

Welcome to the Ware 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. C4R's Ware River Blue Trail, WRBT, is a community partnership working to strengthen river stewardship and community vitality throughout the 4Rivers Watershed.

The WRBT offers varied paddling opportunities through a scenic and historic area, which also is wildlife rich. The WRBT is set in 2 river segments/2 maps: upper & lower and covers a total length of approximately 15 miles with 7+ access points.

The Ware River: (facts)

The Ware River begins its trip to Three Rivers from a tributary stream whose high point is on the western slope of Mt Wachusett. It flows in a southwesterly direction for nearly 40 miles, where it is first met by the Swift River, then the Quaboag River to form the Chicopee River in the Palmer village of Three Rivers. Starting at nearly 1700 feet above sea level, it meets the other rivers at about 290 feet. Its average annual flow rate is about 285 cfs or 2,090 gpm (about 2.8 million gallons per day).

Colonists named the river for early fish weirs (locally pronounced:/wer/) used by Native Americans. (The Town of Ware - Nenameseck - "at the great fish-weir" bears the river's name) The Nipmucs, called the River Menimesit, "at the place where fish abound".

By the 19th century, once industrialization came, many of the colonial settlements along the river grew. Barre, Wheelright, Gilbertville, Ware, and Thorndike all became major mill towns with various water powered industries.

A large part of the Ware watershed's headwaters, above the trail, is part of a major drinking water watershed protection area for metropolitan Boston. In Barre (since the early 1930s) water is diverted from the Ware River to either the Wachusett or Quabbin reservoirs.

The health of the river has changed over time. Once pristine, it was fouled by the boom of industrialization. Fortunately, in recent times, the Clean Water Act, CWA, has brought water quality protections to bear, which has noticeably improved the river's health. There is more to do to improve the river, particularly non point source pollution, but it is today good for fishing and boating.

Ware River Nature:

The watershed straddles a number of "eco-regions." The upper most elevations of the watershed lie in the Worcester-Monadnock Plateau and have generally cool acidic soils and more northern vegetation/hardwoods than is found in most other parts of MA. The larger portion lies in the "Lower Worcester Plateau" and has generally acidic soils, not as cool and supports more southern New England species as a result.

Along these Ware river segments, there are documented 17 species of dragonflies and 5 species of

freshwater mussels (that's roughly 40% of the freshwater mussel species found in MA!). Of these, 3 dragonflies and 2 mussel species are listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. As a side note, freshwater mussels provide many critical stream ecosystem services including biofiltering water of nutrients and pollutants, which can improve water quality.

Overall, the Ware River supports extraordinary biodiversity and will provide great opportunities for paddlers to observe rich plant life and interesting aquatic wildlife. Look for the trout lilies in the spring!

Native American Presence:

The Quaboag Tribe of the larger Nipmuc (fresh water people) group of tribes lived in the region. The Menimeset (or Wenimesset) was a key location for fish and various wild edible and medicinal plants. For river travel, the Nipmuc likely used a dugout style canoe, called a mishoon.



Mishoons

WRBT - Lower Segment Notes:

This segment is approximately 9 miles long and is essentially Calm/Quick water.

At adequate flow levels, >200 cfs, see USGS gage link, it may be possible to launch near Memorial Field off South St in Ware and run down to Robbins Rd, about 2 miles. The river can be rocky but class 1.

The main trail launch at Robbins Rd is a short carry from the parking area to the river, the first few hundred feet can be bony in flows under 200 cfs, but the river then has good depth.

The run to Gibbs Crossing is pleasant, a stop at Flat Brook (Red's) is a nice respite. Below Flat Brook, about a ¼ mile you pass the USGS flow gage and a short drop in the river.

Below the Route 32 Bridge @ Gibbs Crossing, the river can be shallow, it is best to stay to river LEFT of an island for a deeper channel.

After a bend in the river, look for a faint stone abutment, this is likely Lamberton's Bridge, an original river crossing in the area, dating into the 1700s.

The river moves smoothly and quick for the next ½+ mile before it begins to flatten out and slow down. Below the confluence with Beaver/ Brook, the river slows

down and is smooth the remainder of the Blue Trail.

River Etiquette:

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

- 1- Robbins Rd/Ware
- 2-Bennett St on right at designated spots (3-4).

Flow Gage info

Ware River @ Gibbs Crossing
https://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis/uv?site_no=01173500



About C4RWC:

C4RWC is a small volunteer organization focused on providing volunteer water monitoring, as well as recreational and educational activities for watershed residents. C4RWC also serves as an advocate for local concerns and works collaboratively with towns, government agencies and community members to provide effective long-term solutions. We welcome your help and support.

The 4 Rivers in the watershed are the: Chicopee, Ware, Swift, and Quaboag. Check us out at: www.c4rivers.org C4R, PO Box 126, Three Rivers, MA 01080. Email: chicopeewatershed@gmail.com

Water Quality Monitoring: check our web site for sampling results. See our Blue Trail page too!

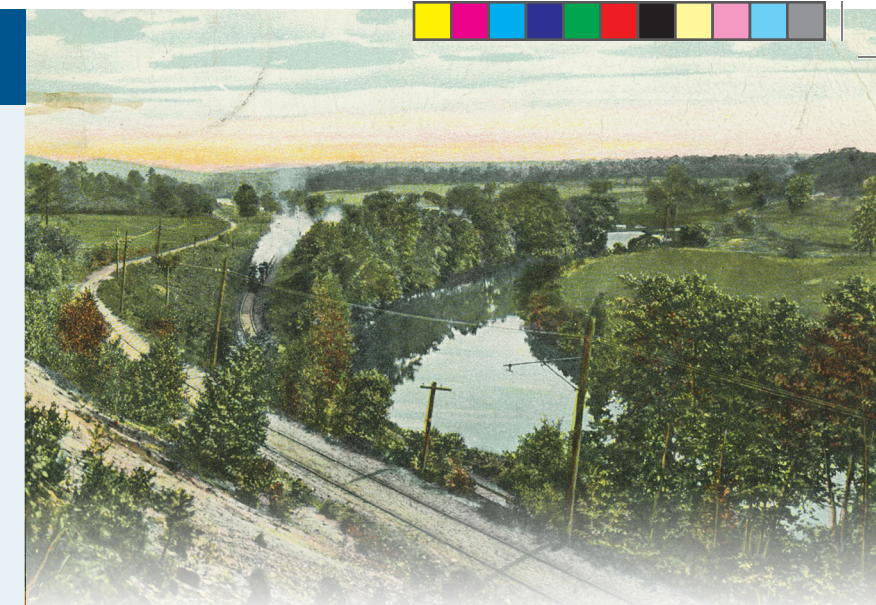
Map Credits:

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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.



1906 Post Card: "One of the prettiest stretches of country in Central Mass, a conoe would make the view complete!"



Lower Ware River TRAIL GUIDE

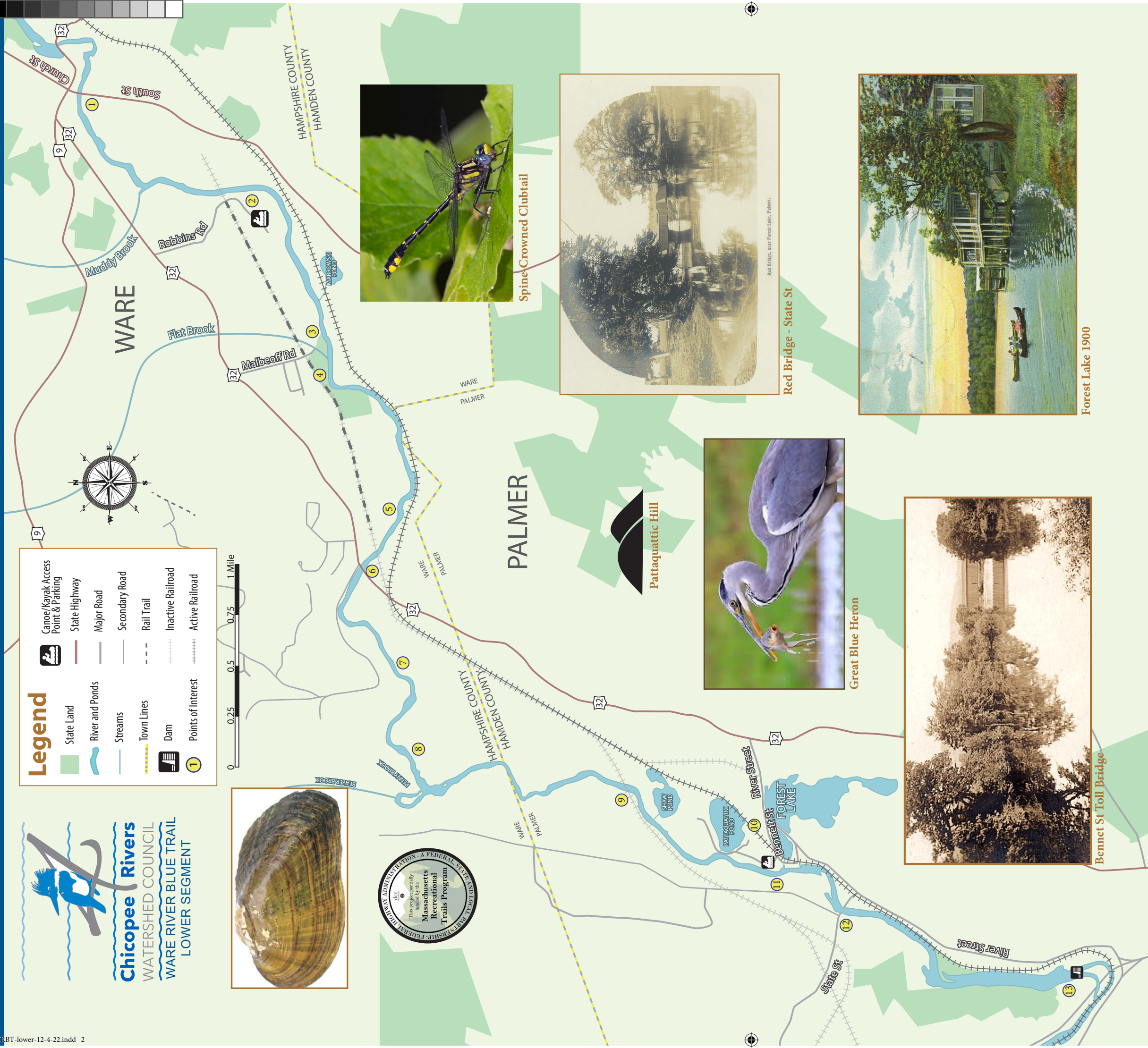
A guide to the natural, recreational and historical points of interest along the Ware River through the communities of Ware and Palmer



Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council
C4R - Care 4 Rivers

Legend

- State Land
- River and Ponds
- Streams
- Town Lines
- Dam
- Points of Interest
- Canoe/Kayak Access Point & Parking
- State Highway
- Major Road
- Secondary Road
- Rail Trail
- Inactive Railroad
- Active Railroad



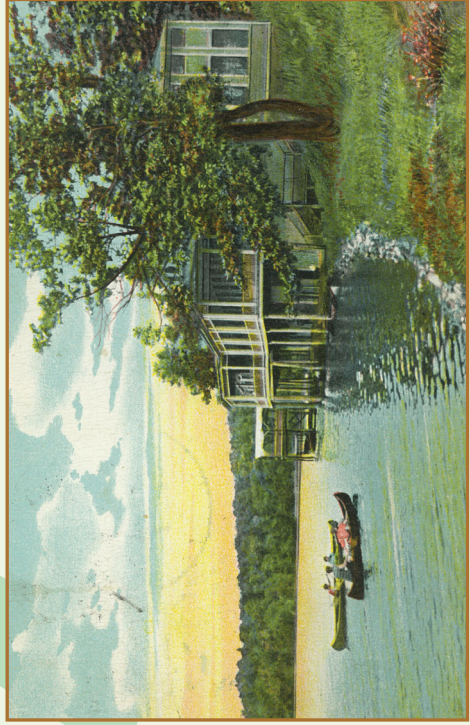
Spine-Crowned Clubtail



Red Bridge - State St



Great Blue Heron



Forest Lake 1900



Bennet St Toll Bridge

Points of Interest

- 1 **Memorial Field to Robbins Road - Banas Farm** - It may be possible to paddle from Memorial Field, Monroe St/Ware to Banas Farm at adequate river flows, over 200 cfs. If so, class I water with some rocks. There is no formal access at the field or entrance. Muddy Brook enters along this stretch of river.
- 2 **Robbins Road - Banas Farm** - This area is Town of Ware land with permitted access to a rustic launch a short walk & carry down the road. Parking area is shared with the local rail trail access. Banas farm was located here along the river.
- 3 **Old Malboef Road Bridge Abutments** - One of the early river crossings in the area, evident on late 1700s maps.
- 4 **MA F&W Area, Flat Brook** - Where Flat Brook enters the Ware River is a Mass Wildlife property (green area), an old mill site, and a possible picnic spot for paddlers at a sandbar. The site is managed as a wildlife management area and for shore fishing. Please follow Mass Wildlife WMA policies when visiting this site.
- 5 **USGS Flow Gage** - The drop here is where river flow is measured-see link above in text. A number of boulders are present, be cautious.

- 6 **Rt 32, Gibbs Crossing** - This crossing likely came to be in the early 1800s and was named for a family living nearby. By 1900, the crossing area supported what is now Rt 32 and a trolley line (on same bridge) as well as the CMRR bridge just upstream. The old RR abutments are still visible today. The area on the north shoreline in 1900 were cornfields.
- 7 **Lamberton's Bridge** - In the 1700s, there was a ford (a shallow point where people crossed through the river) in this area, then a bridge, known as Lambertons bridge, after a local family. Stone outcroppings at the site can be faintly seen. By the early 1800s, it was washed away and Gibbs Crossing became the major crossing in the area.
- 8 **Brook Floater** - The Brook Floater Mussel is an endangered species in MA. The Ware River is only one of 4 locations in the state where it is found. Mussels are nature's wild filters and do much to help keep a river healthy. But non-point source pollution-stormwater run off can be detrimental to their health and populations, thus hurting a river's health.
- 9 **Abandoned Railroad Bridge CMRR** - This part of the CMRR operated over this bridge until 1979 when the branch was discontinued.

- 10 **Forest Lake Area** - Nipmucks called this area "Pottequadic" meaning round place as the area ponds were round as were the hills. The area was a good summer fishing encampment. The Lake later became a popular local recreational area with a dance pavilion, walking paths, and boating.
- 11 **Bennet Street Bridge Abutments Access** - The abutments here supported a covered toll bridge that served the Forest Lake area from 1870 till 1938, it was lost in the 38' hurricane. (River St did not exist between State St and Forest Lake until 1928, it was a trolley line from the 1890s till then!) See top cover photo. The stream here supported a small mill.
- 12 **State Street Bridge** - Known as the "Red Bridge" around 1900, this site was likely a crossing for native Americans heading north from Pottequadic/(Forest Lake.)
- 13 **Thorndike Mill Dam** - Thorndike Village was originally settled around 1732. Since 1736 there have been mills on the river- grist mill, saw mills, textile mills and finally paper mills. There are two dams in Thorndike: the lower dam built in 1837 and the upper in 1845. Today the mills are closed, but hydropower is generated through the dams.

Stay well back from the Thorndike Dam, DO NOT get close to the dam area.