



## Welcome to the Chicopee River Blue Trail!

This map guide is designed to acquaint local residents and visitors with some of this river segment's many special but lesser known natural and historical features and recreational opportunities. The C4R Chicopee Blue Trail is a community partnership working to strengthen river stewardship and community vitality throughout the Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed.

The upper Chicopee Blue Trail offers a smooth water paddle through a scenic and historic area, which also is wildlife rich. Bald eagle can be seen and one will be pleasantly surprised by the quiet in many stretches of this area. The trail covers a segment length of approximately 7 miles with 2-3 access points and a portage.

### Blue Trails and Watersheds:

A blue trail (or water trail) is a dedicated stretch of river that enjoys special clean water safeguards and is a destination for fishing, boating and other recreation. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, blue trails help people discover rivers. Blue trails provide a fun, exciting way to get kids outdoors, connect communities to treasured landscapes, and are economic drivers benefiting local businesses and quality of life.

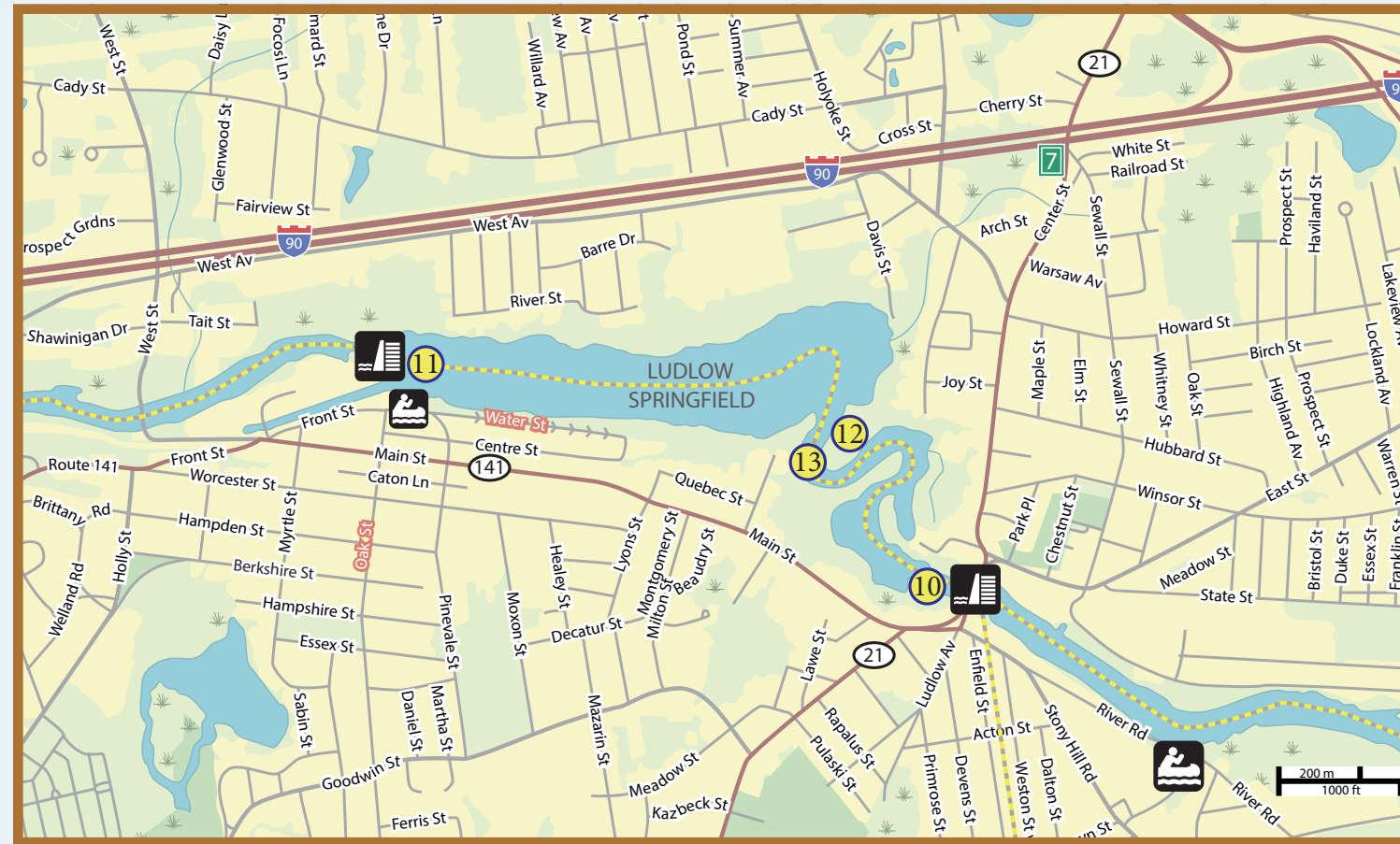


A watershed is a geographic area of land in which all surface and ground water flows downhill to common point, such as a river. A Blue Trail is safeguarded when not only the water is healthy, but the surrounding landscape: thus watershed land protection plays an important role in maintaining a healthy Blue Trail.

### The Chicopee River: (facts)

Flowing from tributaries (Ware, Swift, Quaboag) that meet in the Three Rivers community of Palmer, the Chicopee River flows some 18 miles and drops some 250 feet till it meets the Connecticut River in the City of Chicopee. The river delivers an average flow of 909 cfs (6,800 gallons/second!) to the larger river. The Chicopee River is the Connecticut River's largest tributary and the largest river system in Massachusetts covering some 721 square miles across 39 communities.

Named from an Algonquian/Nipmuc term meaning "place of violent waters", likely referring to the many waterfalls in the lower river, the Chicopee River was a lifeline for the many local native Americans. Later, these many waterfalls would be replaced by some 7 dams along the river's length and power the area's local industrial growth. People then moved away from the river as its water quality suffered, but in the past



### Indian Orchard River Segment

#### Flow Gage info

Chicopee River @ Indian Orchard

[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis/uv?site\\_no=01177000](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis/uv?site_no=01177000)

#### About C4RWC:

The Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council's mission is to "Promote stewardship, conservation, enjoyment, and restoration of the rivers, ecosystems and wildlife habitats of the Chicopee 4Rivers basin, while balancing and fostering river friendly city & town economies and community life.

C4R is focused on providing volunteer water quality monitoring, as well as recreational and educational activities for watershed residents. C4R also serves as an advocate for river concerns and works collaboratively with towns, government agencies and community members to provide effective long-term solutions. We welcome your help and support. [www.chicopeewatershed.org](http://www.chicopeewatershed.org)

*The 4 Rivers in the basin are the:  
Chicopee, Ware, Swift, and Quaboag.*

C4R website: [www.c4rivers.org](http://www.c4rivers.org)  
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#### Map Credits

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Editor - Keith Davies

35 years, environmental protections have gradually improved the river and offered people the opportunity to return and enjoy its beauty.

The main stem Chicopee River lies within the "Connecticut River Valley" ecoregion - this region is distinguished from the surrounding uplands by its milder climate, relatively rich floodplain soils, and level terrain with some higher outcropping ridges; the valley floor is primarily cropland and built land; central hardwoods and transitional hardwoods cover the ridges.

#### River Etiquette:

The upper Chicopee River flows relatively smoothly from Red Bridge on the Ludlow/Wilbraham town line to River Rd across from the Ludlow Mills area throughout the paddling season. The portage on the Ludlow side at the Collins Dam affords passage around the dam, but no parking is available. The section 200 yards below the Collins Dam might get shallow at low flows for a short distance. The impoundment above the Indian Orchard Dam is flat water to Indian Leap, and a bit quicker above until the power plant outflow is reached. Paddlers should always be on the lookout for downed trees, rocks and other obstacles that can pose hazards. Enjoy your trip and be respectful of other paddlers. Please respect private property and avoid trespassing and littering at all times.

Enjoy wildlife quietly and from a safe distance. **Wearing a life jacket is recommended-- and required September through May.**

#### Parking Notes:

Parking is readily available at lower Red Bridge access and Indian Orchard/Water St access. Parking on River Rd near the Putts access is limited with only a few spots in the dirt lot and near the entrance, be cautious parking here.

**There is NO parking at the Collins Dam portage.**



# BLUE TRAIL

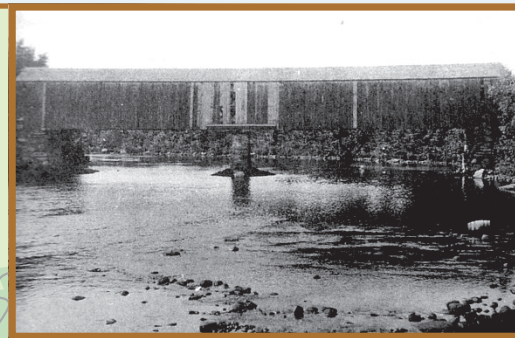
## Upper Chicopee River TRAIL GUIDE

A guide to the natural, recreational and historical points of interest along the Chicopee River between Wilbraham, Ludlow, and Springfield



Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council  
C4R - Care 4 Rivers





### Points of Interest:

- 1 The area above Red Bridge Station can be paddled up to near Three Rivers. The current gets stronger as you progress upstream. This area is also used by power boats.
- 2 The Red Bridge canoe/paddle access is below the dam. The power plant was built in 1900 to provide electricity to the Ludlow Mills downstream. Launching is best done on the west side of the point of land. Be cautious of cross currents if flows are apparent in both channels. No swimming. Be aware of changing flow conditions due to hydro plant.
- 3 Along the west bank of the river, about a 1/2 mile below the launch, you can see the berm of the old Springfield to Athol railroad line. This is the track that ultimately ran through what is now the Quabbin Reservoir. The run was called the Rabbit Run due to its many stops.  
Below here, the river flows under the Mass Pike and by the large LNG facility – **NO Trespassing along this shore.**



- 4 At the bend of the river, Twelve Mile brook enters. This brook was an early source for water powered mills in Wilbraham.
- 5 The trail now parallels Rt 20 or Boston Road. In 1775, General Henry Knox's men and oxen teams carried cannon along this road to George Washington in Boston.
- 6 The Collins Dam is a hydroelectric facility, a portage is along the north bank, on the Ludlow side of the river. The present dam replaced

- the breached 1872 dam in 1990. The Collins Paper Company was founded in 1872 and built the original dam to power the mill and supply water. It made up to 4 tons of fine writing paper a day. A covered bridge here was severely damaged in the 1938 hurricane.
- 7 The area below Collins Dam pool is initially shallow at low flows for a hundred yards, but easy to "walk" your boat. The stretch below is quite pleasant, you may even see a bald eagle. An island can also be found and may have had a house on it before the flood of 1938!
- 8 Near the end of this segment, the Ludlow Mills will appear on the right bank. The Wallamanumps Falls, which are now dammed have supported mills here since the late 1700s and early 1800s. By 1900, the Ludlow Mills were the largest producers of jute products in the world!
- 9 The Putts Bridge access is located on River Road on the Wilbraham side of the river. The Putts Bridge was the name of the old covered bridge, which spanned the river near the falls and dam.
- 10 The Wallamanumps Falls is a Nipmuck word meaning "redcliffs" or "red steep rocks". The falls dropped 42 feet prior to the building of the first dam in the late 1700s.

- 11 The access for the Indian Orchard Mills impoundment is on Water St, a small one-way road off Oak St. The Mills here were first built in the 1840s and made textiles till the mid/late 1900s.
- 12 The Indian Leap section of the river is characterized by steep cliffs that frame the river. The legend of this area says that in 1675, during the King Phillip's war, after attacking Springfield, some Native Americans camped the night near this area. A day or so later, they were confronted by a large group of colonists and they retreated towards the cliffs. Seeing no other escape, Chief Roaring Thunder had his group "leap" into the river below (there was no impoundment then) where some likely perished, perhaps many escaped.
- 13 Two railroad bridges crossed at the leap in more modern times, they had spectacular iron frames. The river winds upstream to the base of the power plant and dam. The current can be quick, but if the paddler is strong, you may get a glimpse of the base of Wallamanumps Falls.