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How many paddle strokes to the L.I. Sound?

To really see the Housatonic River, other than glimpse it from a car window, you need a canoeist's perspective.

To really experience the 149-mile river, you need to canoe it from source to Sound.

To really paddle the river in the company of experts, you need to sign up for Housatonic Valley Association's (HVA) Housatonic River Adventure, an extended paddle trip to help celebrate the river advocacy's 75th anniversary.

The trip will begin on Earth Day, April 22.

"We'll start at Muddy Pond in Washington, Mass.," explained Dennis Regan, HVA's Berkshire director, "pushing through bushes — and 10 days later we'll be breathing salt air and watching seagulls. It will all happen gradually."

It won't be a simple excursion; canoeists will have to navigate around 10 dams.

"And there are some really challenging sections with rapids," Regan said.

Regan, who played a land support role in HVA's 2011 river trip, will this time join veteran river adventure canoeist Schuyler Thomson, owner of Thomson Canoe Works in Norfolk and twice national whitewater downriver canoe champion, and David Sinish, kayak/canoe instructor, trip leader and former national canoe poling champion on the water.

The trip has been plotted in segments and ranked beginner, intermediate, advanced and expert. Other paddlers are invited to



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

David Sinish, Dennis Regan, center, and Schuyler Thomson will lead a 10-day Housatonic River excursion in April.

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take part in the entire trip or one or more segments. Enrollment is through the HVA website, www.hvatoday.org. Sponsors are also

welcome.

Participants will need to bring their own craft and make arrangements for meals and overnight accommodations as necessary, Regan said.

The group will reach the Northwest Corner on Day 6, when they put in on Rannapo Road in Ashley Falls, Mass., and take out in West Cornwall.

There will be several riverside

celebrations as the canoeists go through several towns.

Groups such as the Salmon Kill Tributary Flotilla will join paddlers as they navigate through Falls Village below Great Falls.

"We want to get people out onto the river," Regan said.

Thomson, he added, will bring his 25-foot wooden war canoe, which fits 15 people, for scheduled school or business groups.