780, is thought to have been located near this section of the Millers River..

6 ...more upper millers? Towards Winchendon

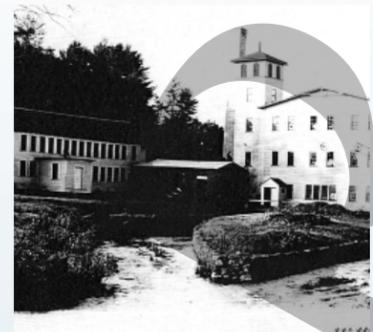
7 ...other upper millers?

8 Boston & Maine RR Bridge. Moved when BHD was constructed in 1941, the bridge stood over 60 feet above the Otter River. The new bridge is upstream.

9 Thompson Chair Co. This mill complex in the village of Baldwinville in Templeton operated from the mid 1800s till the 1940s. Furniture was the primary product.



Priest Brook



Shotty Mill

10 Waite Chair & Bishop/Streeter Mfg. Co. Located on opposite sides of the Otter River in Baldwinville, these companies made furniture, toys, desks, and matches. Part of the area may have supported a mill as early as 1754.

11 ...other lower Otter? There are two old road crossings? ID....

12 ...other lower Otter?

13 Natural POI. Add where identified by recon paddles in summer 2013



Route 2 Tunnels

A The Otter River from Bridge/ Turner Streets downstream (North) to Baldwinville below Route 202 is often shallow, has a number of dams with poor access/portage, and it is not therefore not recommended for paddling.

B Passages under Routes 101, 2A, 2 Tunnels are passable at most water levels.

Always proceed with caution.

C Shotty Mill. Makers of blankets during the Civil War, this mill operated till the early 1900s. The mill was located on the east bank.

Stay well upstream of the dam. The mill site is private property.

D Cummings Conservation Area (CCA). Preserved in 2012 by the City of Gardner, the area contains a glacial "esker" and is bordered by the Otter River. A paddle stop makes a nice spot for a picnic paddle. (A long portage of approximately 1/4 mile is possible from Bridge Street.)

E Otter River Conservation Area (ORCA). This large ponded area in South Gardner near the airport is a great place to view waterfowl and other birds and wildlife.

F ...

Millers River Watershed Council, Inc.

The Millers River Watershed Council, Inc. was founded to protect the health of the Millers River and its watershed. MRWC remains focused on providing volunteer water monitoring, as well as recreational and educational activities for watershed residents. MRWC also serves as an advocate for local concerns and works collaboratively with towns, government agencies and community members to provide effective long-term environmental protection.

| Legend | |
|--------|--|
| | Town Centers |
| | State Land |
| | Federal Land |
| | Flood Control Land USACE |
| | Municipal Land |
| | River and Ponds |
| | Streams |
| | Wetlands |
| | Power Lines |
| | Town Lines |
| | Canoe/Kayak Access Point & Parking |
| | Paddle Stops |
| | Dam |
| | Broken Dam |
| | Camp Ground |
| | Gate |
| | State Highway |
| | Major Road |
| | Secondary Road |
| | Controlled Access Road |
| | Railroad Tracks |
| | Points of Interest – see reverse side of guide |



About This River Guide

The Upper Millers-Lower Otter River Blue Trail runs through the flood control area of the USACoE's Birch Hill Dam project and forms a wild area rich in wetlands and wildlife. This area is great for paddlers who like to get away and explore. Be prepared to carry your boat around a beaver dam here and there and be prepared to see some wildlife.

The Upper Otter River Blue Trail runs from the Otter River Conservation Area to the Cummings Conservation area and is anchored by the Plant Road paddle access. This area is a pleasant and quiet paddle through marsh and woods along the river border between Gardner and Templeton.

USGS Flow Gauges

Otter River: http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis/uv?site_no=01163200
 Millers River, Winchendon: http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis/uv?site_no=01162000

River Safety & Etiquette

The Millers and Otter Rivers flow relatively smoothly through the designated Blue Trail areas. In late Summer and Fall, some areas may experience low water that could make paddling difficult. Conversely, Spring rains may flood behind Birch Hill Dam and may limit access to launch areas. Checking local flow gauges can provide useful information. Paddlers should always be on the lookout for downed trees, rocks, and other obstacles that can pose serious hazards. Paddlers should also be prepared to portage around these obstacles and beaver dams. Wearing a PFD -- a life jacket -- is always recommended, and is required -- October through May.

Paddle stops may be used for brief pullouts. These stops are marked by Blue Trail signs. Be mindful of the environment and "leave no trace" of your visit. Enjoy wildlife quietly and from a safe distance.

Be aware that during October through December, hunting season is in place along the lower Otter and Upper Millers trail sections.

Useful Resources

- Peak Expeditions: www.peakexpeditions.com for boat rentals, guided trips and more
- Athol Bird & Nature Club: www.millersriver.net/abnc for nature programs and events calendar
- Birch Hill Dam: <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/visitors/projects.cfm?id=E601560>
- DCR ORSF: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-central/otter-river-state-forest.html>
- Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.gardnerma.com> for local business listings
- Miller River Trout Unlimited: www.millersriver-tu.org for fishing and habitat protection
- Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust: www.mountgrace.org for regional land protection
- North County Land Trust: www.northcountylandtrust.org for regional land protection
- North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce: www.northquabbinchamber.com for local business listings
- North Quabbin Trails Association: <http://nqta.org>

The Millers River and Otter River Blue Trails and this Map Guide are projects of the Millers River Watershed Council, in collaboration with various organizations and individuals. MRWC wishes to especially thank the following: Athol Bird and Nature Club, Americorps/MassLIFT, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, US Army Corps of Engineers-Birch Hill Dam, Keith Davies, Barbara Stowell and Rebecca Landry.

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To support the Millers River and Otter River Blue Trails and other MRWC Projects, please contact us at:
 100 Main Street, Athol, MA 01331 • 978-248-9491 • council@millersriver.net
 Visit our website: www.millerswatershed.org

Underwriters' Area?

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