

**Androscoggin River Trail
Access Sites**

168 miles from its source at
Lake Umbagog to Merrymeeting Bay



**Trail Under Construction
More than 40 Public Access Sites Available**

Androscoggin River Watershed Council
10/11/09

Introduction

The Androscoggin River Watershed Council is working with numerous groups and individuals to establish a water trail along the full length of the Androscoggin River from Lake Umbagog in Northern New Hampshire to the easterly end of Merrymeeting Bay in Maine.

The purpose of the Trail is to provide access for a wide variety of uses including paddling, fishing and boating in appropriate parts of the river.

The Androscoggin River flows 168 miles; there are more than 40 mapped, publicly available access sites to the river. The Water Trail provides access to the vast majority of the river system through the existing sites. Full development of the trail will include a number of site improvements to existing sites and the establishment of new sites. In addition, improved portages, water access only sites, and day use areas are additions currently being planned or undertaken.

Since sites are changing, a limited number of printed maps are available. Information is being furnished by this web site, including maps and a description of access sites. Maps are also located at kiosks at popular access points.

Trail Ethics

Carry In – Carry Out
Respect Private Property
Leave No Trace

Carry In – Carry Out: ARWC, the managers and owners of the access sites, and all property owners along the river appreciate your thoughtfulness in protecting our resources and reducing site maintenance costs by your carrying out all waste that you generate during your river trip.

Respect Private Property: Almost all of the shoreline and land surrounding access sites is privately owned. Please respect both private and public property. Many property owners have cooperated with access site providers and river users during development of the trail. Respect for their property will ensure good landowner relations for years to come.

Leave No Trace: Leave No Trace principles are a product of and copyrighted by the Center for Outdoor Ethics (www.lnt.org). More information on the principles listed below can be found on the web site.

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

(Camping along the shoreline or on islands is discouraged. As noted the shoreline and islands are all privately owned. ARWC and landowners appreciate your using commercial campgrounds that can be found along the way).

Leave What you Find

Dispose of Waste Properly

(Carry In – Carry Out)

Respect Wildlife

Minimize Campfire Impacts

(Campfires are not allowed on private lands and islands. Permits from local fire wardens are required for any open fires. Therefore, we suggest that users confine campfires to commercial campgrounds).

Trail Description

The river has been divided into three sections. An index map indicates the sections. Each section is divided into two segments to make printing of maps on legal size paper more practical, although the pdf format should allow users to print more or less of any section. The river does not recognize section or even state boundaries. Section maps feature some overlap to facilitate navigation from one section to the next. The sections are

- The North Woods
- The Mahoosucs
- The Lower Androscoggin – Riverlands

Each section provides its unique features but all have some mix of undeveloped, remote-feeling shoreline and built up or urban area. The lower portion of the river offers some surprisingly pristine, remote feeling shoreline, while the northerly sections feature several urban paddling experiences in addition to the remoteness expected of the North Woods.

The North Woods: This section is the northerly most one stretching from the Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge to the Shelburne, New Hampshire Gilead, Maine area. The Wildlife Refuge is rich with wildlife viewing opportunities and features Lake Umbagog that provides great paddling; however, there is some competition from motor boats. The river has a remote feel in many areas, but the urban areas of Berlin and Gorham, New Hampshire are also located in this section. These urban areas offer some good paddling opportunities as well as interesting heritage features including the log drive “booms,” and the Northern Forest Heritage Park. Downstream from Gorham, the shoreline turns to an undeveloped shoreline characterized by deep woods and occasional homes and farm fields. Fishing is excellent and ranges from cold water fishery in the main stem of the river to a mix of cold and warm water species in Lake Umbagog. Drift boat fishing is a popular sport over a number of sections with moderately moving water. Motor boat use is limited by current and water depth in most areas.

The Mahoosucs: The Mahoosuc section is named for the mountain range just north of the Presidentials in the White Mountains. The range covers much of The North Woods section, but the mountain features that come closest to the river are located near the New Hampshire – Maine border where the valley is relatively narrow. This section continues the remote feel from Shelburne until the paddler reaches the historic village of Bethel (a portion of the village is a National Historic District). The shoreline downstream of Bethel is characterized by woods mixed with extensive stretches of farmland. There is little development visible from the river and in some areas mountain slopes reach down to a narrow floodplain. The river flows past historic villages in Rumford Point and Rumford Center and reaches a takeout just above the historic paper mill town of Rumford, birthplace of Senator Edmund S. Muskie, the father of the Clean Water Act. A series of falls and dams in Rumford necessitates a significant portage at this time. An overlook provides great viewing of the falls, and Strathglass Park and the downtown island provide a glimpse of the development originally designed to support the Oxford Paper Company. From Mexico through Dixfield and Canton, the shoreline again features dense woods with occasional farms and glimpses of villages. Much of this section offers excellent fishing. A few areas are suitable for motor boats, but drift boat fishing is extremely popular over most of its length.

The Lower Androscoggin - Riverlands: This section features a true combination of experiences with the dense woods and a few fields continuing downstream from its start to the head of Gulf Island Pond in Turner/Leeds/Greene area. The Center Bridge access site is near the head of the pond, a lakelike body of water held back by a hydroelectric dam more than 13 miles downstream. The Riverlands State Park is located along this stretch and provides a truly remote feeling. There is some motor boat and seaplane traffic on the “pond,” especially on weekends. There are a number of islands for day use. There are also a number of islands that are off limits because of eagle nesting. Downstream of the Gulf Island Pond Dam, the Deer Rips Dam creates another obstacle, but below that there is a short stretch of remarkable river that can be reached from the Androscoggin Land Trust’s Rancourt Preserve on the Lewiston side of the river (river left). The preserve is located adjacent to mixed use urban area, but provides 14 acres of quiet and peaceful woods with walking trails and beautiful views of the Androscoggin and adjacent farmland on the Auburn side. Auburn’s North River Road launch also provides access to this section of river just above the Great Falls that separate the downtown areas of Lewiston and Auburn. The area downstream of Great Falls provides an urban boating experience. Paddlers may want to check out the Lewiston canal outlets on river left. This area is also lined with pedestrian amenities and parks which are joined by a pedestrian trestle across the river. Further downstream development virtually disappears and a wide river with moderately moving current and several sections of white water provides some interesting scenery. The town of Lisbon offers a nice walk on the Paper Mill Trail that starts at their boat launch at the mouth of the Sabattus River. Further downstream, Brunswick also offers a bike-ped trail adjacent to the river prior to the river entering Merrymeeting Bay. Boating or paddling on Merrymeeting Bay offers unique scenery and wonderful wildlife viewing.

Maps

Since sites are changing, a limited number of printed maps are available. Public information is being furnished by this web site, including maps and a description of access sites that follows. Maps are also located at kiosks at popular access points. Full color, paper maps may be obtained by contacting trek@androscogginwatershed.org at a cost of \$20 per set of six of the most detailed maps.

The Mahoosuc Land Trust has an excellent map of the Androscoggin Canoe Trail. It includes eight access sites from Shelburne, New Hampshire to Rumford, Maine, a beautiful section of river. Maps are available for \$7.50. The map may be obtained by calling (207-824-3806), e-mailing info@mahoosuclandtrust.org or writing to the Land Trust at PO.Box 981, Bethel, ME

An older, water-resistant overview map of the trail published by the AMC contains the vast majority of access points, although a few are no longer available to the public. The map contains good descriptions of most sections. The map may be purchased from the Androscoggin River Watershed Council for \$7.50 by e-mailing trek@androscogginwatershed.org.

Overview of Sites

It is currently possible for a paddler to experience attractive day trips or half-day trips on much of the Androscoggin River. Many sections offer suitable launch facilities and water conditions for drift boats or small motorboats. Portions of the river offer excellent fishing, with cold water species (trout) being prevalent in the northerly portions of the river and warm water species, most notably bass, being abundant in the southerly portions.

The sites noted in this report are currently available for public access. Many have very good facilities while others are in need of upgrades to make them more attractive, to make them more suitable for the types of boats that use them, and to make them more protective of the environment.

Site information

The following pages describe the sites reasonably well. Some information is missing but is under development. Sites are listed in order from Lake Umbagog in the north and proceeding southerly. Reference the map for site names. At this time sites are not numbered because we are frequently adding sites.