

St. John River Canoe Guide

Revised 6-4-2019



(Photo by Daniel Chabot)

St. John River Trip Description And History

Updated March 1, 2017

Introduction

Information regarding the upper St. John River is provided to assist people who plan to canoe the river which arises in the St. John Ponds and flows to the Town of Allagash, Maine. Canoeing this river under the proper conditions can be a marvelous experience. North Maine Woods, Inc. has responsibility to manage public access and use of the river corridor. It is a non-profit corporation supported by user fees which help offset management costs.

Registration

Everyone who uses the St. John River is expected to register. Those traveling by vehicle will pass through a North Maine Woods checkpoint and will be registered at that time. Those who fly in to Fifth St. John Pond or Baker Lake are encouraged to preregister and prepay by contacting the North Maine Woods office at 207-435-6213 or via email at info@northmainewoods.org.

Water Conditions Are Important

The St. John River usually provides adequate water for canoeing during the month of May. How late in the spring good canoeing is possible depends on winter snow cover, temperature and rain fall. The minimum for good canoeing, in our judgment, is 3,000 cfs (cubic feet per second) at the Dickey gauging station. You can check the level of water in the gauge reading on the internet at <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?01010500>. Less than this amount will result in grounding out or portaging much of the way. You are also welcome to call us for current conditions at (207) 435-6213.



St John River (Early season water levels)



St John River (Mid to Late season water levels)

Planning the Trip

Early in May the trip is cool with high water, and later in May the water may be lower with more blackflies, more wildlife and perhaps better fishing. Generally, about 75% of the yearly canoeing traffic occurs before Memorial Day Weekend. The weather can vary. Some years, parties are swimming in 75 degree weather in May and the next year during the same time it can be 30 degrees and snowing. Preparation for either extreme should be considered.

Good canoeing is also possible at various times throughout the summer. A couple of days of heavy rain will raise the water level to provide adequate flow for up to a week. If your schedule is flexible, then trips at these times are best. Parties generally have the river and campsites to themselves.



Due to the topography of the St. John River Valley, the water level can change radically due to rain in the headwaters area. Remember to tie canoes and move all gear away from the shore at the end of the day. An increase in the water level of three feet in one night is not uncommon. We also suggest allowing an extra day in your schedule if possible to allow for an upriver wind or bad weather. It is also recommended that at least one occupant of each canoe have experience with fast water rapids.

The following equipment should be considered:

Life jackets (1 USCG approved PFD per person in canoes required by law.)

Spare Paddle

Bow and stern lines

Spray cover and plastic bags for gear

Flashlight, axe, maps, waterproof matches, compass, pocket knife, patching materials, fly repellent (even in the earliest of May), rain gear, change of clothing, first aid kit, extra food.

Camping is allowed only at authorized (designated) campsites along the river. The locations are shown on the St. John River map. All campsites have picnic tables, firepits and outhouses. Some have picnic table shelters as indicated on the campsite inventory included in this trip description.

There are also three camps along the river that are available for public use on a first come first served basis. They are located at Flaws Bogan, Ledge Rapids and on the east side of the river at Nine Mile. These are the only camps open for public use and they are not to be confused with several other privately owned camps along the river that are not available to the public.

This information on the St. John River is intended to supplement information in the North Maine Woods (NMW) Brochure. The NMW brochure includes information, rules and regulations plus a larger scale, detailed map of the northern Maine area. The NMW brochure also includes information on canoe rental services, vehicle transporting businesses and guiding services for the St. John watershed. The NMW brochure can be obtained by contacting the North Maine Woods office at P.O. Box 425, Ashland, ME 04732 or via the internet at- www.northmainewoods.org. The web site contains all of the information that is included in the printed brochure, including a copy in digital format.

Access

Since the best time to do this trip is May, there is always a question whether road access is possible due to snow, mud, or other road conditions. We recommend you contact us before leaving on your trip via telephone at 207-435-6213 or via email at info@northmainewoods.org.

The most used access points are listed below:

1. Fifth St. John Pond- Fly in is possible or use road access from Greenville, Millinocket or Rockwood
2. Baker Lake- fly in or road access
3. St. Juste Road Bridge
4. Moody Bridge on the American Realty Road
5. Blanchet/Maibec Bridge- Accessible via St. Pamphile, Allagash or Dickey checkpoints.
* Please note that crossing the U.S. Canadian border gate requires inspection by U.S. and/or Canadian Customs. Please bring your passport or other acceptable identification.

Emergencies

Help and assistance in an emergency can best be obtained by contact with members of Maine Warden Service, Maine Forest Service or landowner representatives- all of whom have radio contact with people who

can help. Although the access points listed previously are the best locations to do this, for the most part, you are responsible for your own safety and comfort.

Trip Description

The river flows north for 143 miles from 5th St. John Pond to Allagash Village. This description is divided into three sections for your convenience. Each section coincides with the 3 maps that are available in addition to this document.



Photo of Baker Lake (Hannah Stevens Photo)

5th St. John Pond to Baker Lake Outlet is 29 miles. At 5th St. John Pond a campsite is available near the outlet dam. The entire trip down the St. John River requires parties to camp at authorized (designated) campsites along the way. Fire permits, as issued by the Maine Forest Service, are often required for many remote canoe trips in Maine, but campsites along the St. John River are inspected by the Maine Forest Service and are approved for use without a fire permit.

The stream from 5th St. John Pond to Baker Lake is small, and unless run during early May or during other times of high water, much dragging and portaging may be required.

Baker Lake has two camping areas, one on each end of the lake. The lakeshore is known as good moose habitat and, if interested in fishing, there are salmon, trout, and muskellunge in the lake.

From Baker Lake to Turner Bogan there are small rips. You may notice many dead tree trunks or



stems along both shores which show the damages of the spruce budworm epidemic of the 1980's. One campsite is available at **Turner Bogan**. After leaving **Turner Bogan**, a deadwater passes Brailey Brook to **Flaws Bogan Campsite** where there is a single campsite. The log camp at Flaws Bogan is also available for use on a first come first served basis. The building is left unlocked. If you do stay, please leave the camp clean for the next visitors and be extremely careful with fire as the woodstove and stovepipe can sometimes

disconnected or damaged.

More deadwater is ahead for 4 miles to Morrison Depot where there once was a campsite that was discontinued due to poor drainage and lack of use. Below Morrison the river drops gradually until it combines with the Southwest Branch which is a tributary as large as the Baker Branch. At this point the river doubles in width. The **Southwest Branch Campsite** has one campsite on the very west shore which requires crossing the Southwest Branch. **Doucie Brook Campsite**, four miles downstream, overlooks a large deadwater with Doucie Brook located across the river from the campsite. **Knowles Brook Campsite**

is approximately two miles downriver and it has two campsites. This location was once the site of a major logging depot camp as were many of the campsite locations. If you look around you will see remains of the old machinery, including steam log haulers, used during the operation of the camps. (There are many artifacts from the past logging and farming activities along the river. Please don't destroy or remove them so others may also enjoy their presence).

From **Knowles Brook** to the **Northwest Branch**, the river is generally flat with minor rips. One campsite is available at the **Northwest Branch Campsite**.



From the confluence of the Northwest Branch it is approximately three miles to **Ledge Rapids Campsite** which has two campsites with one table shelter. The log camp at the Ledge Rapids campsite may be available for use on the first come first serve basis. The building is left unlocked. If you do stay, please leave the camp clean for the next visitors and be very careful with fires in the old woodstove. Be sure to check the stovepipe to be sure it is connected and not damaged. Ledge Rapids are not very long and are best passed on the right.

Moody Campsite is less than a mile from Ledge Rapids and has two campsites located just below the concrete abutment on the west shore. This is the former location of Moody Bridge which was removed from its piers in 2008. It is two miles downriver to **Red Pine Campsite** on the east shore where road to river access is also possible. It is a short carry up a narrow road to the four campsites along an airstrip which is no longer open for aircraft use.

Down a deadwater two miles is **Burntland Brook Campsite** which has two sites. One site has a picnic table shelter. From Burntland Brook to Nine-Mile one will pass through an area burnt by a major forest fire in 1935. It will remind you of the dangers of a fire out of control. Please remember to keep your campfires under constant supervision. From Burntland to Nine-Mile, the water drops moderately between stretches of flat water. A set of rapids one-half mile long drops to the former site of **Nine-Mile Bridge**. The bridge was brought into the Maine woods by Edouard LaCroix in 1926 to replace a ferry so he could haul supplies and equipment to his logging camps in the Maine woods. The ice removed this historic steel bridge in 1972 and carried it downstream where it was later dismantled and taken to Canada for its scrap metal value. There is one large campsite on the downstream side of the west bridge abutment.

A short distance behind the campsite there is the skeleton of a coal fired steam shovel used to build roads in this region in early 1900's. Rumor has it that it was also used in the construction of Churchill Dam on the Allagash River.



There is also a small cabin on the east side available for public use within site of the river. Please be careful if using the woodstove and be sure to check the stove pipe connection to the stove before starting a fire. **Nine-Mile East Campsite** has one campsite and is just up-stream from the water gauging station which can be seen on the river bank.



Photo taken by “Nine Mile Mike” Shaniger at Nine Mile Campsite looking downriver

Leaving Nine-mile, a good pitch of rapids will start the nine-mile trip to Seven Islands. Hence, Nine-mile acquired its name being nine miles from the major historical farming depot once located at Seven Islands. Once through Nine Mile Rapids, the river will drop mildly with a small set of rips at the mouth of Connors Brook then past a steep bank on the left. Next is Houlton Brook Deadwater then comes the start of the Seven Islands where the river widens and islands separate the main channel.

At **Seven Islands Campsite** on the west shore there are two campsites next to large, open fields. This is one of the more popular camping areas along the entire river and is known as a great location to view wildlife including moose, geese, deer and eagles.

Two miles downriver from Seven Islands is the Blanchet/Maibec Bridge which is another access point to the river. Another mile downstream from there is **Priestly Campsite** on the west shore before entering Priestly Deadwater. Vehicle access is also possible here. For several decades, this location was the site of a major bridge crossing necessary to transport wood to Quebec markets. In 1986 high water and ice took out the bridge, as well as Pamphile LeClerk, an employee who was in the process of removing the wooden deck from the bridge piers with a front end loader. That location was abandoned and a new site was chosen up stream where the Blanchet/Maibec Bridge was built in 1996.



From **Priestly Campsite** to the **Simmons Farm** one passes through terrain and water similar to the stretches previously traveled. At mid-water levels, Priestly Rapids should be approached with caution. On the west shore at Simmons Farm there are two separate camping areas, the first is in the field next to the shore and the second location is on the same shore a few hundred yards downstream. It sits on a high bank that has a fantastic scenic view.

The river drops slowly from Simmons Farm to Basford Rips, a distance of five miles. Basford Rips consists of a narrow gorge in the river which can contain heavy waves and should be not be taken lightly. It is four miles from Basford Rips to the head of the Big Black Rapids. Big Black Rapids should be scouted from either shore by foot before running them by canoe. Portaging is possible on either shore. Loss of canoe and/or gear in this remote area can cause a great hardship. Generally, one will encounter large waves during high water and during periods of low water large rocks will break up the current.

Below these rapids, **Big Black Campsite** is located at the confluence with the Big Black River. There is a 300 foot hiking trail from the campsite to the main road if this location is chosen to take out of the river or meet others. The main stem of the St. John River widens out substantially with the addition of the Big Black River flowage. Two miles downstream is **Ferry Crossing Campsite** with two sites. In the 1980s a ferry operated at this location to access the forest on the eastern side of the river. Crews staying a logging camp just up the road traveled by ferry to harvest wood. In the winter time an ice bridge was built in the

same location. Once ice was thick enough to work on, crews would stack logs on the ice, then spray them with water to freeze. This process was repeated until there were enough logs and ice to support loaded logging trucks. Use of the ferry and ice bridge ended when this region was connected with road networks from the east. All of the campsites from this point to the Town of Allagash are accessible by road.

Two more miles downriver is **Seminary Brook Campsite** which has two sites.



Long Rapids Brook (Hannah Stevens Photo)



Longs Rapids Campsite brook. (Josh Philbrook Photo)

A long stretch of generally flat water runs for four miles to **Longs Rapids Campsite** on the west shore where a cold brook falls into the river near a single campsite. After passing through Long Rapids, the **Castonia Farm** can be seen three miles downriver. Just after passing the confluence of Chimenticook Stream, there is a gravel road leading to the shore to the **Castonia Farm** Campsite. This level, sheltered, grassy campsite can be worth the short carry to get there.

Leaving Castonia Farm there are two sets of small rapids, Castonia and Schoolhouse Rapids, which bring one to the **Ouellette Farm** where there are two campsites on a grassy knoll which have great views up and down the river. Down a long stretch and around a left bend will bring **Fox Brook Campsite** which has two sites.

The last North Maine Woods campsite on the river is at the mouth of **Poplar Island Brook**. This is also the last take out point before encountering the Big Rapids. Around the next four-mile horseshoe bend in the river is Big Rapids which are 3 miles of class III water. The left or west shore is passable for portaging gear or canoes or to scout the rapids before canoeing them. High water usually brings three to five foot waves while low water has large boulders to canoe around.

At the foot of the rapids is **Walker Brook Campsite**, which is maintained by the town of Allagash. From this point it is four miles to Allagash village.

History

This is a history of the upper St. John Valley which includes the area from the St. John Ponds and Baker Lake to the Town of Allagash. While the portion from Baker Lake to Nine Mile is owned by the Nature Conservancy, the balance of the shoreline to Allagash is privately owned by various different owners with most in conservation easements. The land abutting the corridor is primarily a commercial forest, owned as a source of raw material for forest products manufacture.

This is a unique area, rich with lumbering history, folklore and natural features. While many visitors think of the area now as a pristine wilderness, it actually was once a place with much activity and many settlements. Much of the area has been under commercial forest management since before the Civil War. This area has experienced many changes since being settled in the early 1830's. Teams of oxen or horses were common modes of transportation in the woods and river travel was by poled canoes, bateaus, and horse-drawn tow boats. Travel on the river now is just for recreational canoeing and fishing, and only downstream. In the past boats traveled in both directions to carry supplies to the many farms and logging camps along the shore.

Today, almost every campsite along the river is a place of historical interest. Many of the campsites were once logging depots, homesteads or landings where logs were piled in preparation for the river drives in the spring.

Maine became a state in 1820 after separating from Massachusetts, of which it had been part since Colonial times. The location of the northern boundary of Maine was not established between Maine and Canada until the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. About this time private investors began acquiring forest lands in the area as a long-term investment. These lands were sold as townships, which are tracts of land roughly six miles square, containing approximately 23,000 acres. A single township may be owned by several owners, either as specific parcels or in common and undivided.

Many farms along the river were on flood plains, and provided good farming soil. These farms provided many supplies and services to the logging camps in the area. They grew hay, oats, and food and provided river travelers a place to stay.

The upper St. John is a fast-moving, free-flowing river and its major water supply comes from the spring run-off or freshet. The sound of the ice cracking and letting go, even in a normal year, is dramatic. The scoured shoreline and scars left on the trees show the height that the ice and water reach. In 1893 (the year of the 'great ice jam'), the ice piled up higher than normal. The settlers along the river moved back onto the high ground. As the ice let go, it swept away barns, houses and livestock. Many settlers were left with nothing and, being discouraged, moved out of the area.

A number of factors have kept the upper St. John River in its present undeveloped condition. Its owners were interested in keeping it as a commercial forest for long-term investment and not settlement. Another factor is the natural makeup of the river itself. Rapid currents and lack of a holding area for logs contributed to the lack of mill development on the upper regions of the river valley.

First Settlers



Early Native American grave marker located at Seven Islands.

The graves were there prior to settlers arriving in the early 1800's.(Cassie Vaillancourt photo)

The first people in the upper regions of the St. John were the Micmac and Maliseet Indians. They named the river "Woolastock" which translates to "goodly river." Later, travelers came south from the St. Lawrence River Valley. That area was settled much earlier than Maine. When the upper St. John River area did become settled, the river was important mainly as a transfer route. Travelers would cross from the St. Lawrence River overland to the St. John River near Seven Islands or St. Francis and continue downriver to New Brunswick. These routes provided travelers reduced distances and avoided the dangers of the open ocean in their small crafts.



Hay baler at Seven Islands. Horses walked in a circle around the baler connected to turnstyle piston which compressed hay into bales. Bales were easier to store and transport than loose hay. (Cassie Vaillancourt photo)

The early settlers of the upper St. John, who were of Acadian/French ancestry, migrated upriver from settlements in New Brunswick. The Scotch-Irish also settled in the upper regions and many descendants remain in the Allagash Village area today. Settlers were recorded as far back as 1832. Most settlers above Grand Falls, Canada were lumber-oriented, not farmers. Many of the early settlers were squatters who simply cleared the land away from the riverbanks and set up their homesteads. The clearing of land was difficult and time-consuming with the limited tools they had available. Oftentimes a match was the quickest tool for clearing land and many great forest fires resulted.

The search for quality timber took settlers further and further upriver. These first settlers had close family cultural and economic ties with Canada. No roads or railroads existed, so the river, which flows north to Canada, was the source of transportation. Supplies were hauled upriver in towboats and the river was used in the spring to drive logs downriver to mills and other markets.

Farming and logging went hand in hand as a way of life. The summer months were used to grow hay, oats, and vegetables. Homesteads would grow extra crops to be purchased by logging operators. As late fall came, the men and their teams of oxen or horses would head into the woods to work for the winter and come out with the log drive in the spring. The farms were generally located as far apart as a team of oxen or horses could travel in one day.

Lumbering Practices

In the early years, lumbering was done in the winter, ice and snow making twitching (dragging) of logs to the river bank much easier.

Much of the woods being harvested during this time was first-quality pine and cedar logs. The pine was made into ton timbers. A ton timber was one-foot square piece of green pine 40 feet long. These were then floated to market and loaded on ships for export. Cedar logs were driven in an unusual way. The logs were 25-30 feet long and stacked 10 to 15 feet high, then bound together into a raft that would sometimes be up to 300 feet long. At each end was a sweep for steering. One man would operate the sweep; sometimes two sweeps on the front. The men would ride these "craft" downriver in early spring in icy waters.

Northern Maine did not have the large amount of pine found in other areas of the state. Balsam fir and spruce were the dominant tree species then, as today. About the time of the Civil War, spruce became a valuable lumber species and lumbermen began to harvest it in the St. John watershed.

1900 to 1930

This period was a very significant era for lumbering in Maine. As markets for pulpwood and timber increased, so did concern for future timber supplies. Private landowners became very interested in forest management. The first cutting prescriptions were established in 1906. Landowners were concerned about protecting their lands from fire and created the Maine Forestry District in 1909. This was a fire protection system where all landowners contributed by self-taxation for the joint protection of ten million acres.

The Maine Forestry District established fire watchtowers on many mountains. The terrain along the St. John River, however, was flat and fire towers were not practical. Many cabins were established for fire wardens along the river at Baker Lake, Flaws Bogan, Ledge Rapids, Nine-Mile Bridge, Big Black and other places. Telephone lines were connected between all the fire warden camps and towers. Eventually the lines became communication links with logging operations, game wardens and others. It was possible to call all over the world from deep in the woods. More than 2,000 miles of telephone lines eventually were replaced by wireless radio systems which are used today. The observant canoeist can still see the wire and ceramic insulators on the trees along the shore in many places today. Helen Hamlin, who lived at Nine-Mile, tells of this in "Nine-Mile Bridge", a wonderful story of life in the St. John River woods.



The spruce budworm epidemic of 1910 to 1918 destroyed 27 million cords of wood statewide. Loss of valuable wood and the forest fire hazard resulted in great concern among forest landowners. Another severe epidemic occurred in the 1970's and 1980's. Much of the cutting in the St. John watershed in the 1980's was to salvage trees damaged by the spruce budworm during the second epidemic.



Log hauler and crew at Morrison Depot Winter of 1918

The early 1900's was also the beginning of the mechanical age. Steam log haulers were introduced and railroads expanded to help transfer wood. One of the first steam log haulers to the St. John area was taken to Flaws Bogan. It was assembled there but never worked because it was equipped with steel wheels with metal spikes. When it was started up and attached to pull loaded log sleds, it just got mired in the mud and was abandoned by the crews who brought it there. That log hauler remained in the same spot for many years until it was taken apart and sold as scrap metal in Canada. Later log haulers were equipped with lagged track systems which worked much better.

1930 to 1960

The Depression brought activity to a halt in the woods. Many men left the woods in search of work in Southern New England factories, causing a shortage of woods labor later when economic conditions improved. Because there was a very weak market for wood, almost a whole harvesting cycle was missed in this part of Maine. This created vast areas of overmature timber which caused forest management problems later – including the severe budworm epidemic of the 1970's and 1980's.

In 1949, the first two-man chainsaws and tractors were used near Billy Jack Brook above Seven Islands. Competition increased between Maine and Canada for markets and wood. The Canadian government subsidized and encouraged settlements, so mills and roads were built in Quebec from the St. Lawrence River to the Maine border. Fires were set to clear land; one fire crossed into Maine burning 59,000 acres in 1934. The fire jumped the river in the Burntland Brook area.

In the 1940's, a strain of disease spread through the area and large stands of white birch were lost. Road building increased to salvage the some of the standing wood.



Typical tow boat used on the St. John in the 1950s-60s to support driving crews.

In the 1950's and early 1960's, log-driving on the St. John was coming to an end. The high cost of moving supplies upstream, the unreliable water flow and the loss of wood during the drive due to high water levels were reasons that caused landowners to seek other methods of transportation. This in turn caused the rapid expansion of the private road system and the abandonment of river side farms and logging depots.

1960 to Present

Today woods operations are more sophisticated. Mechanization allows harvesting with less manpower and forest management has become highly technical. The road systems have opened up new areas which in the past were not accessible for timber harvesting. With ease of access, recreational use has increased.

Down the River

(People, Places and Events)

As you travel downriver from Baker Lake, The St. John River Valley seems like a vast remote wilderness. On the St. John River itself, there is less activity today than there was in the past. Many consider the river to be more of a natural state today than it was years ago.

For many years, the riverbanks were lined with logging depots, landings, homesteads and cabins. Clearings averaged 25 acres along the river in the late 1800's. Today, campsites have been established in many of these spots.

A few of the people who worked on the St. John River as woodsmen, game wardens, fire wardens and homesteaders in northern Maine recall the days of life on the upper St. John. Their stories tell us about these sites:

Knowles Brook

Knowles Brook was for many years the site of a logging depot. An old trapper named Bill Gordon lived in one of the cabins for a long time. During World War II, he ran an observation post to scout for enemy planes. Game wardens would bring supplies and check on him from time to time. One warden remembers Gordon canning deer meat into mason jars one day for the winter. Gordon was well-known and remembered for his silver revolver which he delighted in showing to visitors.

Nine-Mile

In 1927 Edouard "King" LaCroix built the road into Nine-Mile to get supplies into his backwoods operations. In 1931, LaCroix put the steel bridge across the river at Nine-Mile. LaCroix purchased the

discarded one-lane bridge in St. Georges, Quebec, and transported it in pieces to be reassembled at Nine-Mile. Before the bridge, a ferryboat was operated to get across the St. John. Behind the campsite at Nine-Mile Bridge are the remains of a coal-fired steamshovel that was used in building the road and the bridge. The remains can be found with relative ease.

Nine-Mile Bridge was one of the busier spots along the river in the 1900's. Game wardens and fire wardens had homes for many years at Nine-Mile. The wardens would stay there year-round, snowbound during the winter months. A book by Helen Hamlin entitled "Nine-Mile Bridge" reflects her life as the wife of a game warden at Nine-Mile and other places in the woods.

Beside Nine-Mile Brook, just below the bridge, stood the Maine Forestry District ranger's camp.

Seven Islands

Seven Islands was by far the largest settlement on the upper St. John. Early records indicate there were homesteaders there in 1860. In 1875, records show that Frank Currier sold \$3,000 worth of hay, grain, beef, and other items from Seven Islands. W.H. Cunliffe and Stevens had 56 cattle (19 milking cows), 100 sheep, 7 farm horses and a dozen hogs on his farm. In the early 1900's, there were five major homesteads in the Seven Islands area.

At one time, there was as much as 1,300 acres cleared and all seven of the islands were farmed. Now some of those cleared areas are covered with trees over 40 feet tall. One may see the rock piles and the rows where crops once grew below stands of mature trees.



During those earlier times, there would be as many as 300 men at Seven Islands before they headed into the woods for the winter operations. Up to 100 men would sometimes be kept on hand during the summer to farm and clear more land. Four thousand bushels of oats and 250 tons of hay were raised a year and sold to woods operators during peak times.

After LaCroix left the Seven Islands area, things began to slow down in the late 1930's. At one time, there was a post office at Seven Islands which was eventually moved to Clayton Lake after LaCroix constructed a road to there from Lac Frontiere.

Some of the other homesteads along the river were Simmons Farm, Castonia Farm, St. John Farm, Ouellette Farm and Bishop Farm, but they were not near the size nor did they have the activity of Seven Islands. But they served much the same purpose. Men traveling on the river would stay at these farms.

Downriver about 4 miles below Seven Islands there was a logging depot at Priestly Brook.

Simmons Farm- Simmons Farm Tote Trail

In order to bypass the Big Black Rapids and also access Quebec and the St. Lawrence Valley, a tote or portage trail was constructed from Nine-Mile Dam on the Big Black River to the Simmons Farm.

During World War 1 a man by the name of Fred Deschaine came home on leave and deserted and fled to the St. John region. He spent the rest of his years alone on the St. John. He lived for a time at both Seven Islands and Simmons Farm. He kept livestock and raised a small garden to support himself. People remember him as being a nervous man and always on the watch. Eventually he came out of the woods and spent his last five years in St. Francis.

Big Black

At the mouth of the Big Black River today is a U.S. Border Patrol camp. This camp is a reminder of the times when most of the travel in the areas was done on the St. John River. In those days, border patrol agents would inspect logging crews and merchandise. There was a fire warden's camp was located on the spot where the campsite is now, but it was demolished and removed from the site in the early 1980's.

Almost all travel upriver in the early days was in a poled canoe or bateau. A story is told of a game warden Leonard Pelletier leaving Big Black one morning with a broke-down outboard motor. He was headed upriver to Nine-Mile. He called ahead by radio to tell his wife of his situation. By nightfall, Mr. Pelletier had made it to Nine-Mile by poling his canoe. That is almost 31 miles and stands as an unwritten record today!

School House Rapids

Roughly halfway between the Castonia Farm and Ouellette Farm was a one-room schoolhouse. Several families shared in the expense of the schoolhouse. The students attended school during summer month instead of in the winter.

The North Maine Woods organization wishes to express appreciation to the following people that live or have lived along the St. John River and who have taken the time to share their memories of the area.

Lionel Caron
Edyth Kelley
Father Alphie Marquis
Willie Marquis
Leonard Pelletier
John Sinclair
Jules Vaillancourt

The information and stories gathered in this St. John River Canoeing Guide merely touch the surface of the information available on this wonderful region. For more information, a bibliography of suggested reading is provided for your convenience.

Suggested reading containing information about the upper St. John River:

- Hamlin, Helen. **Pine, Potatoes, and People**
- Hamlin, Helen. **Nine-Mile Bridge**. W. W. Norton Company, Inc. New York, NY, 1945
- Smith, David. **A History of Lumbering in Maine**. NY. University of Maine, 1972
- Wilkins, Austin H. **Ten Million Acres of Timber**. TBW Books, 1978
- Coolidge, Philip. **History of the Maine Woods**. Bangor, Maine. Furbush-Roberts Printing Company, 1963
- Wood, Richard G. **A History of Lumbering in Maine**. Orono, Maine. University of Maine Press, 1971
- **Downeast** magazine has published a number of articles on the river including stories on “King” LaCroix, Telos War and local game wardens.
- Seven Islands Land Company, Bangor, has available a paper entitled “The Upper St. John River Valley 1840-1979.”

St. John River Advisory Council
A Special Place: Special Protection

Today the St. John is protected by a Resource Protection Plan established by private landowners and approved by State agencies. A 250-foot corridor on both sides of the St. John River has been established from Baker Lake to the west line of the town of Allagash.

The purpose of the Plan is to prohibit certain commercial, industrial and residential development along the river. It also regulates timber harvesting, development, roads and bridge construction, in order to protect the natural values of the river.

The plan is overseen by the St. John River Advisory Committee, composed of landowner representatives and state agency representatives. The Committee reviews operating plans, policy and procedural matters pertaining to recreational use of the Corridor.

Landowner Representatives

Seven Islands Land Company
Landvest LLC
The Nature Conservancy
Irving Woodlands, LLC
W.C. S Forestry

State Representatives

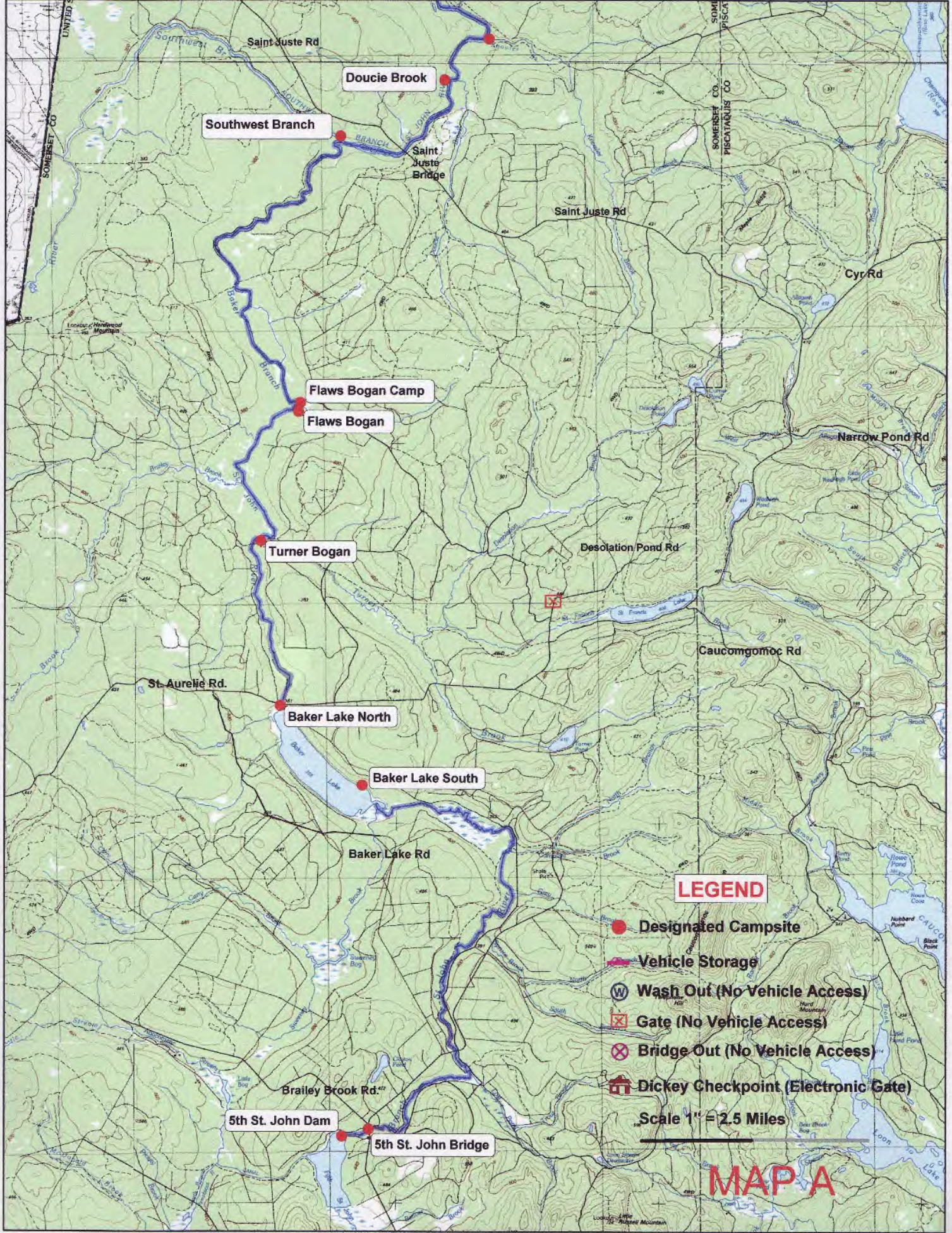
Maine Forest Service
Bureau of Parks & Lands
Land Use Planning Commission
Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Distance and Campsite Summary for the St. John River

[illegible]

A history of the introduction of Muskellunge in the St. John River Watershed, Prepared by David Basley,
retired Regional Biologist, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

- Introduced into Lac Frontier, a 260 acre headwater lake of the NW Branch of the St. John River, by Quebec fishery personnel in 1970 who assumed that the muskellunge were sedentary and territorial, bred in the lake and did not migrate; therefore they would not endanger the St. John River system in Maine
- MDIFW authorities were not consulted prior to the stocking and only found out as the result of information passed on to the Commissioner by District Warden Dan Glidden at Daquaam
- Lac Frontier stocking schedule
 - 1970 3000 @ 3-6 inches
 - 1971 1000 @ 5-6 inches
 - 1972 1000 @ 3-4 inches
 - 1973 1000 @ 6-8 inches
 - 1979 250 @ 6-8 inches
- *Discontinued after 1979 due to self-sustaining population
- In 1973, District Warden Rod Sirois received report of a pike being caught in the St. John River but the fish was not observed
- In spring 1984, MDIFW biologists confirmed two muskellunge from the St. John River
 - 1 @ 25 inches from 7 Islands, 40 miles below Lac Frontier
 - 1 @ 25 inches from the NW Branch, 3.5 miles below Lac FrontierAn additional 4-5 fish were reported but not confirmed
- In late summer 1984, MDIFW biologists captured muskellunge using a large seine in the NW Branch. Six young of the year @ 6 inches and one yearling at 14 inches are captured
- In 1985, no muskellunge were captured with the seine in the 7 Islands area of the St. John
- In 1986, biologists used a seine to capture 9 young of the year at Turner Deadwater on the Baker Branch and 1 young of the year at Baker Lake, 45 miles from Lac Frontier. Anglers begin catching musky in Baker Lake in 1987.
- In June 1988, New Brunswick Dept. of Natural Resources personnel reported the first capture of a muskellunge in the Mactaquac Fishway trap just upstream from Fredericton. (400+ miles from Lac Frontier) The fish was 28 inches @ 6 lb 12 oz. From 1998-2000, 97 muskellunge were captured in the trap and in 2001, 41 were captured through mid-July. Presently they inhabit the river below Fredericton.
- First reported taken by anglers fishing Glazier Lake in January 1992, confirmed by District Warden Chuck Richard. New state record in 2004: 43.9 inches @ 27 lb
- 1998 to present, muskellunge are routinely caught and actively sought by anglers at Glazier Lake, the St. Francis River and St. John River.
- In May 2001, fishery personnel captured 2 muskellunge in the St. John River near the mouth of the Fish River using an electrofishing boat. These fish are males that have spawned and have lengths of 26.7 and 33.5 inches.
- In June 2002, the Fish River from the lower falls to the railroad trestle (3.25 miles) was sampled using the electrofishing boat – no muskellunge are taken. Also an area around Soldier Pond was sampled with no muskellunge captured.
- Muskellunge have been caught in the Allagash River below Allagash Falls
- Muskellunge have been observed and unconfirmed angler catches have been reported below the lower Fish River Falls
- No muskellunge have yet to be reported in the fish trap at Tinker Falls on the Aroostook River in New Brunswick
- Planning for Maine's Fisheries 2002-2017 involved a public working group process with public representatives. Management for exotic species should be to control further spread beyond affected waters and ...seek to minimize impact...on the fisheries of the target waters.
- Present Regulations in the open water season and ice fishing season are no size and bag limit. Commencing 2004, there will be an extended fall fishing season from Oct. 1-31, artificial lures only, open to the taking of muskellunge on the following waters: the main stem to the confluence of the St. Francis River, Northwest Branch, Southwest Branch, Daquaam River and Baker Branch.
- Management problems associated with the presence of muskellunge in the St. John River include:
 - Impacts on brook trout and other coldwater species
 - Natural movement of muskellunge to other tributaries of the St. John
 - Illegal introductions to other waters/drainages
 - Lack of information on the tendencies of movement in a river system
 - Lack of information on the biology of muskellunge in Maine waters
 - Public interest to manage for quality fisheries
- In 2004, MDIFW conducted a winter creel survey at Beau and Glazier Lakes. Few anglers and no muskellunge observed at Beau Lake. Angler use at Glazier Lake estimated at about 900 anglers. 21% successful at catching a muskellunge, 7% a togue and 2% a salmon. Legal togue and musky were caught at almost the same rate but numerous sublegal togue (16-17 inches) from a Maine stocking in 2001 were reported. Musky averaged 32.6 inches/10.1 lb (range 24-43 inches). Togue averaged 19.1 inches/2.3 lb. For the season, 89 musky and 35 legal togue were estimated to have been harvested.



Southwest Branch

Doucie Brook

Saint Juste Bridge

Flaws Bogan Camp

Flaws Bogan

Turner Bogan

St. Aurelie Rd.

Baker Lake North

Baker Lake South

Baker Lake Rd

Brailey Brook Rd.

5th St. John Dam

5th St. John Bridge

Saint Juste Rd

Cyr Rd

Narrow Pond Rd

Desolation Pond Rd

Caucomgomoc Rd

LEGEND

- Designated Campsite
- 🚗 Vehicle Storage
- Ⓜ Wash Out (No Vehicle Access)
- ⓧ Gate (No Vehicle Access)
- ⓧ Bridge Out (No Vehicle Access)
- 🏠 Dickey Checkpoint (Electronic Gate)

Scale 1" = 2.5 Miles

MAP A

