

QUINEBAUG RIVER WATER TRAIL

Thompson Section



WEST THOMPSON LAKE



US Army Corps
of Engineers
New England District

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When can I visit the trail?

The trail is open daily, year-round.

Can I camp along the trail?

Overnight camping is prohibited on project lands.

Can I have a campfire at the rest stops?

No, open fires are not allowed.

Are there trash barrels along the way or at launch areas?

No, please carry out all litter when you leave.

Can we fish along the trail?

Yes! The Quinebaug River is open to fishing from the 3rd Saturday in April through the last day of February. The river is stocked with rainbow, brook, and brown trout by the CT Department of Environmental Protection. A CT state fishing license is required.

Is hunting allowed near the trail?

Hunting is allowed on project lands during the proper season. A CT state license is required.

OTHER RULES APPLICABLE TO THE USE OF THE AREA ARE CONTAINED IN TITLE 36, U.S. CODE. COPIES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE PARK OFFICE.

For assistance or information, please call the
West Thompson Lake Park Office
449 Reardon Road
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255.
Tel: 860-923-2982.
Or visit our web site:

<http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/recreati/wtl/wtlhome.htm>

This designated Water Trail along the Quinebaug River is a flat water course with some quick water sections, with no portages, approximately 5 miles in length. This section of the Quinebaug River flows from the Fabyan Dam down to West Thompson Lake. This water trail is a delightful way to spend the day during any season.

Free parking is available at the water trail launch area on Fabyan-Woodstock Road in the Fabyan section of Thompson, and at the West Thompson Lake Boat Ramp off of Reardon Road.

Except in winters when the flat, slow-moving stretches freeze, the river trail is open year-round. Each changing season offers the paddler and wildlife observer excellent opportunities to enjoy everything from migrating birds and waterfowl to spectacular fall color displays.

The Quinebaug River Water Trail provides excellent examples of a riverine environment and the geological developments in the valley. As you embark down the river, note the differences in the riverbanks which change from steep and forested to flat agricultural fields. American sycamore trees, black willow, and silver maples abound along the banks.

Look and listen for the many wildlife inhabitants including turtles, great blue herons, green herons, geese, ducks, muskrats, beavers, red foxes, deer, turkeys, hawks, belted kingfishers, and various song birds. Bald eagles have also been sited, usually in late winter and early spring. When you look closely along the edge of the river in the summer, you may see some remains of fresh water mussels or piles of fish scales and bones. This is a sure sign of an otter.

Paddling down the river, turn your attention to some historical developments. Fabyan was home to Nipmuc Indians from the earliest documented history. They would build weirs of stone in the river to channel fish for easy capture with baskets or spears, which can still be seen today. When you put in at the Fabyan Launch, notice the dam just upstream of the bridge. This was built in 1804 to power a carding and felting machine at the mill on site. From 1821 to 1870, steel axes and tools as well as woolen goods were made there. The Fabyan Mill was severely damaged by the 1938 hurricane and flood and never recovered. In March 1939, a fire destroyed the mill completely. As a result of the devastating effects of the floods of 1936, 1938, and 1955, West Thompson Dam was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1963-1965 for flood damage reduction, and a 200 acre lake was created in the process.

Travel time along the river should take about 3 hours. Camping and fires are prohibited, so please leave only "paddle prints" along the trail. During the summer recreation season, from April to October, there is a portable toilet at the Boat Ramp at West Thompson Lake.

River flow levels vary during the course of the year, depending on rainfall amounts and snow melt. Under normal rainfall conditions, the river is easily passable from April to mid-July. It gets low in August and September and you may have to get out and walk your canoe/kayak through shallow spots. Use caution when deciding whether or not to embark down the river. Please watch for floating debris, downed trees, obstructions, and other conditions which may affect safe passage.