



# Rural Intelligence

## Housatonic River Adventure: The Long Or Short Of It

By **Jamie Larson**

There's a singular calming and introspective sensation to paddling a kayak or canoe down stream, drifting through changing scenery, warm air above mixing with the cool coming off the water where you sit, inches from the surface. The Housatonic River is a great, underused producer of such feelings. This month, the [Housatonic Valley Association](#) is hosting a week-long paddle trip from "Source to Sound" to promote the vibrancy of the river as a resource to protect and share, and to celebrate its 75th anniversary year.



The [River Adventure Paddle Trip](#) will run April 22 through May 1. While 50 or so people have already registered for the entire 149-mile ride, paddlers can also participate in sections of the trip. Throughout the three-state journey, the HVA in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York will host events taking place riverside. The paddlers intend to hit a number of these parties as they flow by. The main celebration will be on Thursday, April 28 at 6:30 p.m. at [The Bull's Bridge Inn](#) in Kent, Conn. (Reservations required, \$50.)





[Registration](#) for the paddle trip is now open, whether you intend to join in full or in part. The excursion will be led by David Sinish, an experienced kayak/canoe instructor, trip leader and former national canoe poling champion; Dennis Regan, HVA's Berkshire County director, an avid paddler and advocate for the Housatonic River; and Schuyler Thomson, owner of Thomson Canoe Works in Norfolk and former two-time national whitewater downriver canoe champion.

"I'm one of the leaders and I'm happy about that," says Regan, who won't be envying anyone else's job that week. "We'll meet up with other people along the way. It's a pretty quick bonding experience."

Shoving off at the aptly named Muddy Pond in Washington Mass., paddlers will have to scramble at times and navigate rapids as they pass through the first trickling leg of the journey in the east

branch tributary. This first section is suggested for experienced paddlers, but things mellow out soon as the group enters the river proper. Shove off is, appropriately, on Earth Day, and the event will conclude when paddlers ride the tide out into Long Island Sound.



The HVA has been working to get people involved with the river for 75 years but, like many of our regional waterways, past industrial pollutants including PCBs damaged the ecosystem and led to people turning their backs on the very water systems that defined why people settled here in the first place. As the environment has improved, so has community interest. While it's unfortunate that we are still suffering from the shortsightedness of previous

actions, it also means there's a lot of uninterrupted scenery between the few towns along the way. The river is now safe for people but there is still a ban on eating fish caught here, resulting, Regan notes, in fish of impressive age and size, which often surprises paddlers.

"You rarely see houses and there's a lot of wildlife," Regan says. "It changes every time you go out. We're seeing more and more people, which is great."