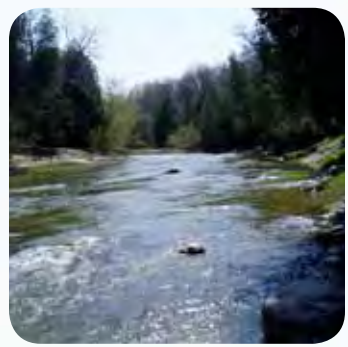


Exploring the Nottawasaga Valley by Water — Points of Interest

The Landscape

Although you cannot see bedrock while travelling the river, it is interesting to note that the entire river valley is resting on sedimentary rock more than 400 million years old. This rock consists of sediments and shells of ancient marine animals deposited when the area was covered by warm, shallow seas. On top of the bedrock is a thick layer of material that has been deposited, shaped and reshaped countless times by the actions of glacial ice sheets, post-glacial lakes and Nottawasaga River and its tributaries.



1 Here the river has cut a 25 m gorge through layers of sediment deposited in the post-glacial lakes created by the retreat of the Wisconsin ice sheet. The rapids in this area and just upstream are thought to have started as gravel beaches and bars along the ancient shorelines of these post-glacial lakes.

2 Twelve thousand years ago this area was part of the bottom of post-glacial Lake Algonquin. Gradually water levels dropped until even the Wasaga Beach area was 30 m above the level of Lake Algonquin. Then 7,000 years ago, a minor resurgence of the Wisconsin ice sheet caused lake levels to rise, creating Lake Nipissing. At this stage the Minesing Wetland existed as an inland extension of the lake. The area around the Village of Minesing was an island near the north-east shore. The name Minesing is, in fact, a native North American word for island. Gradually lake levels again decreased and the area exists today as a 6,000 ha, internationally significant wetland.

3 In this area the Nottawasaga has cut a deep gorge through the Edenvale Moraine. The moraine is made of materials deposited by the retreat of the Wisconsin ice sheet.

4 During the Lake Nipissing stage of post-glacial lake development, a baymouth bar was created in what is now Wasaga Beach. The baymouth bar resulted in the formation of a large lagoon that eventually drained and reduced in size to form the Jack's Lake basin. As lake levels dropped, a series of successive shorelines developed along the bar and an extensive sand dune complex was created. In fact, the Wasaga Beach dune complex contains the largest group of parabolic sand dunes in the entire province. Where the river breached the now relic baymouth bar, a sand spit developed and has extended to form the Wasaga Beach Spit.

Flora & Fauna

The Nottawasaga River floodplain is made up of a variety of habitats including forests, wetlands, dunes, farmland and urban land. This diversity of habitats along the river not only make it

Leave No Trace

The NVCA and its partners work hard to maintain conservation lands for the enjoyment of all. Help us protect our wild places by following these simple rules:

- Pack out your litter or dispose of it where facilities exist.
- Observe all signs regarding private property.
- Camp only at designated campsites.
- Set campfires only at designated locations. Do not bring in your own firewood, as this can lead to the spread of invasive species.
- When portaging, stay on existing trails and leave no trace of your passage behind.

interesting to travel, but also ensures plentiful wildlife along the river valley.

Mammals commonly seen along the river include raccoons, weasels, mink, muskrats, porcupines, snowshoe hares, grey and red squirrels, eastern chipmunks, red fox and whitetail deer. Although rare, black bears have been sighted in the Minesing Wetlands.

Over 200 species of birds have also been sighted along the river, with the Minesing Wetlands being the richest bird habitat.

The Nottawasaga supports at least 32 species of fish including walleye, northern pike, white longnosed sucker, carp, bowfin, sticklebacks, mud minnows, common shiners, salmon, sturgeon, and brook, brown and rainbow trout.

5 The Wasaga Beach area, because of its complex geomorphological history, exhibits a striking linear vegetation pattern. This pattern is a result of white birch-red maple forest development on raised beach ridges separated by low, wet swales containing white cedar swamp and dogwood-holly thickets.

The dunes contain a variety of vegetative communities, from forest through savannah, prairie grasslands to open desert. Natural fires, blow outs and logging have contributed to this survival of this pattern for 4,000 years.

6 The Minesing Wetlands are of international significance, showcasing diverse habitats. Practically side-by-side lie areas typical of the Hudson Bay Lowlands and Carolinian Bottomland and levee forests. Highlights include:

- one of the most extensive sites for pure Silver Maple stands in Ontario
- one of a very few sites in Ontario where walleye spawn in a wetland
- several species of provincially rare plants
- several species of breeding birds believed to be endangered in Ontario

Plantations on Private Lands

The extensive sand flats of the Nottawasaga Valley supported rich stands of pine that were quickly exhausted during early logging and settlement periods.

7 Pine forest plantations are visible at several locations along this section of the river. These pine stands are part of the Simcoe County Forests established in the 1920s under the Reforestation Act of 1921.

A Rich & Colourful History

Long before Europe discovered the New World, the native peoples of Central Ontario were using the Nottawasaga River as a transportation route. The river valley was used extensively for hunting, fishing and camping. Then came the explorers, fur traders, missionaries, military suppliers and soldiers. Later, when roads were established, lumbermen settled in the area using the Nottawasaga as a source of power and as a means to ship sawn timber to market. Once timber resources were exhausted, woollen, flour and grist mills became common. Much of the river valley was cleared and converted into agricultural lands. Today, the Nottawasaga provides many recreational opportunities for naturalists, hunters and anglers.



8 Schooner Town served as the winter quarters of the Royal Navy on Lake Huron from the end of the War of 1812 until they transferred to Penetanguishene in 1817.

9 It's here at Glengarry Landing that during the harsh winter of 1814, the Glengarry Light Infantry, under the command of Lt. Col. Robert McDougall, built 29 batteaux in a desperate expedition to relieve the British troops at Fort Mackinac. This action helped save this vital gateway to the west from American invasion.

10 Nancy Island Historic Site displays, among other artifacts, the remains of the sailing vessel Nancy. During 1812-13, the Nancy carried troops and supplies on the Great Lakes. After the American naval victory on Lake Erie, the Nancy remained the sole surviving British vessel. A new supply route was quickly established from York (Toronto) overland to Lake Simcoe, then along the Nine Mile Portage to Fort Willow. From the fort, it was downstream to Wasaga Beach to load supplies and troops for the trip to Fort Mackinac.

During the summer of 1814, the Nancy was discovered at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River by the American ships Niagara, Tigress and Scorpion. She was set afire and sank into the river. Her crew retreated upstream where they constructed several open boats and bravely made their way to Fort Mackinac. Here they joined the fort's troops in capturing two of the American ships that had sunk the Nancy. Once again the British controlled the upper Great Lakes.



11 The Willow Creek Canoe Route starts south of the village of Minesing off George Johnston Rd. Here you will find a parking lot, interpretive trail, information kiosk and canoe launch.

12 The Nine Mile Portage, originally an Indian trail, served as one of the three major gateways to the west, the others being a southern route via the Great Lakes and a northern route via the Ottawa and French rivers. The portage was used extensively by the fur traders of the North West Company, but gained fame as the route British soldiers used to transport men and provisions to posts in the upper Great Lakes during the War of 1812 when other routes were cut off. The portage continued to supply military and fur posts until about 1830. Noted explorers David Thompson and Sir John Franklin also travelled through the Nine Mile Portage.

13 It was the rise of the automobile that started the influx of seasonal tourists to this area. Wasaga Beach, known as the largest freshwater beach in the world, can see up to 200,000 visitors during summer long weekends.

14 Angus, founded by Jonas Tarbush in 1855, grew and died with the early forest industry. The vast sand plains in this region supported extensive stands of pine. With the coming of the railways, the supply of trees was quickly exhausted and the once thriving community declined rapidly. The establishment of CFB Borden in 1916 and the Ministry of Natural Resources Angus Seed Plant in 1923 saved and revitalized the community.

15 As with many settlements, Nicolston started with the establishment of a sawmill that became a flour and grist mill when timber supplies were exhausted. The original dam and mill still stand, as does the secondary dam that was constructed to supply power for a woollen mill. That mill, owned by George Upton, was one of the first to supply the T. Eaton Company with wool for socks and underwear.

Today, the site serves as a private campground. The largest dam incorporates a Ministry of Natural Resources fish ladder to aid in the migration of rainbow trout to their spawning grounds far upstream.

Touring the Nottawasaga River

The main branch of the Nottawasaga River is 121 km long, dropping 300 m from its source to its mouth. The river drains almost 3,000 km² of land in the Nottawasaga Valley.

The river remains passable from spring to fall, although the section from the Essa Canoe Access downstream to Essa Centennial Park may require some portaging and lining during low water levels. During the summer months, paddlers are encouraged to check with the NVCA about water levels and the best starting point along the river.



The canoe route starts near the Hamlet of Nicolston on Hwy 89 and takes you some 75 km downstream to Schooner Town Parkette in Wasaga Beach. The route offers three distinctive canoeing opportunities, each being suitable as a day trip. It is possible to travel the entire route at a comfortable pace in two or three days.

Nicolston to Angus 32.5 km

This longest portion of the route offers several highlights including a series of small rapids extending from just south of Baxter to Essa Centennial Park, impressive 25 m clay and sand bluffs near Essa Centennial Park, and excellent rainbow trout fishing in the spring and fall.

Angus to Edenvale 19 km

This portion of the route offers plenty of opportunities for exploration as it passes through the 6,000 ha, internationally significant Minesing Wetlands. Among this section's most notable features are more than 400 species of plants, including several species of orchids, some 220 bird species ranging from the common crow to the much less common glossy ibis, and the Mad River, which has been known to flow backwards during high water levels on the Nottawasaga River in the spring.

Edenvale to Wasaga Beach 23.5 km

This portion of the route offers several highlights including Jack's Lake, a popular fishing spot, a series of small and easily navigated rapids just downstream of Jack's Lake, and the largest group of parabolic sand dunes in the province. The route ends at historic Schooner Town and Nancy Island, as well as one of the world's longest fresh water beaches, Wasaga Beach.



Canoeing in the Minesing Wetlands

Witness a unique assemblage of fens, marshes and swamps via the two canoe routes that cross the 15,000 acre Minesing Wetlands.

Willow Creek Route

George Johnston Rd., south of Minesing Village to Edenvale Conservation Area
The 19 km paddle down the Willow Creek to its confluence with the Nottawasaga River remains passable for most of the year, but can be quite low in spots during the summer months. This route winds through open wetlands, which in the high water levels of the spring flood give the impression of a lake. Bird watchers will not be let down with the diversity along this route.

Mad River Route

Concession 2 Sunnidale north of Angus to Edenvale Conservation Area
Starting at the Wildlife Viewing Platform, the 18 km trip along the Mad River offers paddlers glimpses of a wide diversity of habitats, including open marshes and forested flood plains. This route experiences low-water levels in the summer.

Safety First

Whichever route you take, be prepared. The Minesing Wetlands are an isolated wilderness area. Take the appropriate cautions to have a safe and enjoyable trip. Stay in the river channel in the Minesing Wetlands, especially during high water. Carry a good map and compass, as many experienced paddlers have got lost quickly as there is no channel during high water.

Better still, take advantage of the knowledgeable tour guides who lead trips into the Minesing. The Friends of Minesing Wetlands, a volunteer group dedicated to protecting and promoting the Minesing Wetlands, often offer guided tours in the spring (minesingwetlands.ca).



Safety Tips

- Know how to swim.
- Wear your life jacket/PFD at all times.
- Know the symptoms and treatment for hypothermia, one of the leading causes of canoeing deaths.
- Be prepared. Carry an extra paddle and PFD, first aid kit, throw line, bailer, sound signalling device, waterproof flashlight, good quality map of the area and compass. Dry clothes and extra food and water are also good to pack.
- Let at least one responsible person know where you are going and when you are expected to return.
- Take care around rapids, especially if you are new to paddling.
- Think twice before paddling the Nottawasaga in the early spring. High water levels, cold temperatures, strong currents and floating debris are common, and make paddling extremely dangerous.
- Watch for deadheads (partially submerged logs), which are common along the paddling routes.
- Use caution when you enter or leave your boat, as log-jams and high muddy banks are common along most of Nottawasaga.
- Note that winds can generate large waves quickly on open water such as Jack's Lake. Stay close to shore in such situations.



Nottawasaga River Paddling Routes



Step Into Nature

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705-424-1479



Points of Interest

Landscape

- 1 Gorge and Rapids
- 2 Bottom part of Post-Glacial Lake Algonquin
- 3 Gorge through Edenvale Moraine
- 4 Wasaga Beach Spit

Flora & Fauna

- 5 Linear Vegetation Pattern
- 6 Mining Wetlands

Private Lands

- 7 Pine Forest Plantation

History

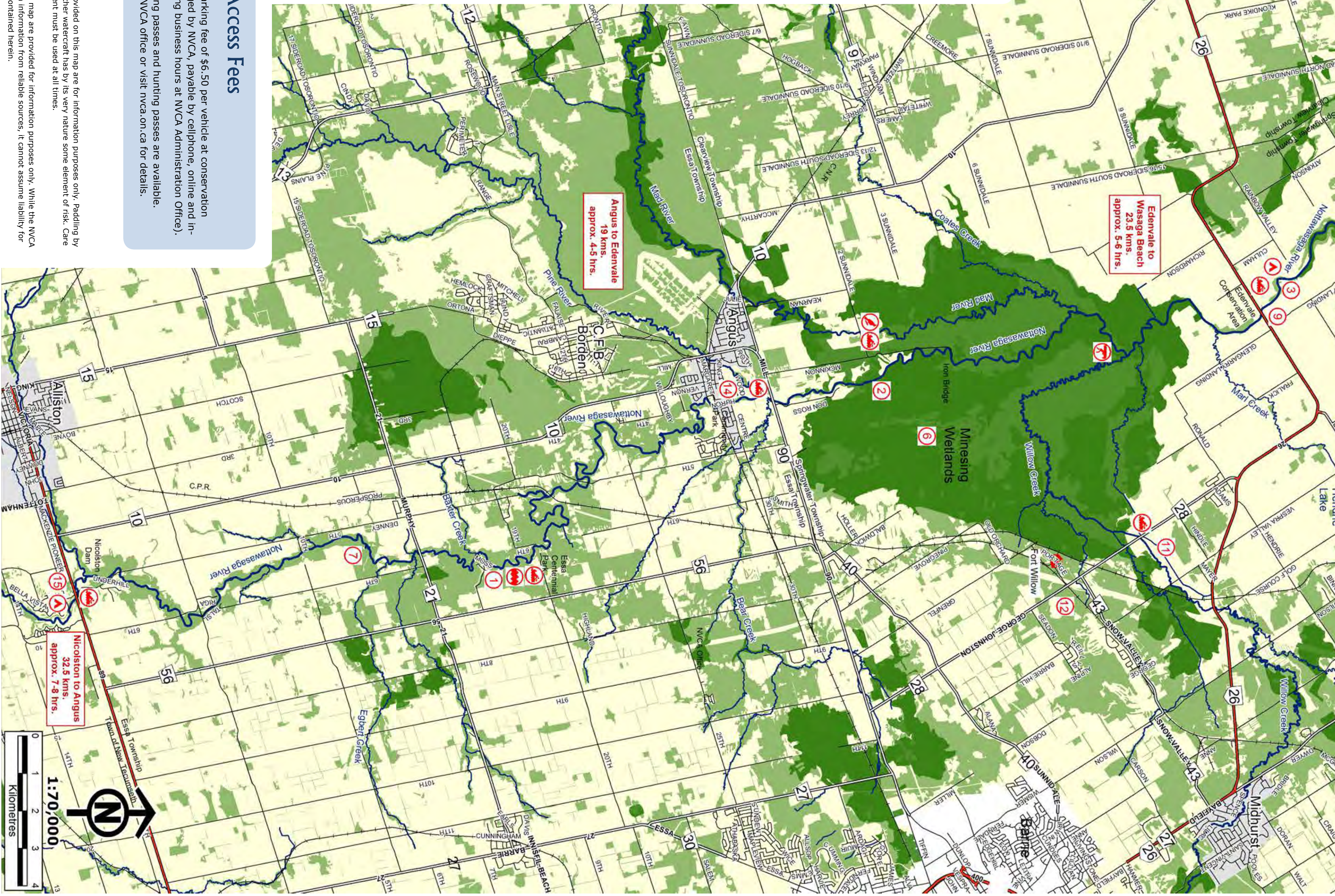
- 8 Schooner Town
- 9 Glengarry Landing
- 10 Nancy Island Historic Site
- 11 Willow Creek Canoe Route
- 12 The Nine Mile Portage
- 13 Wasaga Beach
- 14 Angus
- 15 Nicolson

Legend

- Canoe Access/Egress
- Canoe Camping Only
- Rapids
- Portage
- Wildlife Viewing Platform
- Wetlands
- Woodlands

Land Access Fees

There is a parking fee of \$6.50 per vehicle at conservation areas managed by NVCA, payable by cellphone, online and in-person (during business hours at NVCA Administration Office). Annual parking passes and hunting passes are available. Contact the NVCA office or visit nvca.on.ca for details.



The safety tips provided on this map are for information purposes only. Paddling by canoe, kayak or other watercraft has by its very nature some element of risk. Care and good judgement must be used at all times.

All content on this map are provided for information purposes only. While the NVCA attempts to obtain information from reliable sources, it cannot assume liability for any inaccuracies contained herein.