

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic River

Corridor Description

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic River includes corridors that stretch for 78.1 miles along the East Branch, Middle Branch and West Branch of the Westfield River (see map). The corridor width is 200 feet wide from mean high water, corresponding to the width of the Massachusetts River Protection Act.

- 5 miles of the headwater streams of the East Branch including Drowned Land, Center and Windsor Jams Brooks (Windsor, Savoy)
- 28 miles of the East Branch (Savoy, Windsor, Cummington, Chesterfield, Huntington)
- 13 miles of the Middle Branch (Worthington, Middlefield, Chester, Huntington)
- 0.4 miles of Glendale Brook (Middlefield)
- 14 miles of the headwater streams of the West Branch including Shaker Mill, Depot, Savery, Watson and Center Pond Brooks (Becket, Washington)
- 16 miles of the West Branch (Becket, Middlefield, Chester)
- 0.8 miles of the Main Stem (Huntington).

Designated Reach: November 2, 1993. The designated segments include: the West Branch from a railway bridge 2000 feet downstream of the Becket Town Center to the Huntington/Chester town line; the Middle Branch from the Peru/Worthington town line downstream to the confluence with Kinne Brook in Chester; Gendale Brook from Clark Wright Road bridge to its confluence with the Middle Branch; the East Branch from the Windsor/Cummington town line to a point 0.8 miles upstream of the confluence with Holly Brook in Chesterfield.

Designated Reach: October 29, 2004. Headwater Tributaries of the East Branch including Drowned Land Brook from its headwaters in Windsor to the confluence with the East Branch in Savoy; Center Brook from its headwaters below a pond near Savoy Center to its confluence with the East Branch; and Windsor Jams Brook from the junction of Phelps Brook and Clear Brook to its confluence with the East Branch in Windsor. The Upper East Branch from the confluence with Drowned Land Brook in Savoy to the Windsor/Cummington Town Line. The Lower East Branch from Sykes Brook in Huntington to the confluence with the West Branch. Lower Middle Branch from the Goss Hill Road Bridge downstream to the confluence with the East Branch. Headwater Tributaries of the West Branch including Shaker Mill Brook from Brooker Hill Road in Becket to its confluence with the West Branch; Depot Brook from its headwaters near Beach Road in Washington to the confluence with Shaker Mill Brook in Becket; Savery Brook from the headwaters off Pittsfield Road in Washington to the confluence with Shaker Mill Brook; Watson Brook from the headwaters off Stanley Road in Washington to the confluence with Shaker Mill Brook ; and Center Pond Brook from Center Pond to its confluence with the West Branch. Lower West Branch from Chester/Huntington town line downstream to the confluence with the Main Stem. Main Stem from the confluence with the East Branch and Middle Branch in Huntington Center downstream until the Huntington/Russell town line.

Classification/Mileage: Wild -- 2.6 miles; Scenic -- 42.9 miles; Recreational -- 32.6 miles; Total -- 78.1 miles.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Westfield River

(Note: the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act [U.S.C. 1271-1287] has identified the following "outstandingly remarkable values" as applying to the Westfield River.)

- Scenic and geologic resources
- Historical resources
- Rare and Endangered Species
- Fisheries Resources
- Water Quality and Flow
- Recreational Resources

Background

In 1968, the United States Congress established a National Wild and Scenic Rivers system to protect outstanding rivers from the harmful effects of new federal projects, such as dams, hydroelectric facilities, bank stabilization and bridges. To be considered "Wild and Scenic" a river must have at least one "outstandingly remarkable" natural, cultural or recreational value pursuant to federal law (Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287).

In 1993, after years of study, adding protective bylaws, working with landowners and residents of Becket, Chester, Middlefield, Chesterfield, Worthington and Cummington, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Westfield River Watershed Association, the Westfield River was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River.

The Wild and Scenic designation is meant to encourage owners, regional groups, citizens and all levels of government to act as stewards by promoting and protecting it. Initially, the creators of the Wild and Scenic River designation believed that certain steps could be taken together by the towns and the landowners. These include: voluntary conservation restrictions, increasing the maintenance at river access points, and grants for selected land acquisitions or improvements, riverbank beautification (clean up of trash, establishment and maintenance of buffers), salmon restoration, land acquisition and greenways.

Concerted efforts by municipalities, agencies, private landowners and others are required to protect this outstanding river, recognized as one of our national treasures, that includes 5 miles of the headwater streams of the East Branch including Drowned Land, Center and Windsor Jamb Brooks (Windsor, Savoy); 28 miles of the East Branch (Savoy, Windsor, Cummington, Chesterfield, Huntington); 13 miles of the Middle Branch (Worthington, Middlefield, Chester, Huntington); 0.4 miles of Glendale Brook (Middlefield); 14 miles of the headwater streams of the West Branch including Shaker Mill, Depot, Savery, Watson and Center Pond Brooks (Becket, Washington); 16 miles of the West Branch (Becket, Middlefield, Chester); and 0.8 miles of the Main Stem (Huntington).

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee is composed of representatives of the towns of Becket, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Huntington, Middlefield, Savoy, Washington, Windsor, and Worthington as well as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the National Park Service, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Berkshire Planning Commission, The Trustees of Reservations and the Westfield River Watershed Association. Representatives are appointed by local elected officials, the Commonwealth or appropriate authorities in the organizations they represent. For more information on the Advisory Committee see www.westfieldriverwildscenic.org or contact WRWSAC, PO Box 397, Huntington, MA 01050.

Resources on this river include cold water fisheries, recreational amenities, historic resources, historic villages, unique geologic features, rare and endangered species and biodiversity habitat as well as being one of the largest roadless wilderness areas remaining in Massachusetts.

