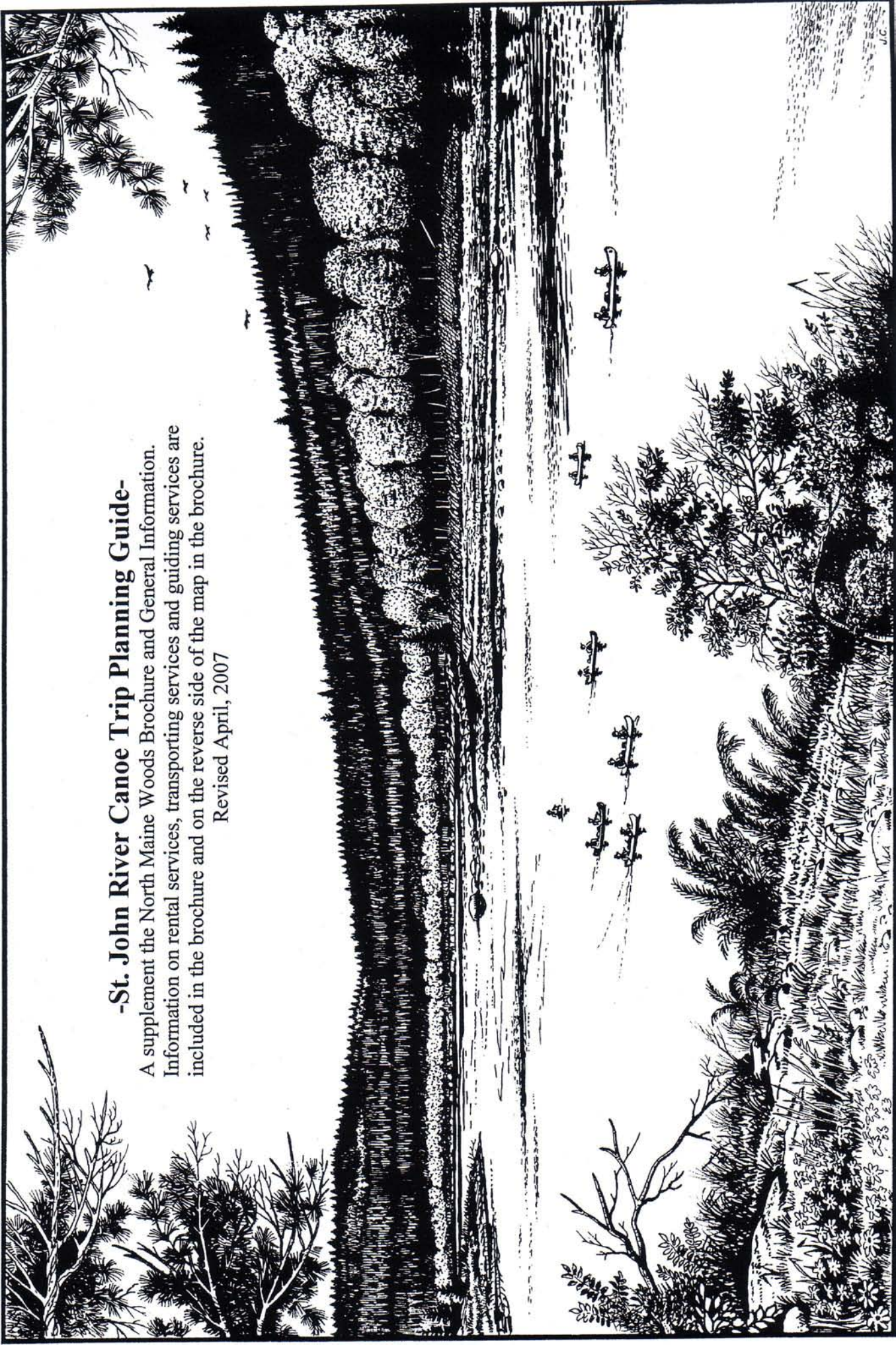


## -St. John River Canoe Trip Planning Guide-

A supplement to the North Maine Woods Brochure and General Information. Information on rental services, transporting services and guiding services are included in the brochure and on the reverse side of the map in the brochure.

Revised April, 2007



## Distances and Campsite Summary for the St. John River

	SITES	TABLES	OUTHOUSE	TABLE SHELTERS	MILES DOWN RIVER FROM 5th ST. JOHN	MILEAGE TO NEXT SITE OR LOCATION	VEHICLE ACCESS *	REMARKS
5th ST. JOHN DAM	1	1	1		0		*	Alternative starting point, if river flow is adequate
5th ST. JOHN BRIDGE	1	1	1		1	25	*	Alternative starting point, with easy river access
BAKER LAKE SOUTH	1	1	1		26	3		Suitable large group site
BAKER LAKE NORTH	4	4	1	1	29	4	*	<b>Primary</b> starting point for St. John River trip
TURNER BOGAN	2	2	1		33	5		Suitable large group site, near confluence of Turner Brook
FLAWS BOGAN	2	2	1	1	38	0		Suitable large group site, open field
FLAWS BOGAN CAMP	1	2	1		38	5		Camp open to visitors, on first come first serve basis
MORRISON DEPOT	2	2	1		43	4		Suitable for mid-size groups
SOUTHWEST BRANCH	2	2	1		47	4		Comfortable 3-6 person site, at confluence of Southwest Brch.
DOUCIE BROOK	3	3	1		51	2		Suitable large group site, located on high bank
KNOWLES BROOK	3	3	1		53	5		Suitable large group site
NORTHWEST BRANCH	2	2	1		58	3		2-4 person sites
LEDGE RAPIDS	2	2	1	1	61	0		Suitable for mid-size groups
LEDGE RAPIDS CAMP	1	1	1		61	3		Camp open to visitors, on first come first serve basis
MOODY BRIDGE	3	3	2	2	64	2	*	2 sites below bridge, 1 site above bridge
RED PINE	3	3	2		66	2	*	Sites along abandoned air strip
BURNTLAND BROOK	2	2	1	1	68	9		Suitable for mid-size groups
NINE-MILE BRIDGE	2	2	1		77	0	*	Suitable large group site, located on high bank
EAST NINE-MILE	1	1	1	0	77	5	*	Suitable for mid-size groups
CONNORS FARM	1	1	1		84	1		Suitable for mid-size groups
SEVEN ISLANDS	4	4	1	2	85	3		Suitable large group site, fields nearby
PRIESTLY CAMPSITE	2	2	1	1	89	7	*	Suitable large group site
SIMMONS FARM	2	2	1	1	96	5	*	Suitable large group site, fields nearby
BASFORD RIPS	1	1	1		101	6		Comfortable 2-4 person camping
BIG BLACK	3	3	1	1	107	2		Suitable large group site, at confluence of Big Black River
THE BIRCHES	1	1	1		109	3		Comfortable 2-4 person camping
FERRY CROSSING	2	2	1	1	112	2	*	Suitable large group site
SEMINARY BROOK	2	2	1	1	114	3	*	Suitable for mid-size groups, with sites next to brook
BOOM CHAIN	2	1	1		117	1		Suitable for 4-6 person camping
LONG RAPIDS	2	2	1	1	118	4	*	Suitable for mid-size groups, with spring-fed brook nearby
CASTONIA FARM	2	2		1	122	3	*	1 tent site, other site suitable for camper trailers
OUELLETTE FARM	2	2	1	1	125	3	*	Suitable large group site, fields nearby
FOX BROOK	2	2	1	1	128	5	*	Suitable for mid-size groups
POPLAR ISLAND	1	1	1		133	10	*	Take-out point above Big Rapids
ALLAGASH VILLAGE					143	11	*	
ST. FRANCIS-TOWN					154		*	
TOTALS	65	65	33	17	154			

**St. John River Trip Description**  
**And History**  
**April 1, 2007**

**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.

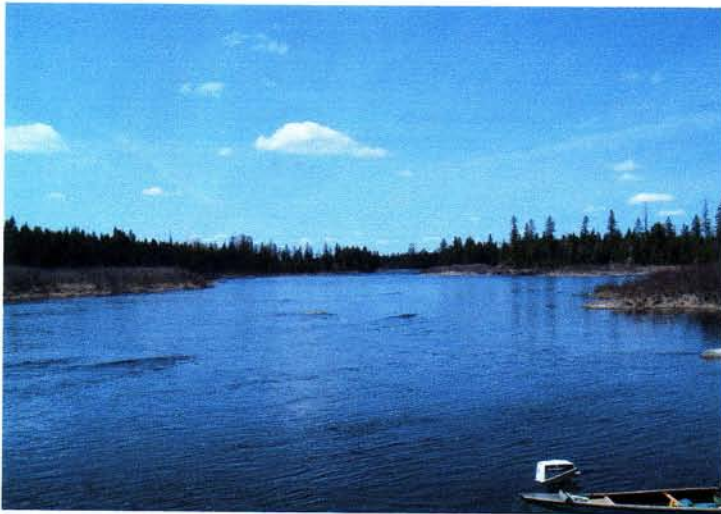
**Registration**

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 will either be registered by the flying service or by one of the North Maine Woods attendants on the river. Fees will be collected at the time of registration.

**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 rainfall.

The North Maine Woods' office obtains daily readings on the water level of the river during the month of May. The minimum for good canoeing, in our judgment, is 3,000 cfs (cubic feet per second) at the Dickey gauging station. Less than this amount will result in grounding out or portaging much of the way. You are welcome to call us for current conditions at (207) 435-6213. You can also check the level of water in the gauge reading on the internet at- <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?01010500>



*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 in late May the water may be lower with more blackflies, more wildlife and perhaps better fishing. Generally about 50% of the yearly canoeing traffic occurs during the weeks before and after Memorial Day. The weather can vary. One year parties were swimming in 75 degree weather on May 20<sup>th</sup>, and the next year during the same week it was 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 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. These are shown on the St. John River map.

This information on the St. John River is intended to supplement information in the North Maine Woods Brochure. The brochure includes information, rules and regulations plus a larger scale, detailed map of the northern Maine area. The brochure also includes a list of the flying services, outfitters and guide services serving the area. The 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](http://www.northmainewoods.org). This web site contains most of the information that is included in the printed brochure.

### **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.

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- This location is accessible through the 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 contacting people in the Maine Warden Service (Fisheries & Wildlife), Maine Forest Service (Dept. of Conservation), or landowner representatives, all of whom have radio contact with people who can obtain 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

5<sup>th</sup> St. John Pond to Baker Lake Outlet is 29 miles. At 5<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 good moose habitat and there are salmon, trout, and muskelunge in the lake itself.

From Baker Lake to Turner Bogon there are small rips. The dead tree trunks or stems along both shores show the damages of the spruce budworm epidemic of the 1980's. Three sites with tables are available at **Turner Bogon**. After leaving **Turner Bogon**, a deadwater passes Brailey Brook to **Flaws Bogon Campsite**. There are three campsites sites with tables and a privy. The log camp at Flaws Bogon is available for use on first come first served basis if the North Maine Woods staff members are not using the facility. The building is left unlocked. If you do stay, please leave the camp clean for the next visitors and be careful with fire.

More deadwater is ahead for 4 miles to **Morrison Depot Campsite**. Two sites with tables are available here. The Southwest Branch is a tributary as large as the Baker Branch and the river widens out at this point. The **Southwest Branch Campsite has one** one site. **Doucie Brook Campsite**, four miles downstream, has three campsites with tables overlooking a large deadwater. **Knowles Brook Campsite** has four sites with tables and a privy. This was once the site of an old logging depot camp as were many of the campsite locations. You will see remains of the old machinery 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. Two sites are available at the **Northwest Branch Campsite**.

**Ledge Rapids Campsite** has three sites available with one table shelter. The log camp at the Ledge Rapids campsite may be available for use on the first come first serve basis if the North Maine Woods staff members are not using the facility. The building is left unlocked. If you do stay, please leave the camp clean for the next visitors and be careful with fire. A privy is also located here. Ledge Rapids are short and are best passed on the right.

**Moody Bridge** is a good access point during lower water periods. There are five sites here with two privies. Table shelters are available at two sites. All have tables. A vehicle storage area is also here. It is two miles downriver to **Red Pine Campsite** where road access is also possible. There are three sites and one privy along an airstrip which is no longer open for aircraft use. Down a deadwater two miles is **Burntland Brook Campsite**. Two sites with tables are available. 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 **Nine-mile Bridge**. The ice removed this historic steel bridge in 1972 and carried it downstream. There are two campsites near the left downstream side of the bridge and one campsite on the east side of the river up stream from the water gauging station.

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 depot at Seven Islands. Generally the water will drop mildly with a small rip at the mouth of Connors Brook where the river runs along a

steep bank. Upon entering the Seven Islands area is **Connors Brook**, where there is a campsite on the east shore. This is a single party campsite with a table and privy. At **Seven Islands Campsite** there are four sites with two table shelters, one privy, and four tables.

Two miles downriver is the Blanchet/Maibec Bridge which is another access point to the river. Another mile downstream is **Priestly Campsite** at Priestly Deadwater. Vehicle access is also possible here. A table shelter, two sites, and a privy are at this location.

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 and has a table, firering and outhouse. The second is a few hundred yards downstream and sits on a high bank. A table shelter, picnic table, firering and outhouse are at this location.

The river drops slowly from Simmons Farm to **Basford Rips Campsite**, a distance of five miles. **Basford Rips Campsite** has one site available. It is four miles from Basford Rips to the head of the Big Black Rapids. These rapids should be scouted from either shore by foot before running them by canoe. Portage 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, one will find **Big Black Campsite** at the confluence with the Big Black River. There are three sites with a privy, three tables, and a table shelter.

The river widens out again with the addition of the Big Black flowage. The next campsite is **The Birches** which consists of one solitary site at the bottom of a steep bank. A small brook runs into the river next to the campsites. Below The Birches is Seminary Brook Campsite which provides two sites with tables, a shelter and a privy. The road from Dickey is passable to most sites down river from this site. A long stretch of generally flat water runs for three miles to Boomchain Campsite which is on the east shore. At this site are two firerings, tables and an outhouse. Another mile downriver on the west shore is **Long Rapids Campsite** where cold brook falls into the river near these two sites. After passing through Long Rapids, the **Castonia Farm** can be seen three miles downriver. At **Castonia Farm** there is one site available near the mouth of Chimenticook Stream. The burnt remains of a river tow boat, used to haul supplies on the river during the log driving days, lay nearby.

Two sets of small rapids, Castonia and Schoolhouse Rapids, fall to bring one to the **Ouellette Farm**. Two sites are here on a grassy knoll with one table, shelter, and privy. Down a long stretch and around a left bend will bring **Fox Brook Campsite**. There are two sites with shelters, two tables and a privy.

The last North Maine Woods site on the river is at the mouth of **Poplar Island Brook**. One site with one table and privy is located here.

Around the next four-mile horseshoe bend is Big Rapids. These rapids 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 St. Francis. It is primarily a commercial forest, owned as a long-term investment and 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. These methods have now given way to 18-wheeled logging trucks and travel on the river is for recreational canoeing and fishing. Travel today is mostly downstream, instead of upstream, as when the boats used to carry supplies to the many farms and logging camps.

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 farm 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**

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 area did become settled, the St. John 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.

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 of quality timber took settlers 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 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 began to be harvested in the area.

### **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 based on self-taxation 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 used today. The observant canoeist can still see the wire 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 recent years was to salvage trees damaged by the insect during the second epidemic.

The early 1900's were also the beginning of the mechanical age. Steam log haulers were introduced and railroads expanded to help transfer wood. The first steam log hauler in the St. John area was at Flaws Bogan, where it was assembled but never worked. When it was started up and attached to pull loaded log sleds, it got mired in the mud and was abandoned by the crews who brought it there. The log hauler remained in the same spot for many years until it was taken into Canada and sold as scrap metal.

### **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 little market for wood, almost a whole harvesting cycle was missed. These 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.

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.

### **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.

At the site 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. It was known to have homesteaders as long ago as 1860. In 1875, Frank Currier had 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 at Seven Islands. 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 the stand of 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 which was eventually moved to Clayton Lake when LaCroix put in the road 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. They served much the same purpose. Men traveling on the river would stay at these farms.

Below Seven Islands there was at one time a logging depot at Priestly Brook. Today Priestly Bridge is three miles upriver from Priestly Rapids. Each year the wooden deck of the bridge is removed during "ice out" in early spring.

## **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 crews would inspect logging crews and merchandise. Until recently a fire warden camp was located here on the spot where the campsite is now.

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 information and stories gathered in this article merely touch the surface. For more information a bibliography of suggested reading is provided for your convenience.

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

**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**

Dunn Timberlands, Inc.  
Huber Resources Corp.  
The Nature Conservancy  
Stetson Timberlands  
Irving Woodlands, LLC  
Seven Islands Land Co.  
Prentiss & Carlisle Management Co.

**State Representatives**

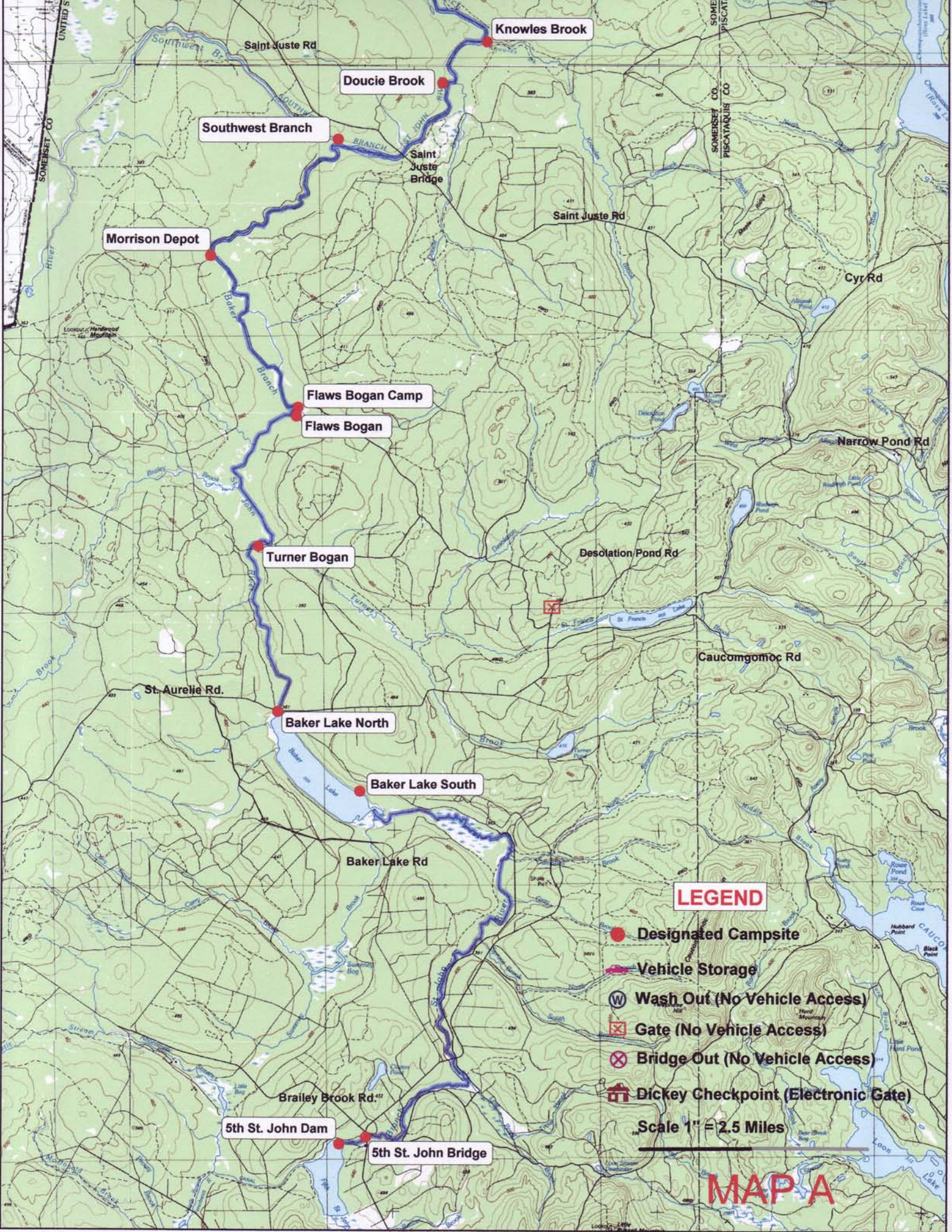
Maine Forest Service  
Bureau of Parks & Lands  
Land Use Regulation Commission  
Allagash Wilderness Waterway  
Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

A history of the introduction of Muskellunge in the St. John River Watershed, Prepared by David Basley, 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.
- In September 2006, the Fish River below the falls in Fort Kent and an upstream section between the falls and Soldier Pond was sampled using an electrofishing raft. No muskellunge were captured.
- Jeff Albert of Madawaska caught the state record muskellunge at Glazier Lake on March 24, 2007. The fish measured 46 inches and weighed 31.02 pounds.



Morrison Depot

Southwest Branch

Doucie Brook

Knowles Brook

Flaws Bogan Camp

Flaws Bogan

Turner Bogan

St. Aurelie Rd.

Baker Lake North

Baker Lake South

Baker Lake Rd

5th St. John Dam

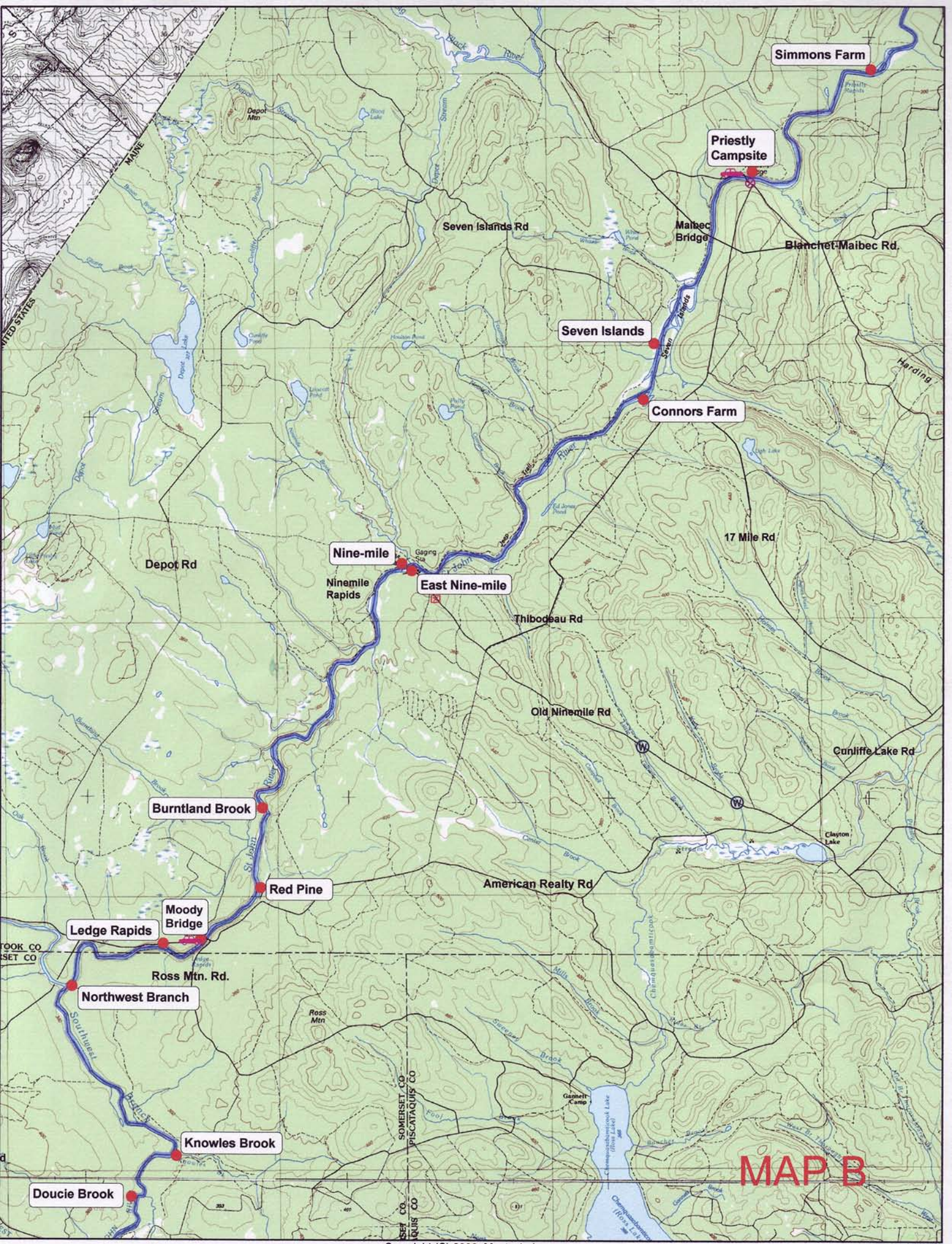
5th St. John Bridge

**LEGEND**

- Designated Campsite
- ➔ Vehicle Storage
- W Wash Out (No Vehicle Access)
- X Gate (No Vehicle Access)
- ⊗ Bridge Out (No Vehicle Access)
- ⌘ Dickey Checkpoint (Electronic Gate)

Scale 1" = 2.5 Miles

**MAP A**



Simmons Farm

Priestly Campsite

Seven Islands Rd

Maibec Bridge

Blanchet-Maibec Rd.

Seven Islands

Connors Farm

Depot Rd

Nine-mile

East Nine-mile

17 Mile Rd

Ninemile Rapids

Thibodeau Rd

Old Ninemile Rd

Cunliffe Lake Rd

Burntland Brook

American Realty Rd

Red Pine

Ledge Rapids

Moody Bridge

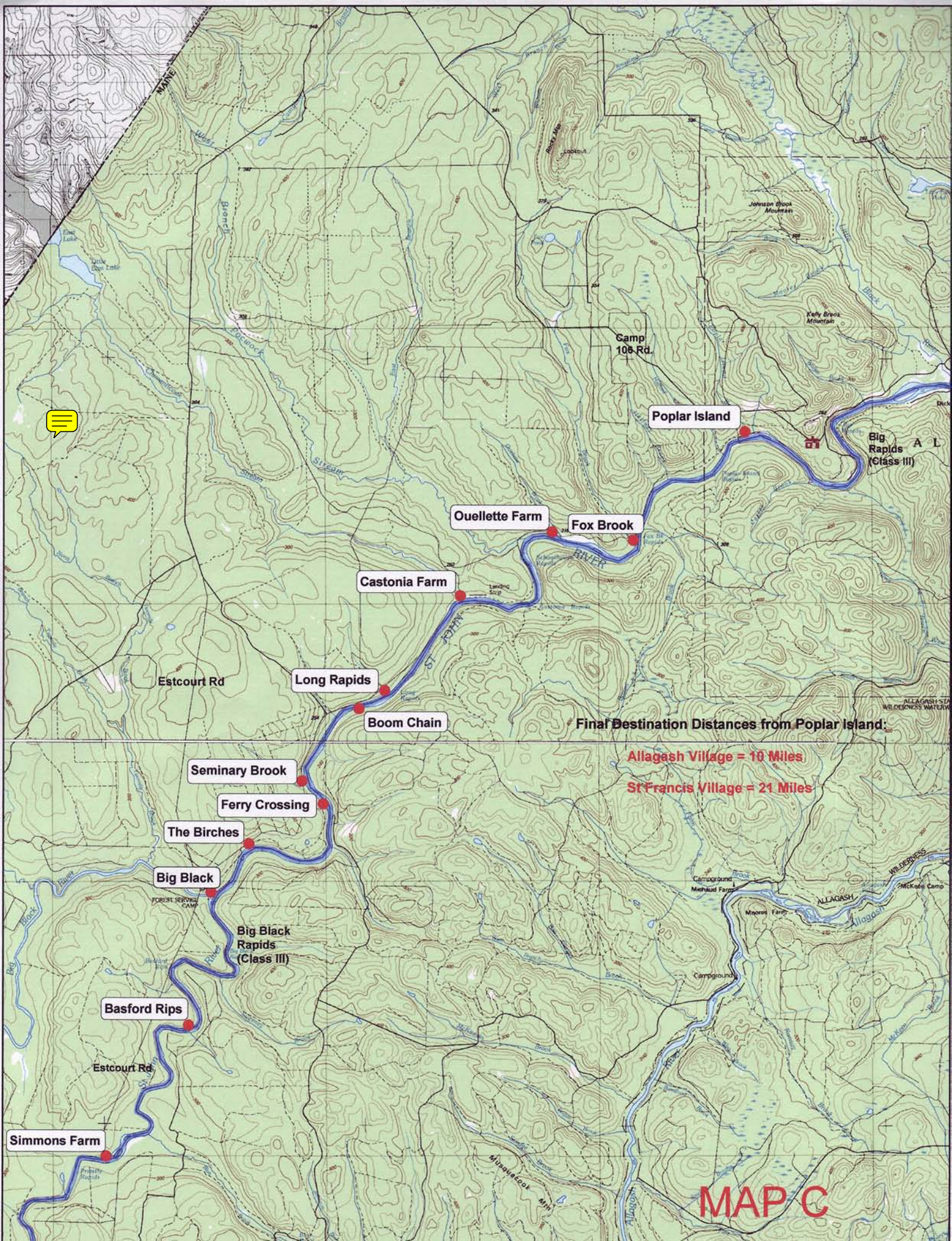
Ross Mtn. Rd.

Northwest Branch

Knowles Brook

Doucie Brook

MAP B



Camp 106 Rd.

Poplar Island

Big Rapids (Class III)

Ouellette Farm

Fox Brook

Castonia Farm

Estcourt Rd

Long Rapids

Boom Chain

Final Destination Distances from Poplar Island:

Allagash Village = 10 Miles

St Francis Village = 21 Miles

Seminary Brook

Ferry Crossing

The Birches

Big Black

Big Black Rapids (Class III)

Basford Rips

Estcourt Rd

Simmons Farm

MAP C