

# Why I Paddle Rivers

By Erik Eckilson

What's your favorite river? That's probably not an easy question for any RICKA paddler. There are so many great rivers in southern New England that it can be difficult to choose. For each, there's something that makes it special.

My local river is the Blackstone. Its like an old friend – easy and comfortable. There's also the Branch. It doesn't run very often, so its like a far away relative that you seldom see. When you get together, it's a treat.

Down south is the Wood and the Pawcatuck. To the west is the Quinebaug and the Willimantic. To the north is the Charles. To the east is the Nemasket. I could go on and on.

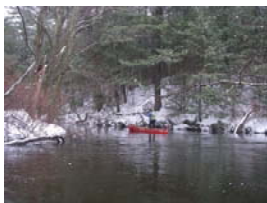
Personally, I'll paddle rivers any time of year. With proper gear and a few good friends, winter paddling can be spectacular. A new layer of snow makes everything look fresh and clean. Icicles hanging from the trees sparkle in the sunshine. The air is crisp and refreshing. A short winter paddle, followed by refreshments at the local pub, can make the long cold days more bearable.

In the spring, the action picks up a bit – its whitewater season. As the spring run-off swells local streams, river runners and play boaters head out for an adrenaline rush. But spring paddling isn't only about whitewater. With higher water levels, many of the area's best flatwater rivers are also great to paddle in the spring.

As we enter the lazy days of summer, the paddling gets easier. The scenery is lush and green. Birds and wildlife are everywhere. We take long breaks for lunch – especially if a swimming hole or rope swing is involved. Everyone loves summer paddling.

Then comes the fall. The nights are cool, but the days stay warm. The leaves turn brilliant shades of yellow, orange and red. Even rivers that we know well become a new experience with stunning views around every twist and turn.

I'll paddle anywhere, but for me, there's something about moving water that makes paddling rivers a special treat. Anyone want to go paddling?



Winter on the Branch



Spring on the Willimantic



Summer on the Charles



Fall on the Blackstone