

Ipswich River Watershed Association's River Warden Manual

Overview

The purpose of the River Warden volunteer corp is to oversee maintenance and improvements on the Ipswich River Water Trail and its public landings.

Stretches of the Ipswich River Water Trail and its landings are assigned a Warden (or multiple co- wardens) for the oversight of the water trail. Additional groups such as Middleton, Topsfield and Reading/North Reading Stream Teams coordinate maintenance and workdays. Oversight of the entire Ipswich River Water Trail is handled by the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA). Any final decisions on changes made to landings or within the River fall to the landowners and the town's Conservation Commission. **All work done at landings, riverside rest stops and river sections is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act and town wetlands bylaws.** Woody debris removal is done in accordance to MA woody debris policy.

Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to be an Ipswich River Water Trail River Warden. This manual has been prepared to guide you in your efforts as a Warden and to assure that your work remains within the laws of the Commonwealth and the town in which your designated landing is located. Your work as a Warden is extremely important in the protection and maintenance of the river. Your upkeep of river stretches and landings is deeply appreciated by those paddling, fishing, or otherwise enjoy this beautiful resource. Your vigilance also helps protect landings from encroachment and prohibited uses.

Warden's Duties Management Practices

River Wardens are asked to check on their assigned river section(s) and/or landings on a monthly basis from May through October. Additional conditions motivated checks may be required such as:

- After a big storm event
- Following a flooding event

- During drought conditions (landings only)

General Guidelines

1. IRWA Representative: As a River Warden you are the eyes and ears of IRWA and are the primary contact with Ipswich River Water Trail users and the neighborhood. A courteous and friendly outlook can be a valuable contribution to public relations.

2. Checklist: River Wardens will complete the State of the Water Trail Checklist at the beginning and end of the paddling season, approximately April 1st through October 30th.

3. Time Tracking: River Wardens will track their volunteer time on the provided time sheet and submit to IRWA at the end of the paddling season.

4. River Conditions: After checking in on their landing or river stretch, River Wardens should communicate to IRWA if there are:

- a. Obstructions blocking passage on the river including blow downs and beaver dams.
- b. Suspected invasive aquatic plants.
- c. Anything that seems odd or out of place.

5. Rules and Regulations: All River Wardens should be familiar with the Rules of the River and Landings as published on IRWA kiosks. If a Warden notices a visitor with prohibited items or demonstrating a prohibited use and determines that this is an emergency that requires immediate attention, the Warden should call the police. If the observation is of a lesser nature, the River Warden may handle the situation personally (if they feel comfortable doing so) or may contact IRWA for guidance. **All work done at landings, riverside rest stops and river sections is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act and town wetlands bylaws.**

Landing Maintenance Guidelines

Guidelines for landing maintenance during the paddling season (May-October) :

1. Pruning and cutting back vegetation.

- a. Pruning low hanging branches and brush up to a six foot width and 4 foot height on the river and an 8 foot width and 8 foot height at landings is recommended. This leaves head room for paddling on the river and for launching a canoe or kayak.
- b. Clip branches back to a fork or to the main trunk

to avoid sharp protruding branch stubs. At landings, brush should be cut flush with the ground surface to avoid tripping hazards. **c.** The river and landings should be checked after major storm events during the paddling season.

2. Pick-up of Trash: Trash along the road frontage and river frontage of your landing or river section should be picked up every spring, fall and when you notice an accumulation of trash. If there has been a large dumping of trash on your reservation, contact the IRWA for additional guidance.

3. Maintenance of Structures: Check condition of kiosks and signage. If repairs are required, contact IRWA (and in some cases the landowners) and describe what repairs are needed.

4. Identification of Hazards: Contact IRWA about any existing or potential hazards such as large trees that could fall (or have fallen) on a neighbor's property, wires, or roads.

5. Dumping: Keep an eye out for dumping along the river or at/near landings. Note any issues identified and contact IRWA and the land owner to assist you in determining how to proceed with:

- a. Clean-up of any dumping, b. Identification of person doing the dumping, or c. Contacting an adjacent home owner about their dumping.

River Section Guidelines

Guidelines for landing maintenance during the paddling season (May-October) :

1. Pruning and cutting back vegetation.

- a. If low hanging branches impede passage on river, trim to approximate head head to allow passage for paddlers. b. The river and landings should be checked after major storm events during the paddling season.

2. Pick-up of Trash: Trash along the road frontage and river frontage of your landing or river section should be picked up every spring, fall and when you notice an accumulation of trash. If there has been a large dumping of trash on your reservation, contact the IRWA for additional guidance.

3. Identification of Hazards: Contact IRWA about any existing or potential hazards such as large trees that could fall (or have fallen) on a neighbor's property, wires, or roads.

4. Dumping: Keep an eye out for dumping along the river or at/near landings. Note any issues identified and contact IRWA and the land owner to assist you in determining how to proceed with:

- a. Clean-up of any dumping, b. Identification of person doing the dumping, or c. Contacting an adjacent home owner about their dumping.

5. Blowdowns: Large woody material in rivers occasionally poses a navigational hazard to paddlers. While paddlers want to create the best and safest experience on the river, excessive removal of woody material from rivers can be very detrimental to river ecology. A balance needs to be achieved. *(From the Nashua River Watershed Association's Case Study in Large Woody Material Management.)*

- a. **Large woody debris or blowdowns should only be cut if they cannot be navigated around.** b. Handsaws are the preferred tool for addressing woody debris and blowdowns. River Wardens are required to wear a personal floatation device when making cuts (IRWA can provide if needed.) c. Cuts should be made only to allow passage of a canoe. d. Cuts should be made only when water conditions are safe and never when high flows or cold water temperatures would put the River Warden's safety at risk. e. Do not remove woody debris from the river.

Be aware and careful of poison ivy that may be growing on blow downs. If a blow down is or has been made navigable, but has a growth of poison ivy, please report to IRWA so that paddlers can be informed.

Riverside Rest Stop Guidelines

If there are riverside rest stops located on a River Warden's assigned river section they are responsible for:

- Checking for and collecting trash.
- Assessing accessibility
- Assessing condition of IRWA kiosks and/or signs. (See landing guidelines)

Appreciation

Once again, we thank you for volunteering to be a River Warden. It is important to us that you know your responsibilities and duties and that you IRWA staff and landing owners if you have questions. We look forward to working with you for years to come, protecting this wonderful natural resource for current and future generations.

State of the Water Trail Checklist

Landing _____

River between _____ and

_____ landing.

State of the Water Trail - Landing

Status of landing: ___ Good ___ Passable ___ Needs work

If needs work, describe _____

Large pieces of trash that need to be hauled away: ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, describe _____

Encroachment, dumping, or cutting: ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, description _____

Other needs of the landing: _____

State of the Water Trail - River

Status of river: ___ Good ___ Passable ___ Needs work

If needs work, describe _____

Large pieces of trash that need to be hauled away: ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, describe: _____

Any blowdowns on the river: ___ Yes ___ No

Do you need assistance removing them? ___ Yes ___ No

Encroachment, dumping, or cutting: ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, description: _____

Other needs of the river: _____

How can IRWA help you?

Do you need supplies? Yes No If yes, what _____

Do you need training in some area? Yes No If yes, what _____

Would you like to continue as a River Warden? Yes No

Would you like an additional River Warden for your assigned area of the Water Trail?
 Yes No

Other comments: Attach pages for additional comments.

Thank you!

Please return this form to the Ipswich River Watershed Association
by mailing to: IRWA P.O. Box 576,
Ipswich, MA 01938

Have comments or questions? Please contact Ryan O'Donnell at rodonnell@ipswichriver.org
or call 978 412 8200

