

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 7-8 access points.

The Ware River: (facts)

The Ware River begins its trip to Three Rivers from a tributary 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 - Nenamesek - "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 towns 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 stormwater, but today the river is good for fishing and boating.

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.

Colonial expansion into the Ware and Quaboag River watersheds caused conflict with Nipmuc tribes, sparking the King Phillips' war in 1675-76. Ultimately, the colonists wrestled control of the land from the Nipmucs. Descendants still live in this geographic area.

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!

WRBT - Upper Segment Notes:

This segment is approximately 9 miles long and is essentially divided into 2 types of paddling: Calm/Quickwater & White Water.

Flow rate notes: Generally, the upper section from Old Furnace to Ware River Park in Gilbertville is navigable to as low a flow as 200 cfs (Gibbs USGS). As for the White Water (WW) run below this point, most WW groups say the low end is about 400 cfs.

The first Calm and Quickwater section runs from the Old Furnace access down to the Ware River Park access, about 4.5 miles. The run to Ware River Park from Old Furnace has a steady current. Downed trees and maybe a beaver dam could be encountered.

After the RR bridge and bend in the river, stay RIGHT. A large boulder (in moderate flows) marks the start of the take out area. Below are the rapids.

The White Water section begins at the Ware River Park access and runs to the Church Street access, about 3 miles. The lower portion below the mills is simply quick water. Flows under 400 cfs are generally not practical for a WW run. See WW inset map.

The final 1.5 miles is calm water to the Grenville Park access. This can be paddled upstream from the Park to Church St and back as a summer paddle. A good paddle at most any flow rate/level, may be a bit shallow near the bridge.

Flow Gauge info

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



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 and fishermen. 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 - Limited parking can be found at: #4 Old Furnace, #10 Ware River Park, #13 Gilbertville/New Furnace, #16 Church St, and #18 Grenville Park.

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!

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.



Map Credits:

Hardwick Historical Commission
Ware Young Men's Library Staff
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Editor - Keith T Davies

Top cover image: 1882 steamboat at Grenville Park Area



BLUE TRAIL

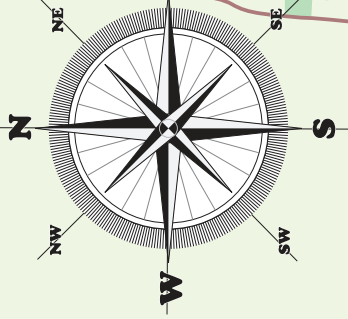
Upper Ware River TRAIL GUIDE

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

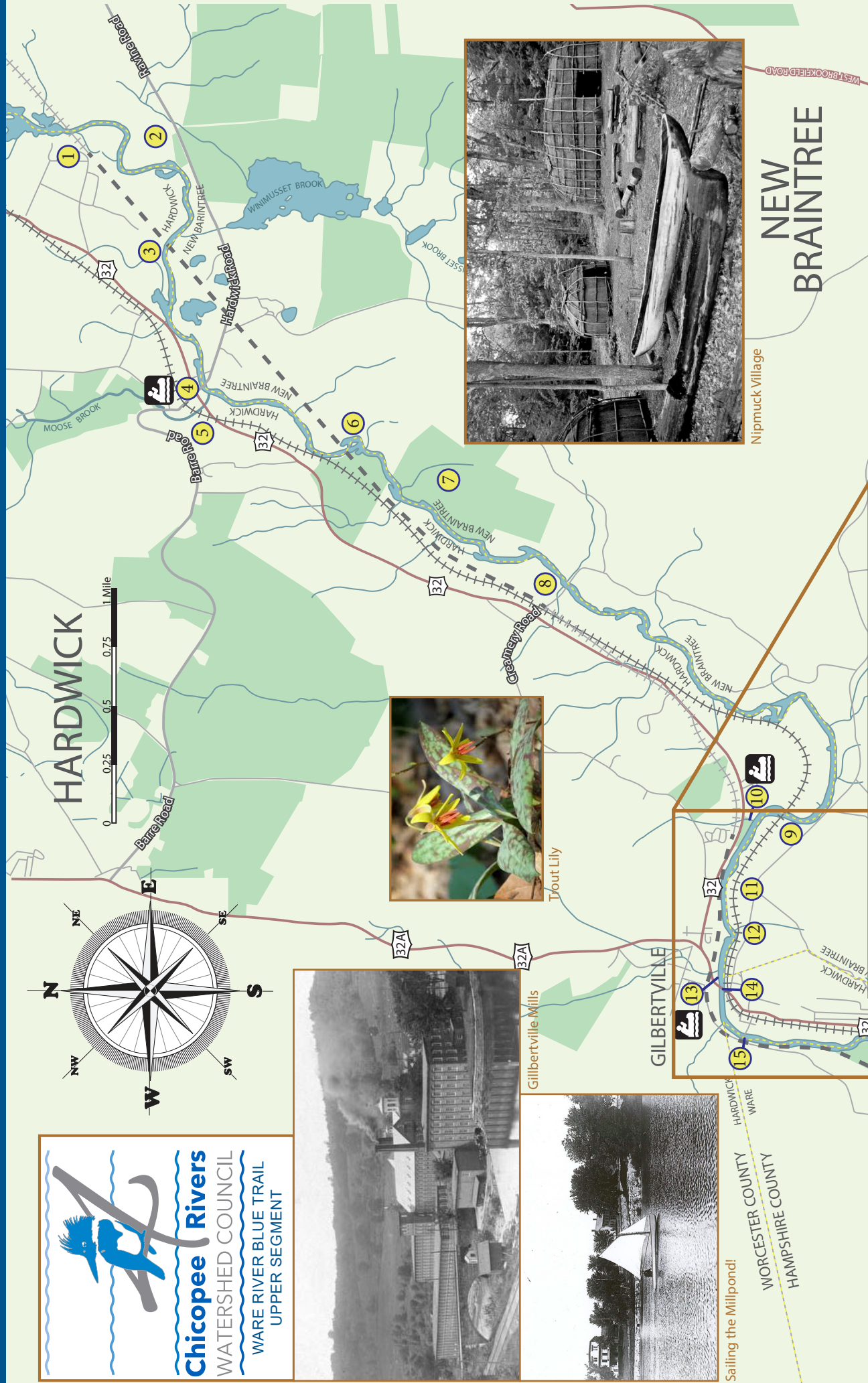


Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council
C4R - Care 4 Rivers

map created 2022



0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Mile



Sailing the Millpond!



Trout Lily



Nipmuck Village

NEW BRAINTREE



Lamberton Bridge

E I D I C B I A

A - rocky class I
B - large boulders, need scouting, class II-III
C - class I
D - calm water, access
E - class I-II, some waves, can be shallow
F - class II-III, standing waves, some boulders
G - class I, 1/2 mile
WW flow rates >400 cfs acceptable, 500-1500 cfs good, over 1500 cfs for more experienced paddlers. (Gibbs Gage)

WARE

WEST BROOKFIELD

Legend

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



Points of Interest

- Wheelright** - From the Old Furnace access, you can paddle upstream towards Wheelright, a former mill village. The river quickens as you approach the existing dam. Presently, there are considerations (2022) to remove this dam. A trail extension may be made upstream in the future.
- Menimesit** - During the King Phillip's War (1675-76) there were 3 Nipmuc villages along the Ware River in New Braintree. One village was near where Winimussset Brook enters the river. Metacombet (King Phillip) stopped here as did captive Mary Rowlandson. The area was a major Native American encampment location with abundant natural resources.
- EQLT-MCRT Pony Truss Bridge** - This bridge was part of the former Central Mass RR. It is now part of a rail trail, created and managed by EQLT: East Quabbin Land Trust.
- Old Furnace Access** - The area is named for a blast furnace that manufactured iron products. It was significant during the Revolution as a manufacturer of cannon balls. The access is on the Hardwick side of the crossing along Rt. 32.
- Moose Brook** - Enters just downstream of the river access. Moose Brook enters. In low flow conditions, the river has a short shallow stretch. The Moose Brook Valley is of ecological significance in the region. The Valley and its associated supporting habitats have been declared an Important Bird Area due to its high density of breeding Neotropical species. EQLT and MA F&W manage preserves upstream.
- EQLT-MCRT Lattice Truss Bridge** - A second former CMRR bridge, and now part of the rail trail.

- Ware River WMA** - As you approach the Lattice Truss bridge, the land on your right is a state wildlife management area (WMA). Shortly below the bridge, the left shore becomes a WMA. The areas are wooded, one has a small cold water stream. Hunting is permitted in season.
- Creamery Road Bridge** - A popular fishing spot!
- Active Railroad Bridge** - This is an active railroad bridge for the Central New England RR. Around 1900, it was a covered RR bridge!
- Hardwick-Ware River Park-Access** - This site is a Town of Hardwick conservation area and community park with picnic area. (river right, just upstream of the rapids) It offers the ideal take out for those who do not wish to run the rapids or are not skilled to. In lower river flows (200-400 cfs) this is also the furthest that can be paddled as the river below is generally not navigable.
- Old Road Crossing, 1800s** - Just below the river access, note what appears to be abutments/stone mounds. The Lamberton Bridge once crossed the river here.
- White Water Segment - see insert** - Shortly downstream of the Ware River Park access is (in season) a white water run: adequate paddling skills are recommended. The river from here to Upper Church St. is suited for paddlers with proper boats and experience.
- Gilbertville-New Furnace Access** - The Gilbertville access is on river right, where the flow becomes calm above the Rt 32 bridge. A gazebo is visible as you approach the access, Danforth Brook enters at access point. The old mill dam was at this site prior to 1938.

- Gilbertville-Old Granite Bridge & Dam** - Prior to the 1938 hurricane flood, there was a dam and a beautiful granite arch bridge just below the river access. The first mills here were built in the late 1860s.
- Covered Bridge 1886** - Built in 1886 when the MCRR came through, the covered bridge is one of the few in central MA. The river here is white water/wavy in high water and rocky and not navigable in shallow low water summer conditions.
- Church Street Crossing Access** - As you approach the bridge, there is an indent in the river bank-river right, a good spot to pull in, walk along the shore to a path closer to the bridge which leads to a parking area.
- Old MCRR Bridge Abutments** - A mile below the upper Church St crossing (upstream of Grenville Park) is another old MCRR bridge crossing, likely a truss style bridge.
- Grenville Park Access** - As you enter the upper impoundment above the Ware Dams, the river right area is Grenville Park, where there is a state access launch. J. H. Grenville and Grace Gilbert donated Grenville Park in memory of their son, Grenville, Jr. Construction of the park took many years and it was officially accepted by the town in 1907. In the 1920s, the Boston Transcript described Grenville Park as Massachusetts' "most notable instance of a public park established as a memorial". It called the park "Ware's loveliest adornment" which "preserves the landscape by uniting the woodlands with the river". **Do not venture towards the dam below in case the safety barrier is not in place.**