



Guidebook

For the

NRWA Adopt-a-River Program



Summer 2026 Edition

Welcome to the Nashua River Watershed Association's (NRWA) **Adopt-a-River Program!** This guidebook is designed to provide you with essential information and step-by-step instructions to help you effectively manage and remove water chestnuts from designated sections of the Nashua River. Your involvement is crucial to maintaining the health and vitality of our watershed, and we appreciate your commitment to this important conservation effort.

1. About NRWA

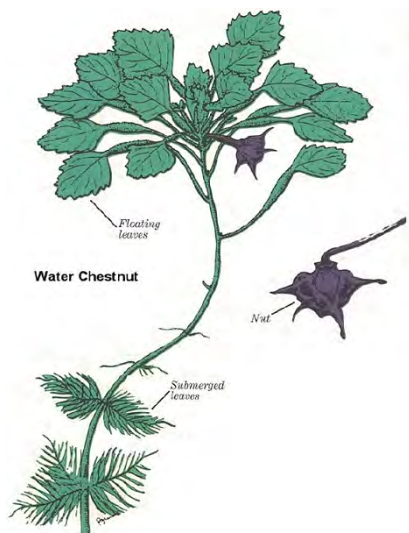
The Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) is dedicated to protecting the water and land resources of the Nashua River watershed. This mission is achieved through a combination of environmental education, testing and advocacy for water quality, river restoration, and active community involvement in conservation efforts. The organization works tirelessly to ensure that the natural resources within the watershed are preserved and enhanced for current and future generations. By engaging with local communities, NRWA promotes sustainable practices and fosters a deeper understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy watershed environment.



Photos 1 & 2. Water Chestnut Removal at Nashua River in Devens - 2024

2. Water Chestnuts

Water chestnuts (*Trapa natans*) are an invasive aquatic plant that poses a significant threat to Massachusetts' water bodies. Native to Eurasia, the plant was initially brought over for ornamental purposes and to enhance aquatic habitats. Water chestnut has rapidly spread across North America, where it colonizes lakes, ponds, and rivers. The plant features a rosette of floating leaves and distinctive, spiky fruit (see Photos 3 & 4), and forms dense mats on the water's surface. These mats block sunlight, disrupt native plant growth, and negatively impact fish and wildlife habitats, while also hindering recreational activities like swimming and boating.



Photos 3 & 4. Water Chestnuts. Illustration by Pam Bruns.

Water chestnuts can grow in water up to 15 feet deep and have long, submerged stems with fringe-like leaves. Emerging in early May, the plant produces small white flowers from June to July. By mid to late summer, sharp, barbed seed pods develop and drop into the substrate from August to September, where they can remain dormant for up to 12 years. Each seed pod can generate up to 20 new plants, with each plant producing up to 20 seeds. The presence of water chestnuts complicates recreational activities. In boating, the plant can snag on paddles and rudders, making navigation difficult. Large mats can obstruct fishing and create hazardous swimming conditions, as the dense vegetation is hard to navigate and the sharp seeds can pierce skin or become entangled in clothing.

3. Water Chestnuts Removal Techniques

Effective management of water chestnuts (*Trapa natans*) involves several approaches: manual removal, mechanical harvesting, chemical control, biological control. The Adopt-a-River Program focuses on manual removal.

Manual Removal: Hand-pulling is most effective during the summer, from late June through early August, when the floating rosettes are present but before the fruits ripen and sink to the sediment. This can be done using a canoe, kayak, or small motorboat. When wading to remove the plants, it is essential to protect feet from the sharp nuts in the sediment.

Focus on removing only the leaves and fruits of the water chestnut plants. As annuals, water chestnuts will die without their leaves, and they cannot spread without their seeds.

Removed plants should be composted on land, provided they are kept well away (preferably 20 feet or more) from water sources to prevent them from being washed back into waterways. If composting is not possible, bag the plants and dispose of them at a local landfill.

4. Adopt-a-River Program

The NRWA launched the **Adopt-a-River** program to combat the spread of invasive water chestnuts in the Nashua River watershed. Building on the success of previous initiatives funded by the Nashua River Regional Aquatic Invasives Alliance (NRRRIA) and the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council, which has significantly reduced infestations since 2016, this program is a step towards ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of the watershed's aquatic ecosystems. The Adopt-a-River program is generously funded by both the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council and the NRRRIA.

NRWA recruits volunteers for the Adopt-a-River Program to help manage and remove water chestnuts from designated sections of the Nashua River. Volunteers are equipped with detailed maps and essential tools, such as baskets and other equipment (excluding boats), to monitor and remove water chestnuts from their adopted, designated river sections. This hands-on approach not only helps manage current infestations but also prevents future re-infestation, as the removal of a single water chestnut plant can prevent the growth of dozens of plants the following year. By engaging the community in this effort, NRWA is nurturing

environmental stewardship and fostering a deeper understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy watershed environment.

The program will be managed by **Ryan Hennrikus**, *Senior Land and Climate Associate*, and **Utkir Adkhamov**, *Water Quality and Ecological Restoration Associate*, with oversight from **Jessica Veysey Powell**, *Water Programs Director*, ensuring effective coordination and support. The NRWA communications team play a vital role in raising awareness and recruiting volunteers, focusing on key areas such as Pepperell Pond, and reaches of the river in Hollis and Nashua.

3. Project Overview

The objectives of the program are:

- **To manage and remove** water chestnuts in designated sections of the Nashua River where these invasive plants threaten aquatic ecosystems and recreation.
 - a) **Target areas** include sections where water chestnuts are known to be prevalent and are not currently being managed.
 - b) **Potential sources** of infestation include dispersal from existing infested areas via streamflow, wildlife, and/or boats.
- **To collaborate with local communities** to enhance river health and recreational access through hands-on volunteer efforts.
- **To provide ongoing updates and reports** on the effectiveness of removal efforts and overall river health.

4. Project Logistics

The Adopt-a-River program will target 11 river segments for water-chestnut removal:

- **7 reaches** in Nashua and Hollis, NH
- **4 reaches** in Pepperell, MA

Volunteer teams can choose to adopt multiple sections of the river or multiple teams can work on one site within the program area. NRWA will supply volunteers with river maps and baskets for water-chestnut removal before the start of the program. Volunteers will need to use their own boats for water-chestnut removal. River access points are described for each adoptable reach in the provided maps.

NRWA staff is offering an in-person training for all Adopt-a-River volunteers on Saturday June 6th, 2026 at the Mass Fish & Game Fishing and Boating Access / Petapawag Canoe Launch off of Nod Road in Groton MA. A rain date for this in-person training is scheduled for the following Saturday, June 13th, at the same time and location.

A one hour online trainings call will be offered on Wednesday June 10th, 2026 for those who cannot attend the in person training. Contact Ryan Hennrikus for details at ryanh@NashuaRvierWatershed.org.

5. Safety Guidelines for the Adopt-a-River Program

Ensuring safety is top priority in the Adopt-a-River Program. Please prioritize your safety and refrain from participating if you have any concerns about the conditions. All volunteers must read and sign the liability waiver before the first water-chestnut-removal event. Additionally, please adhere to the following safety rules;

1. **Always Work with a Partner:** Paddle with at least one other person. Wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) if working near flowing or deep water.
2. **Emergency Contacts:** Add the NRWA phone number (978-448-0299) and your team members' phone numbers to your contact list.
3. **Inform Others:** Before heading out, notify someone of your location and expected return time. Keep your cell phone accessible at all times.
4. **Safe Parking:** Park in a secure location away from traffic. Use hazard lights and traffic cones if parked on the road and wear a high-visibility vest when walking near or on roadways.
5. **Be Aware of Your Surroundings:** Be mindful of others nearby. Never visit a remote section of the river or stream alone.
6. **Monitor Weather Conditions:** Water-chestnut removal should be avoided in high water or flood conditions. Be conscious of your physical limits and avoid unsafe conditions. If access to a site is hazardous, do not proceed.
7. **Wading Precautions:** Avoid wading into water deeper than knee-high, even with waders. Be aware that stream bottoms can be slippery; wear sturdy, closed-toed footwear.
8. **Navigate Carefully:** Watch for uneven terrain, steep banks, overgrown vegetation, and poison ivy. Check yourself for ticks after working in the area.
9. **First Aid Kit:** Carry a first aid kit and inform your partner(s) of any allergies or medical conditions.
10. **Report Unsafe Conditions:** Notify NRWA staff immediately if site conditions change.

6. Contact Information

Utkir Adkhamov – Project Coordinator

Water Quality and Ecological Restoration Associate

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Phone: 978-448-0299

Address: Nashua River Watershed Association, 592 Main Street | Groton, MA 01450

Ryan Hennrikus – Project Coordinator

Senior Land and Climate Associate

Email: ryanh@nashuariverwatershed.org

Phone: 978-448-0299

Address: Nashua River Watershed Association, 592 Main Street | Groton, MA 01450

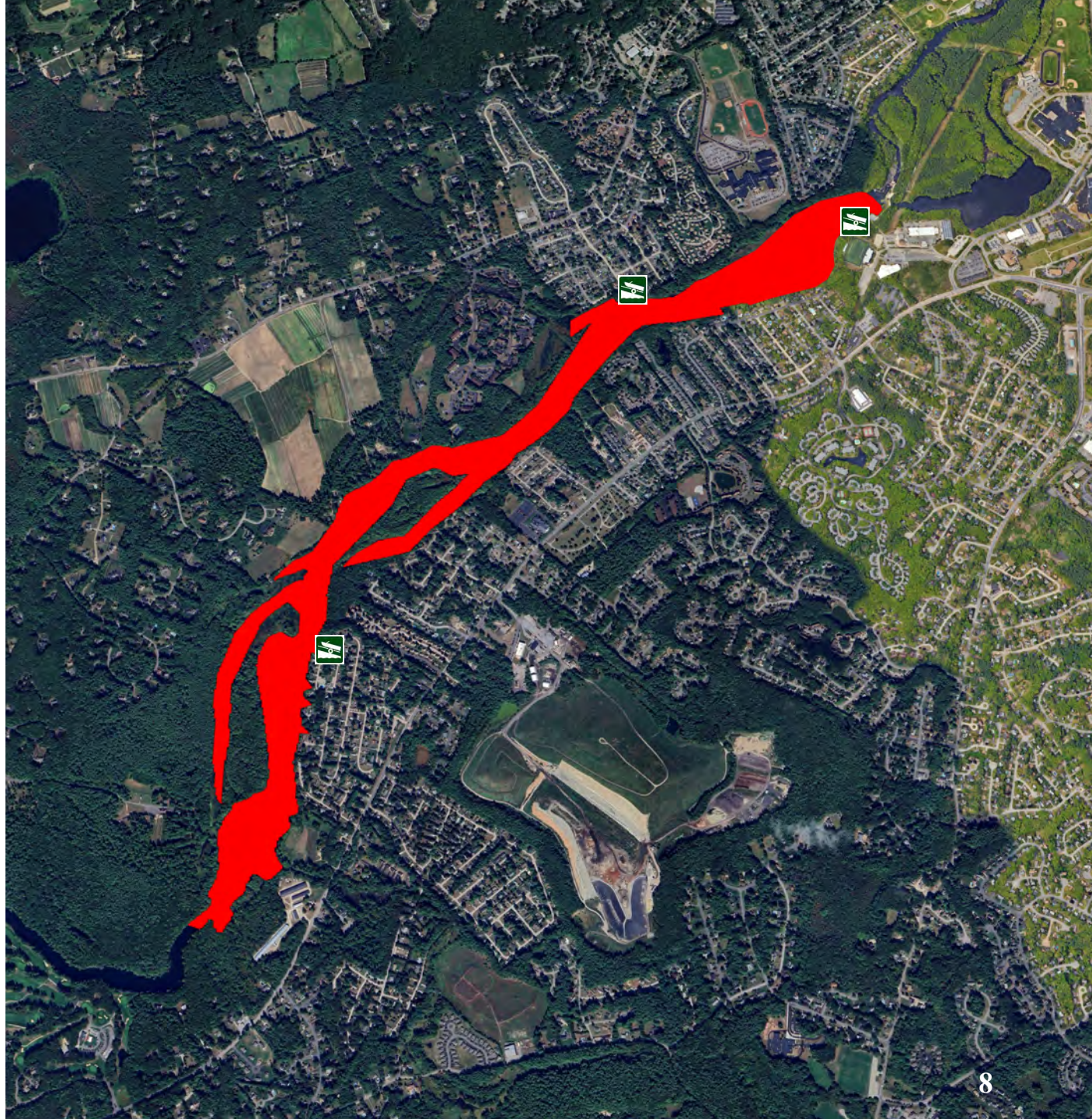


NASHUA RIVERS
WILD & SCENIC
STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

Nashua • Squannacook • Nissitissit Rivers

This project is funded in part by the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council.
wildandscenicnashuarivers.org

Nashua And Hollis



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Nashua and Hollis: Section 1



NASHUA RIVER
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION

0 0.025 0.05 0.1 0.15 0.2 Miles



Point of entry:

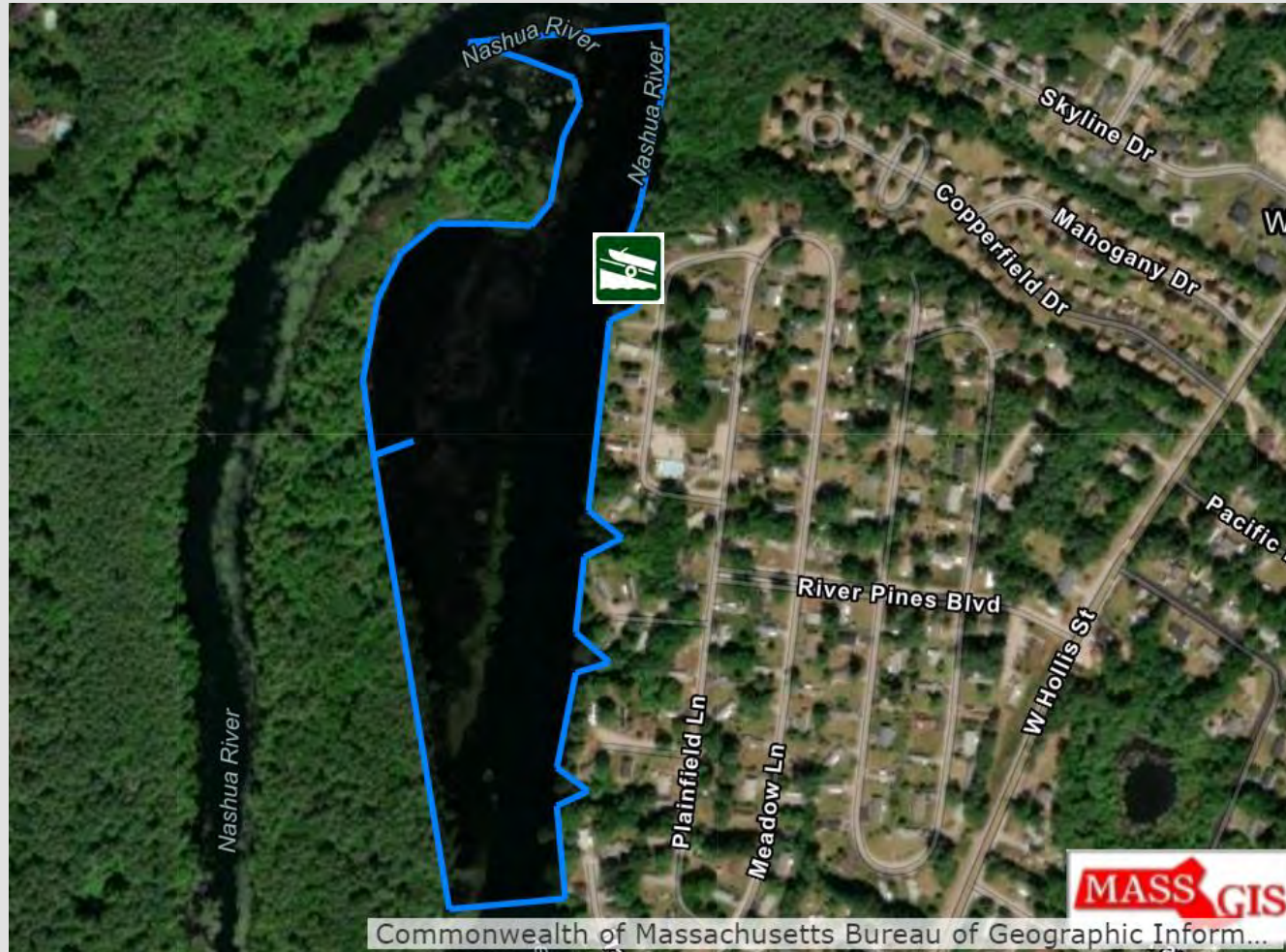
Waterview Trail near Lone Pine Hunters Club;
(with permission from River Pines community)
(42.73171, -71.53295)

Lone Pine Hunters Club
(42.72526, -71.53685)

Parcel Specs:
Width: 686 feet
Length: 2323 feet
Perimeter: 6019 feet
Area: 123,904 square yards



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Nashua and Hollis: Section 2



Point of entry:

Waterview Trail with permission
from River Pines community
(42.73171, -71.53295)

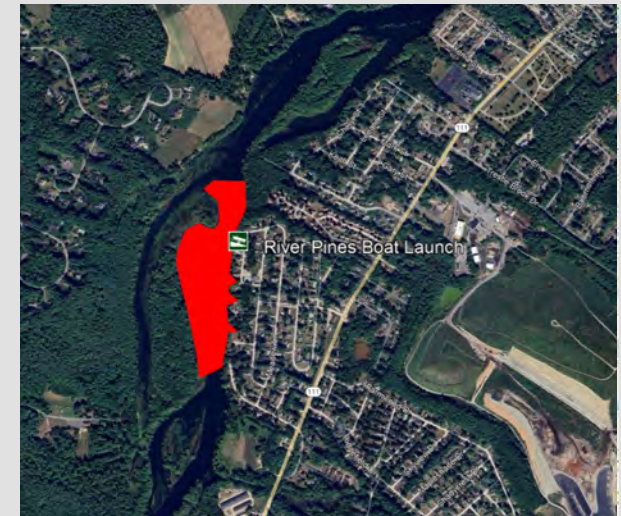
Parcel Specs:

Width: 625 feet

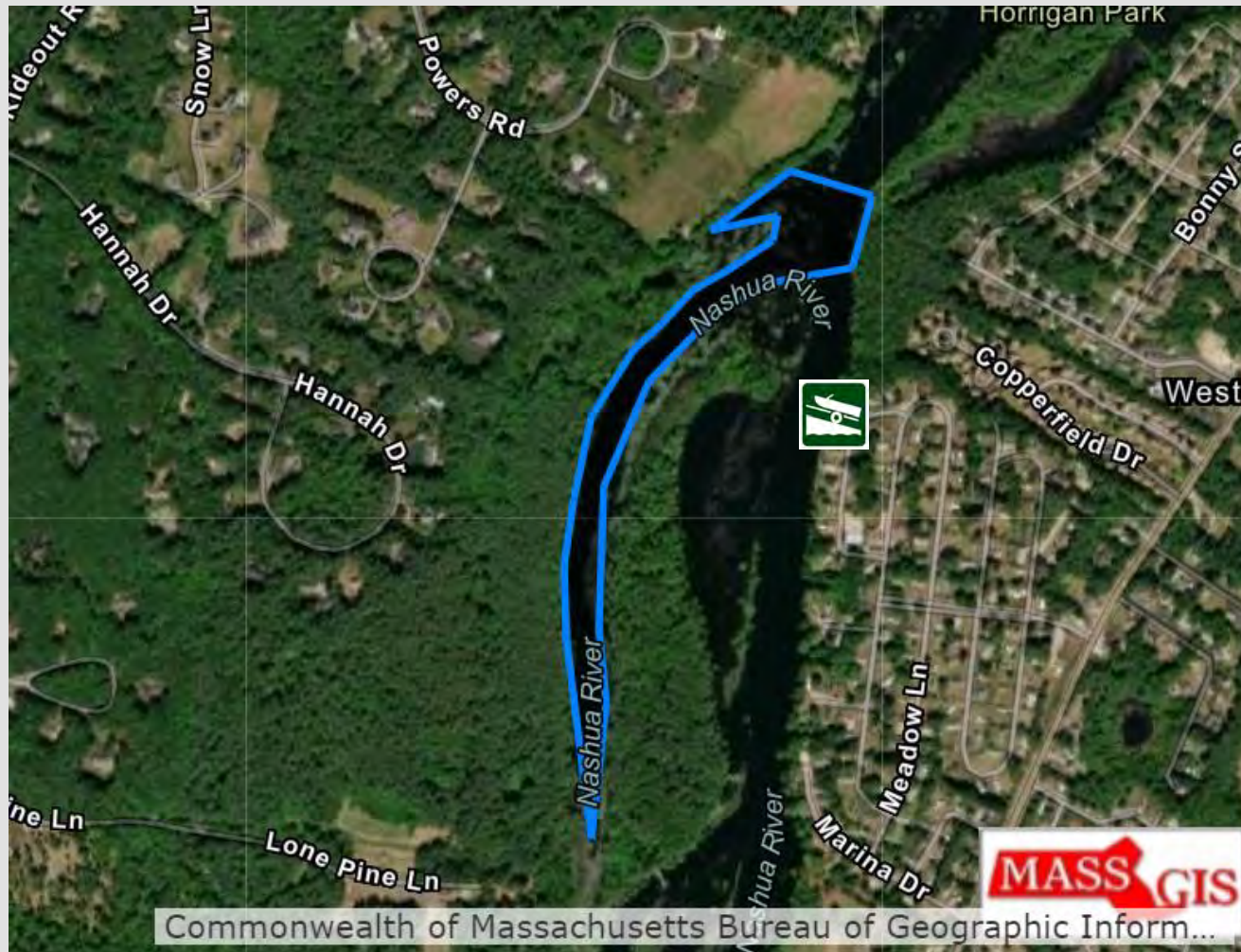
Length: 2083 feet

Perimeter: 6124 feet

Area: 120,564 square yards



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Nashua and Hollis: Section 3



Point of entry:

Waterview Trail with permission
from River Pines community
(42.73171, -71.53295)

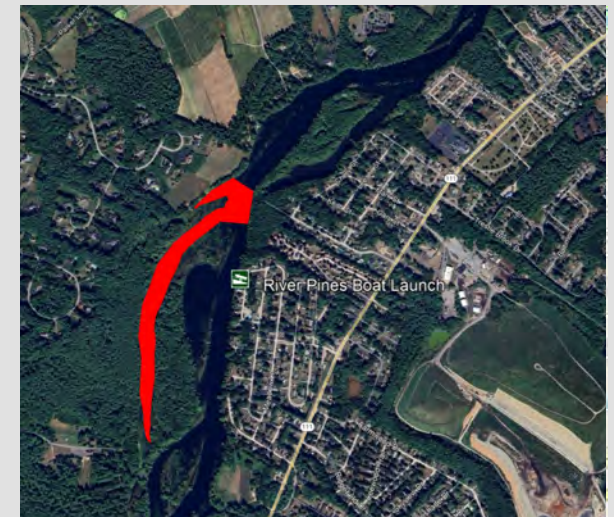
Parcel Specs:

Width: 679 feet

Length: 2961 feet

Perimeter: 8326 feet

Area: 128,098 square yards



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Nashua and Hollis: Section 4



0 0.025 0.05 0.1 0.15 0.2 Miles



Point of entry:

Winchester Street Boat Launch
(42.74578, -71.51699)

Parcel Specs:

Width: 594 feet

Length: 1995 feet

Perimeter: 6008 feet

Area: 92,928 square yards



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Nashua and Hollis: Section 5



Point of entry:

Winchester Street Boat Launch
(42.74578, -71.51699)

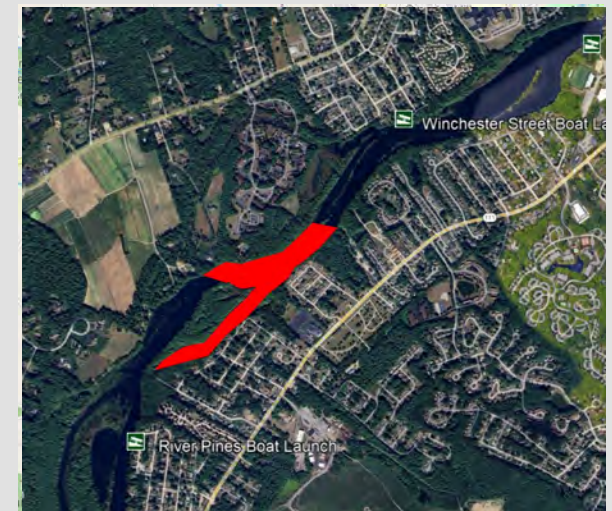
Parcel Specs:

Width: 778 feet

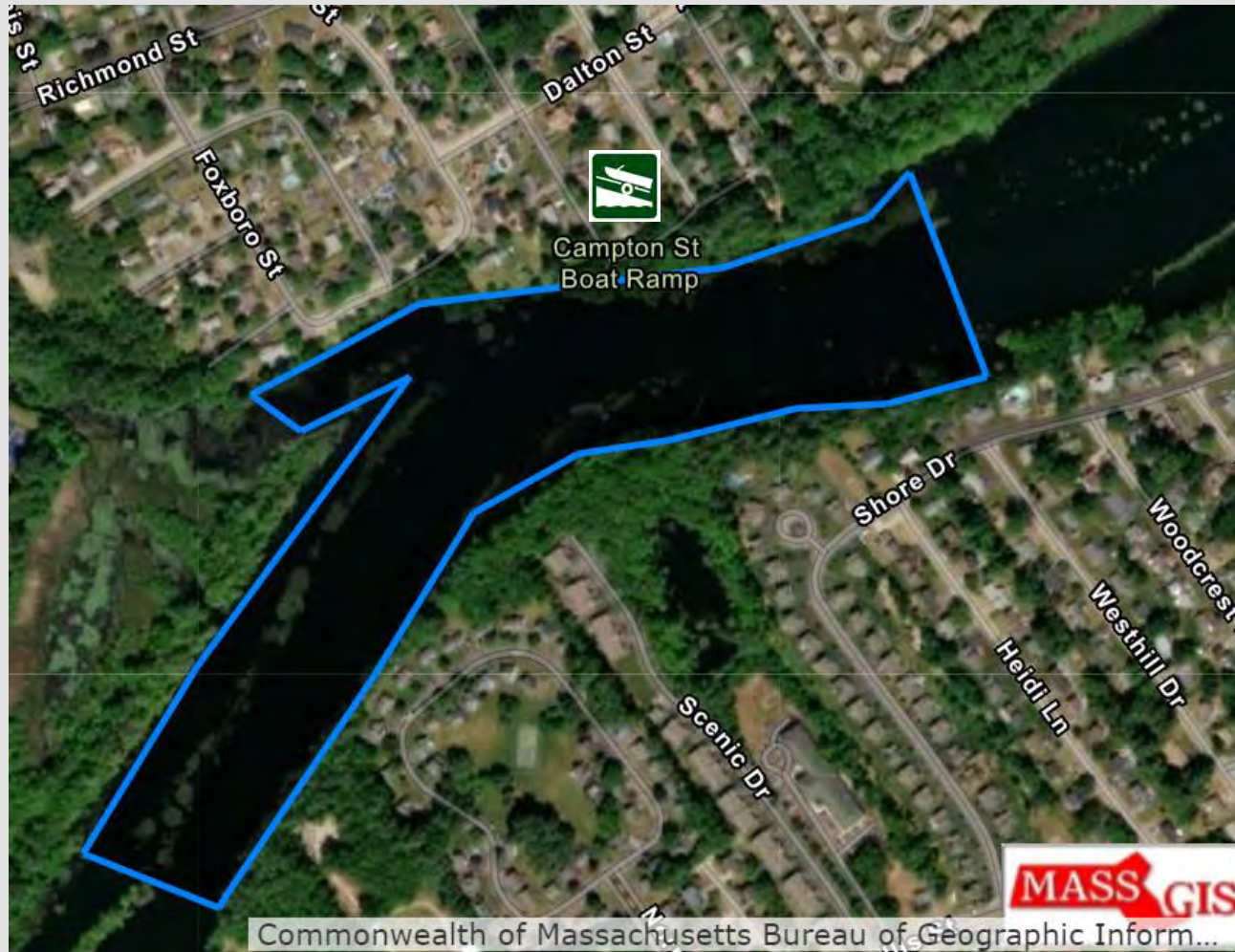
Length: 2231 feet

Perimeter: 8872 feet

Area: 112,650 square yards



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Nashua and Hollis: Section 6



Point of entry:

Winchester Street Boat Launch

AKA Campton Street Boat Launch

42.74578, -71.51699)

or

Mine Falls Boat Ramp

(42.74925, -71.50581)

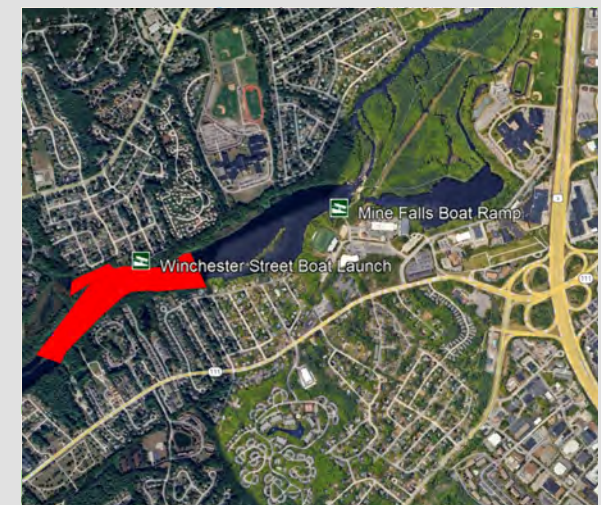
Parcel Specs:

Width: 743 feet

Length: 2234 feet

Perimeter: 7233 feet

Area: 125,518 square yards



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Nashua and Hollis: Section 7



NASHUA RIVER
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION

0 0.025 0.05 0.1 0.15 0.2 Miles



Note: Beware of Dam!

Point of entry:

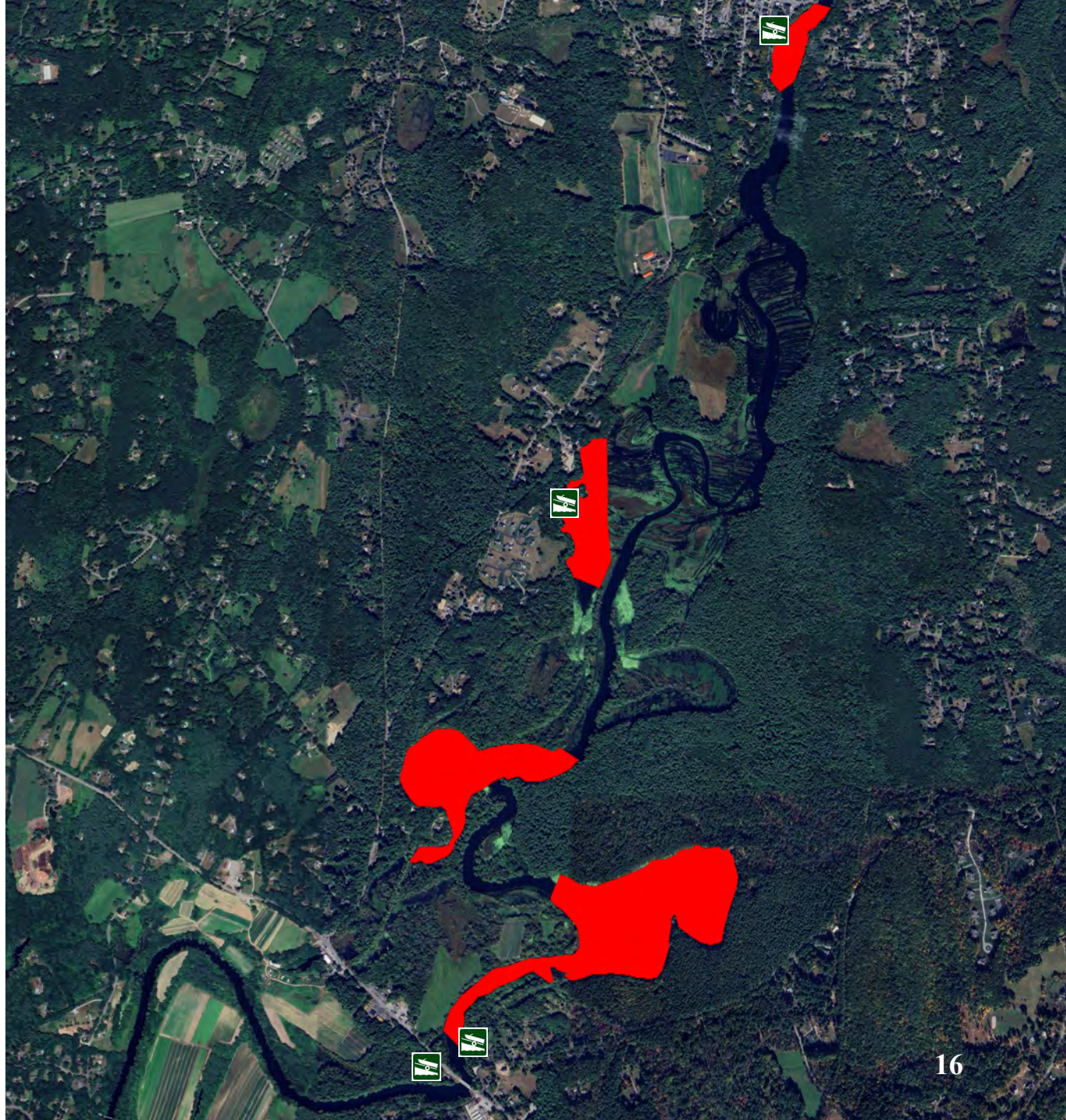
Mine Falls Boat Ramp
(42.74925, -71.50581)

Parcel Specs:
Width: 903 feet
Length: 2199 feet
Perimeter: 7520 feet Area:
126,092 square yards

Note: Beware of Dam. Stay well away!



Pepperell And Groton



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Pepperell Pond, Section 1



Point of entry:

Marion Stoddart Boat Launch
(42.6462085 -71.5889759)

or

Massachusetts Fish & Game Fishing and Boating
Access

or

(42.628359 -71.593242100)

or

Nashua River Canoe and Kayak Launch
(42.6267121 -71.5939277)

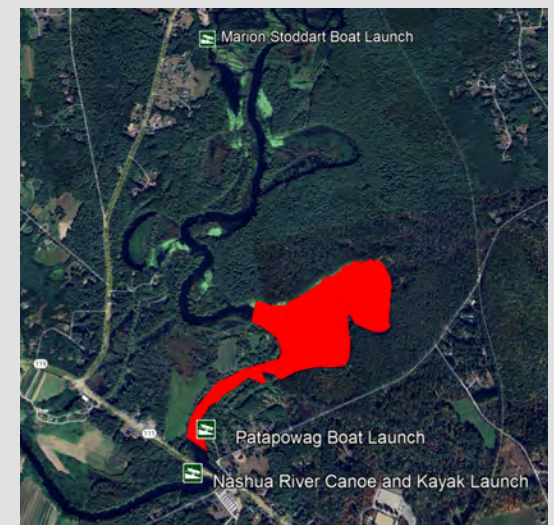
Parcel specs:

Width: 2001.32 ft (at widest point)

Length: 4,012.03 ft

Perimeter: 10,209 ft

Area: 313,189.01 yd²



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Pepperell Pond, Section 4



Point of entry:

Marion Stoddart Boat Launch
(42.6462085 -71.5889759)

or

Massachusetts Fish & Game Fishing and Boating
Access

or

(42.628359 -71.593242100)

or

Nashua River Canoe and Kayak Launch
(42.6267121 -71.5939277)

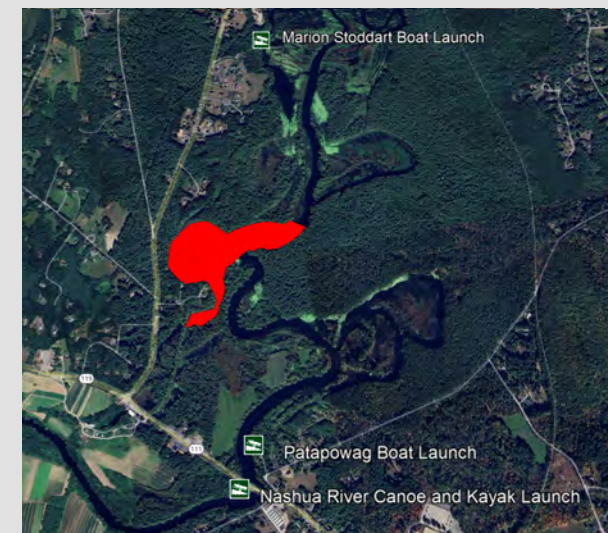
Parcel specs:

Width: 2,266.23 ft (at widest point)

Length: 1,463.84 ft

Perimeter: 7,597.59 ft

Area: 157,521.78 yd²



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Pepperell Pond, Section 7



Point of entry:
Marion Stoddart Boat Launch
(42.6462085 -71.5889759)

or

Massachusetts Fish & Game Fishing and Boating
Access

or

(42.628359 -71.593242100)

or

Nashua River Canoe and Kayak Launch
(42.6267121 -71.5939277)

Parcel specs:

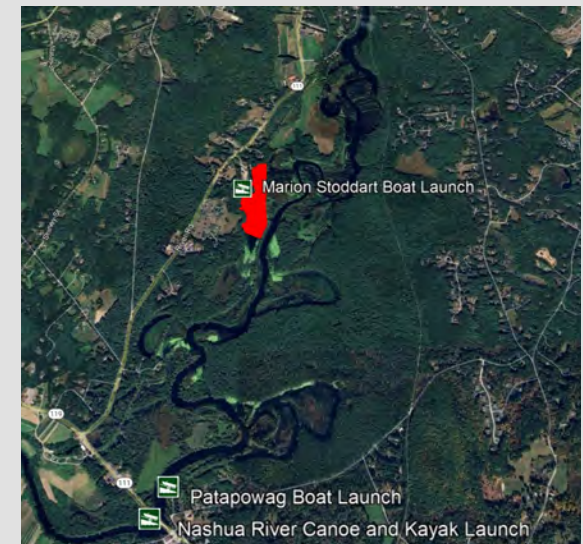
Width: 633.88 ft (at widest point)

Length: 2,043.56 ft

Perimeter: 5,697.20 ft

Area: 97,438.32 yd²

Treatments are planned for this area of dense plant growth



Water Chestnut Scout and Removal: Pepperell Pond, Section 10

Note: Beware of Dam!

Point of entry:

Nashua River Canoe Portage at Pepperell Dam
(42.6647502 -71.5769234)

Canal Street Boat Launch
(42.663666 -71.5782567)

Parcel specs:

Width: 265.5 ft

Length: 951.64 ft

Perimeter: 2,751.44 ft

Area: 49,041.73 yd²

Note: Beware of Dam! Stay well away!

