





Bluestone River Water Trail, WV


Legend

Access..... 

Hazard..... 

Rapids..... 

Mileage..... 

Novice..... 

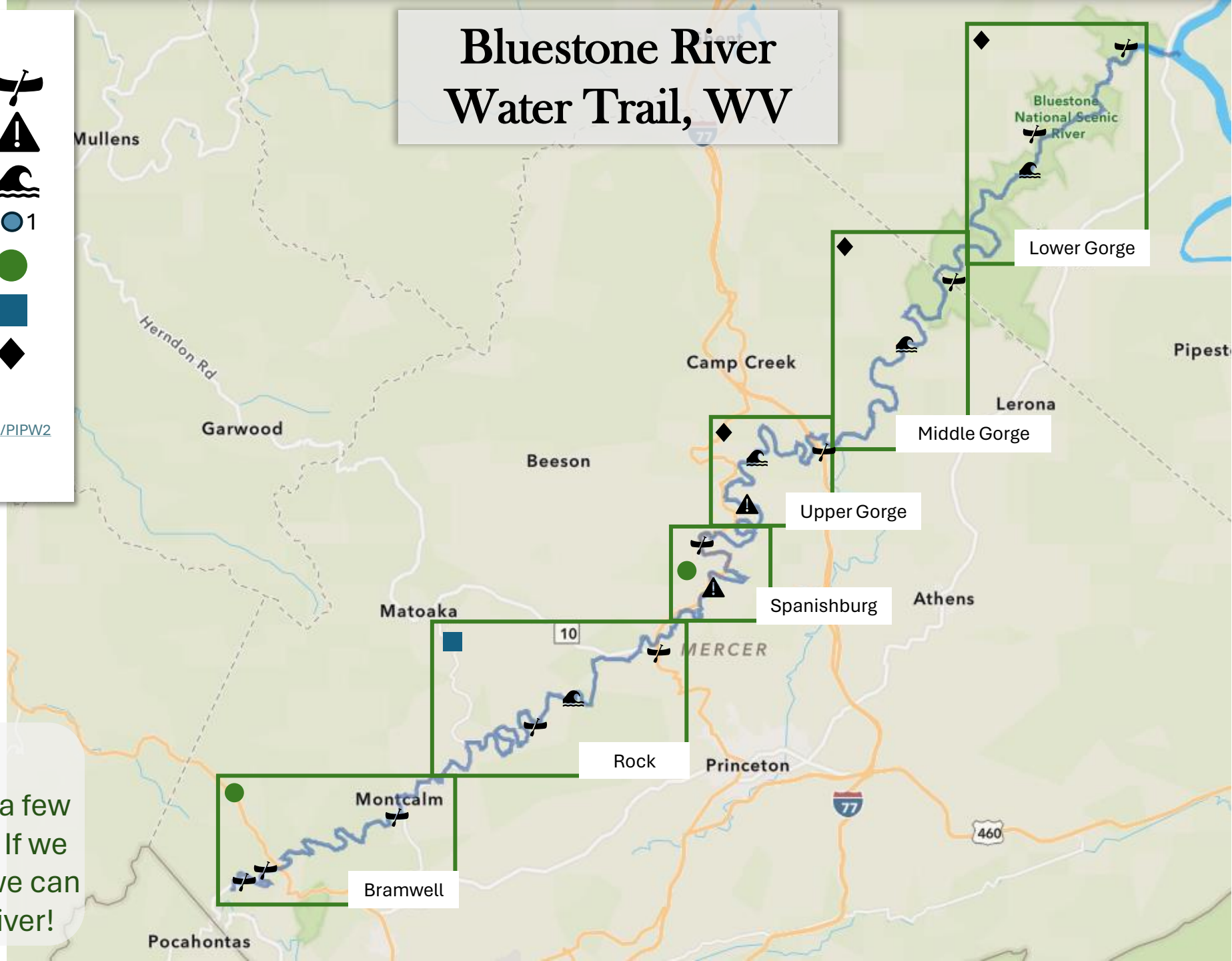
Intermediate..... 

Expert..... 

Pipestem Gauge*:

<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>

*All water levels based on Pipestem Gauge



Please pick up a few pieces of litter. If we work together, we can clean up our river!

RIVER SAFETY – START HERE



1. The Bluestone River Water Trail is an *ongoing* project. Some access points have already been approved; others are surrounded by private property and require boaters to skirt public roadways to access. Maps indicate site status as either *Approved* or *Informal*. As of this writing (5/4/24), all access points are *primitive*. Sites do not have signage and boaters may have to carry their boats down steep, muddy, rocky terrain to reach the water. The Bluestone River Water Trail aims to improve these conditions, but for the time being, expect paddling the Bluestone to be a bit of an adventure, no matter which section you choose!

2. The Bluestone water levels rise and fall quickly and generally level out around 3 ft on the Pipestem Gauge (<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>). All water levels referenced in this site are based on the Pipestem Gauge. In general, the upper sections (upstream of the Gorge) are pleasant at 3.5 ft (except Rock), but doable at 3 ft (expect to scrape along and get stuck a few times). Rock and the Gorge call for higher water levels ~ 4.5 ft *minimum*. Paddlers must refer to water levels and plan trips accordingly to enjoy paddling the Bluestone.

3. Each section includes a map, description, and coordinates to the exact parking and access locations. Copy and past coordinates into a mapping app to locate accesses. Direct Google Map links are also included in the main website. Use these coordinates / links to access the River at appropriate sites and avoid private property.

4. This site uses an informal difficulty scale: Novice, Intermediate, Expert. There is no formal definition of what these ratings mean. They are simply designed to give paddlers some idea of what to expect in different sections, but a brief general description may help. Think of these levels like ski slopes. Novice = a green run; Intermediate = a blue run; Expert = black diamond. **Novice does not mean** first time paddler. Just like skiers on green slopes need to be under control and aware of their surroundings, the same goes for paddling. Even the easiest section of river paddling involves current and potential hazards. Paddlers **MUST** be comfortable controlling their boats and navigating away from hazards. **DO NOT** attempt any section of the Bluestone (or any other river, for that matter) without sufficient training and experience. A good place to start is by taking a paddling course through the American Canoe Association: <https://americancanoe.org/education/types-of-paddling-classes-and-courses/> Intermediate means a strong, experienced paddler who can safely navigate class 2 whitewater and has the awareness to anticipate and plan for risks. Expert speaks for itself. **DO NOT** attempt Rock if you are not a **strong intermediate** paddler. **DO NOT** attempt any section of the Bluestone Gorge if you are not an **expert** paddler.

5. Paddle **AT YOUR OWN RISK**. Every effort has been made to provide accurate information, but paddlers assume all risk of injury, drowning, trespassing, and any other risk of the sport by their participation. **YOU** are responsible for your safety on and around the water.

6. **ALWAYS WEAR YOUR PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE**. Follow safety practices as promulgated by reputable paddling organizations such as the American Canoe Association: https://americancanoe.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/sei-educational_resources/essentials_riverrescue.pdf

Paddler's Safety Checklist



CANOE • KAYAK • RAFT • SUP

- Know What to Bring
 - Know Where to Paddle
 - Know your Ability
 - Know your Group's Abilities
 - File a Float Plan

TAKE A COURSE

Learn essential information and practice paddling and rescue skills by taking an on-water class from an ACA certified paddlesports instructor.

sei@americancanoe.org
www.americancanoe.org

American Canoe Association 2011



Paddler's Safety Checklist

- Be a Swimmer
- File a Float Plan
- Wear Your Lifejacket
- Know the Weather Conditions
- Know the Water Venue
- Assess your Boat's Flotation Needs
- Carry a Spare Paddle
- Wear Appropriate Clothing
- Dress for Immersion in Cold Water
- Wear a Hat or Helmet
- Carry a Compass and Chart or Map
- Carry a Whistle or Sound Signaling Device
- Have a Bilge Pump and / or Bailer
- Carry a Knife, Throw Bag or Tow Rope, Paddle Float, Sling and Other Rescue Gear
- SunScreen
- Water & Snacks
- Light / Signal (for low light conditions)
- Wear Proper Footwear
- UV Eye Protection
- Drybag with Extra Clothing
- First Aid Kit
- Small Repair Kit
- VHF Radio and GPS Locator



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.



Reference:

https://americancanoe.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/sei-educational_resources/aca.paddlerssafetychecklist.pdf



CANOE-KAYAK-SUP-RAFT-RESCUE

The American Canoe Association (ACA) is a member-based nonprofit organization 501(c)(3) that promotes fun and responsible canoeing, kayaking, stand up paddleboarding and rafting. Founded in 1880, the ACA actively advocates recreational access and stewardship of America's water trails. For more information and to become a member, visit www.americancanoe.org.



Contact the ACA:
Phone: (540) 907-4460
Fax: (888) 229-3792
aca@americancanoe.org

www.americancanoe.org

Making the world a better place to paddle! Since 1880.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Wear your lifejacket!
- Be properly clothed and equipped
- File a float plan
- Learn and practice essential rescue skills
- Carry a throw-bag and practice regularly
- Seek out ACA-certified instructors for paddling instruction, and in river safety & rescue skills
- Paddle safe and paddle often



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.



River Paddler's Guide to Rescue

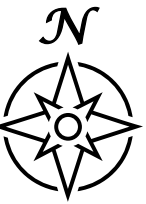


Part of ACA's Paddle Safe - Paddle Smart Series

www.americancanoe.org



Reference:
https://americancanoe.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/sei-educational_resources/essentials_riverrescue.pdf



Essentials of River Safety

An experienced paddler never takes safety for granted. Every paddler should practice and be competent at self-rescue, and be able to help others with simple assisted-rescue techniques. Seek out training, and learn quick, uncomplicated methods to help your paddling buddies, as well as how to use a few simple pieces of safety gear. All paddlers should wear a USCG-approved, properly fitted life jacket, appropriate protective clothing, including secure footwear, and have a throw-rope, knife, and sounding device. Bright lights should be carried for low-visibility conditions.

Preparation and Prevention

Know before you go! This means reading guide books, checking with outfitters, or talking to other paddlers with experience on the river you intend to paddle.

Learn to recognize potential hazards, and use good judgment to avoid them. Inclement weather, flood waters, and natural or man-made obstructions are all danger signs.

Be conservative! Paddling can be safe, and should be fun. Walk around, or leave a wide margin surrounding hazards. Reschedule trips when conditions are simply too dangerous; for instance, during floods or extreme cold.



As soon as you find yourself in the water, assume a defensive position. This means lying on your back, legs pointing downstream. Arch your back to stay as close to the surface as possible and avoid bumping the bottom. Keep your feet on the surface. This helps you avoid foot-entrapment, one of the most common river hazards.

Angle your head toward the closest, safe shore and back-stroke to safety. If you are being swept rapidly toward a hazard you may need to roll to your side into an aggressive swimming position to more quickly reach safety, but stay flat along the surface until you reach shallow, slow water.

Hold your boat and paddle with one hand and swim with the other if it is safe to do so.

Otherwise, let go of your gear and take care of yourself first.

Shore-Based Rescues

Ropes can be useful in assisting swimmers to shore. Throw-ropes can be either stored in a throw-bag designed for quick and easy deployment, or just loosely coiled. In either case, the rope itself should float, and be brightly colored for easy visibility. Because of their simplicity and speed of operation, throw-bags are recommended.

All paddlers should be able to swim with a life jacket on, and be able to assist a swimmer with either a boat-based rescue or a rope toss from shore. These are essential skills. There are more advanced skills that can be helpful, such as wading, either singly or in groups, to rescue entrapped paddlers or pinned boats. Setting up mechanical systems to rescue people and/or equipment, learning how to swim in more difficult conditions or how to safely swim over a strainer can all be vital skills for the paddler to know. These skills (and more) should be learned in a class setting, taught by knowledgeable,

experienced, certified instructors. Paddlers would be well-served to seek out such classes and instructors and learn these skills. Your safety may depend on it.



Boat-Based Rescues

Often a self-rescue is the quickest and safest method for a swimmer to reach safety. However, a paddler can assist a swimmer in several ways.

The simplest method is to paddle over to the swimmer and instruct them to hold onto either the bow or stern of the paddler's boat. Towing and pushing a swimmer both work well, but determining which will work best in a given situation requires practice.

Towing or "bulldozing" an empty boat to shore can work well too, although you'll notice the boat will not follow directions very well. Both techniques require specialized equipment and advanced training. It can be hazardous, and is not recommended for beginners.

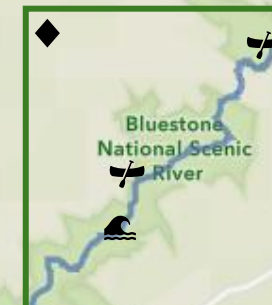
www.americancanoe.org

Reference:

https://americancanoe.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/sei-educational_resources/essentials_riverrescue.pdf

Bluestone River Water Trail, WV

Mullens



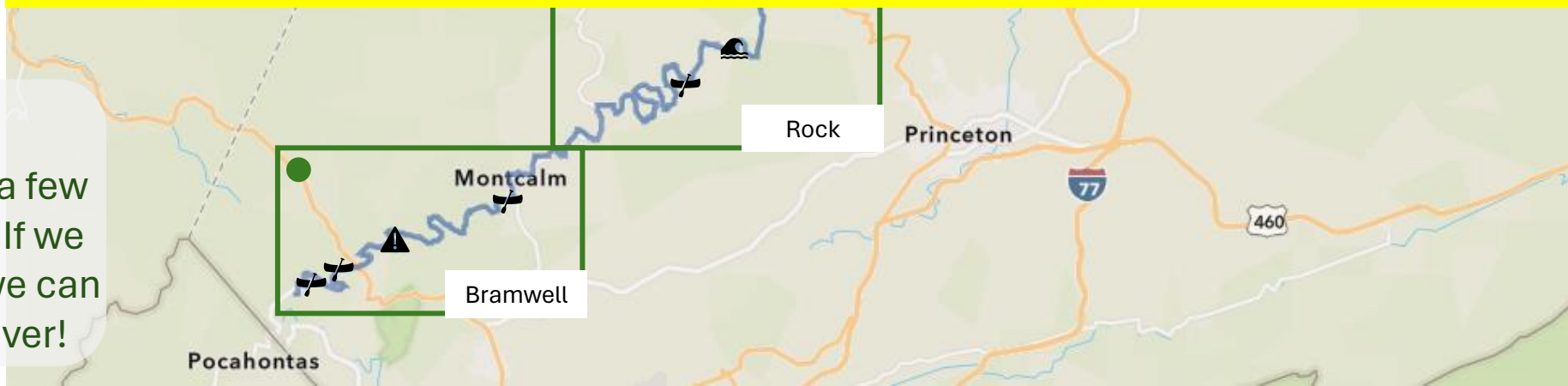
RIVER SAFETY – Continued

1. **You** are responsible for setting your own limits and educating yourself about safe paddling practices.
2. In addition to the resources provided on previous pages, see for following for information on common river hazards and an introduction to “Reading the River.”


1. <https://www.whitewaterguidebook.com/the-six-most-common-river-hazards/>
2. <https://aquabound.com/blogs/resources/reading-rivers-with-w-o-r-m-s>





Please pick up a few pieces of litter. If we work together, we can clean up our river!





Legend

Access..... 

Hazard..... 

Rapids..... 

Mileage.....  1

Novice..... 

Intermediate..... 

Expert..... 

Pipestem Gauge*:

<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>

*All water levels based on Pipestem Gauge

Bramwell, WV (3.5')

Coopers → Old School Grocery: 7.6 mi.

CAUTION: Old School Grocery is last takeout before long challenging section up to class 1 whitewater.



6" Drop;
Class 0.5


Bramwell
Firehouse

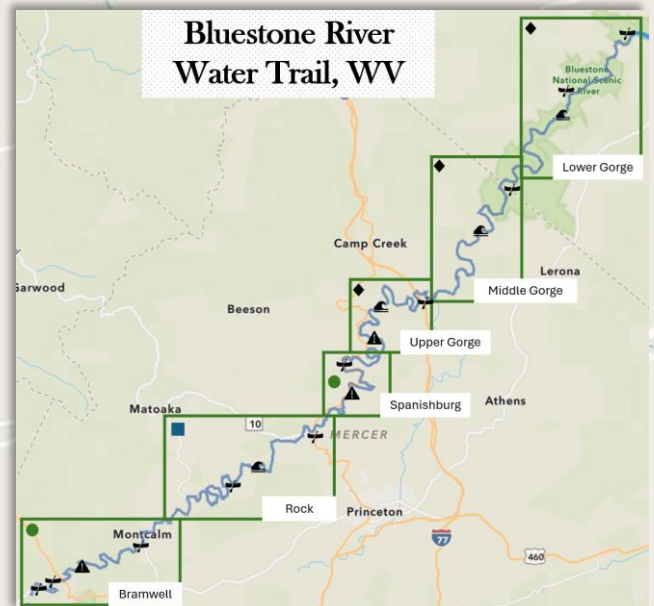
2 Freeman

Simmons

Coopers

Coopers


Please pick up a few pieces of litter. If we work together, we can clean up our river!

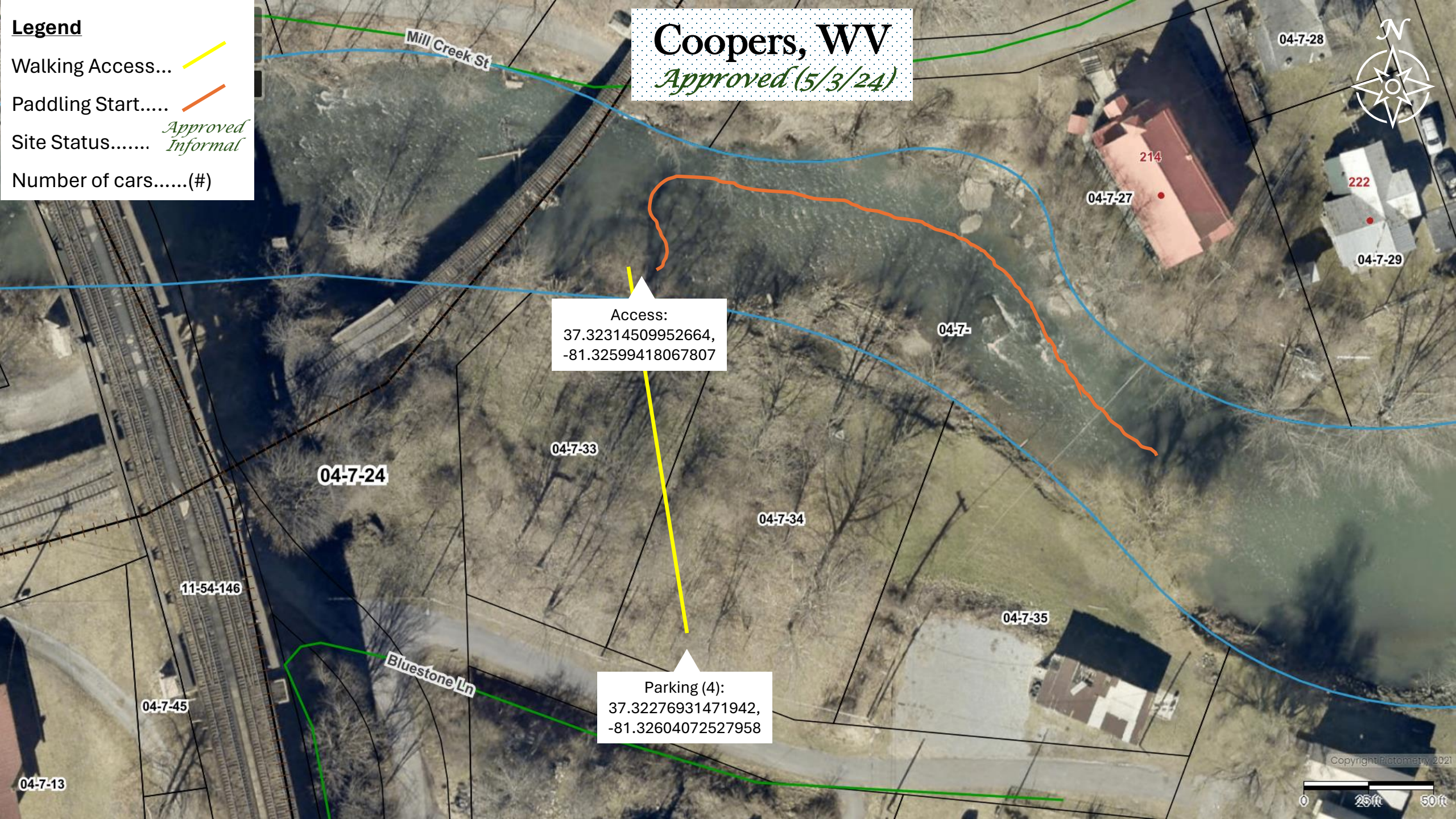


Legend

- Walking Access...
- Paddling Start.....
- Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
- Number of cars.....(#)

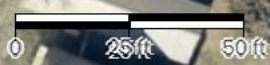
Coopers, WV

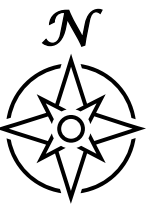
Approved (5/3/24)



Access:
 37.32314509952664,
 -81.32599418067807

Parking (4):
 37.32276931471942,
 -81.32604072527958





Legend

Access.....

Hazard.....

Rapids.....

Mileage.....

Novice.....

Intermediate.....

Expert.....

Pipestem Gauge*:
<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>

*All water levels based on
Pipestem Gauge

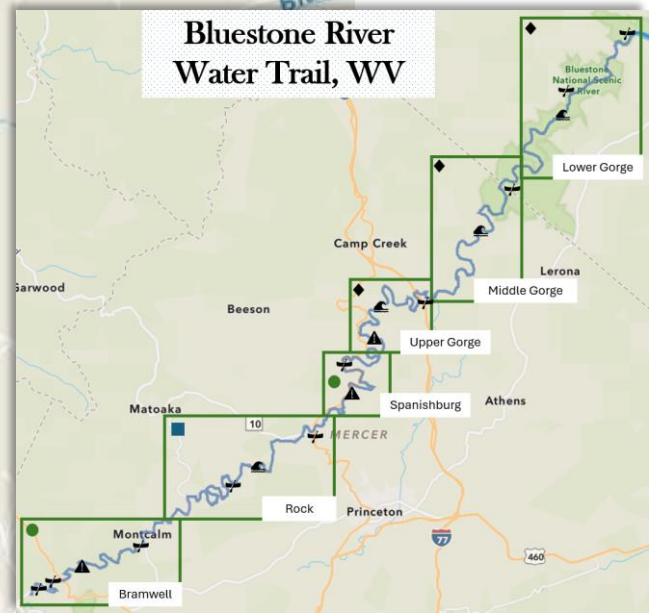
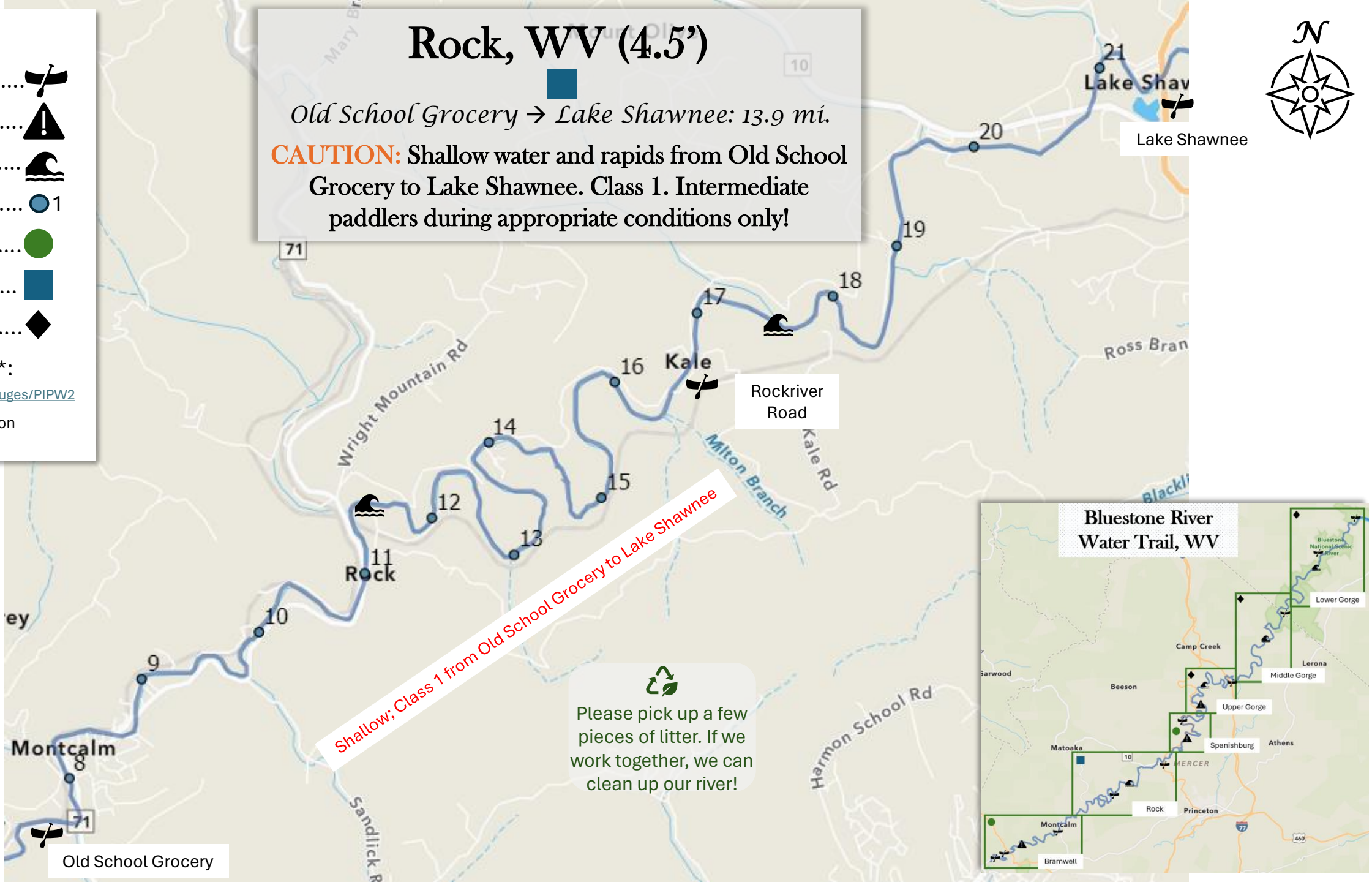
Rock, WV (4.5')

Old School Grocery → Lake Shawnee: 13.9 mi.



CAUTION: Shallow water and rapids from Old School Grocery to Lake Shawnee. Class 1. Intermediate paddlers during appropriate conditions only!

Shallow, Class 1 from Old School Grocery to Lake Shawnee

Please pick up a few pieces of litter. If we work together, we can clean up our river!



Legend

- Walking Access... 
- Paddling Start..... 
- Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
- Number of cars.....(#)

Rock River Road, WV

Informal (5/3/24)



11-46-18

Rock River Rd

11-46-17

11-46-

Access:
37.382975118040584,
-81.19036664561081

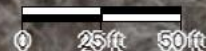
Parking (2):
37.38288345200098,
-81.19028801041497

11-38-

11-38-63.2

Kale Rd

11-38-63.1

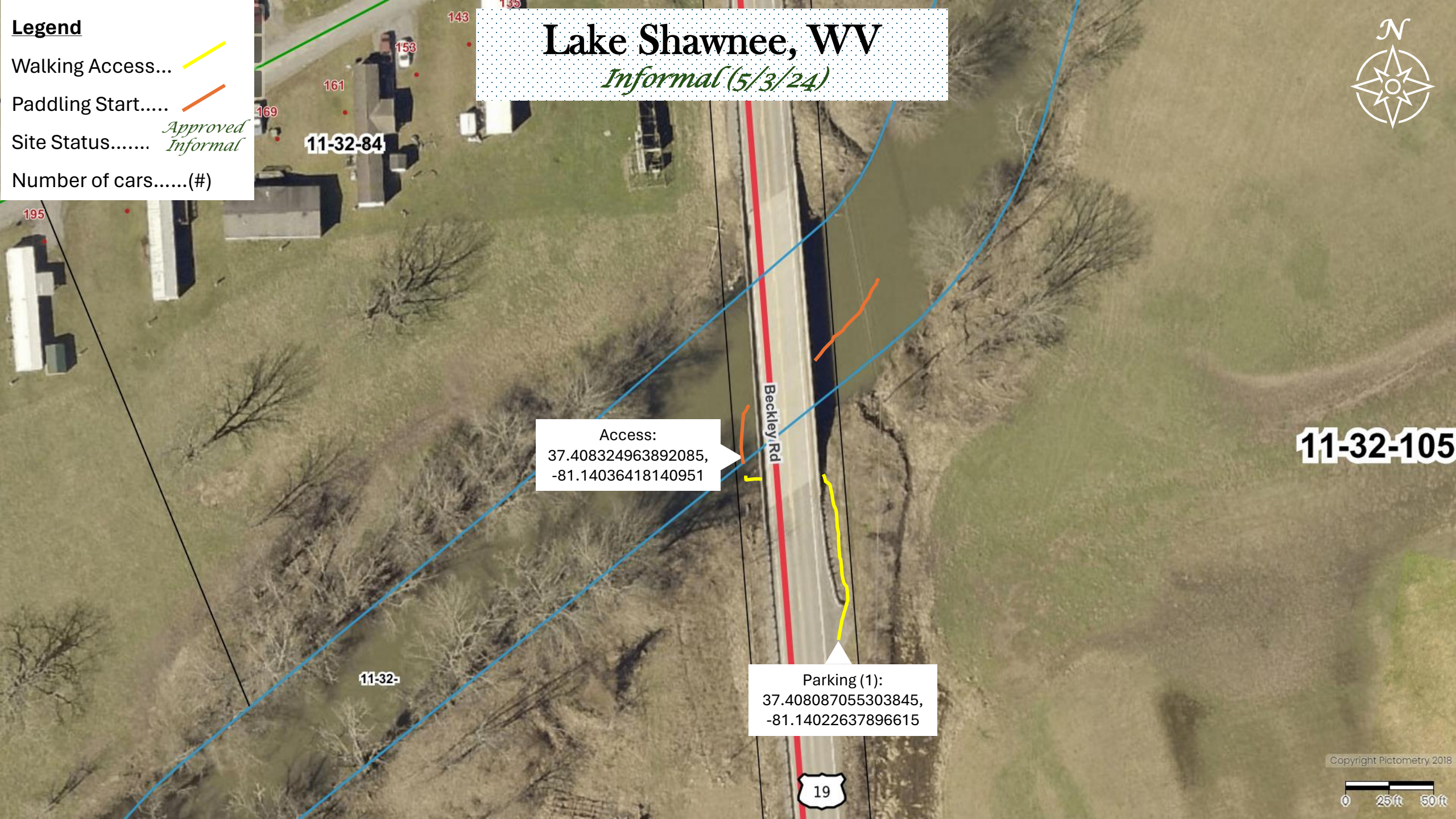




Lake Shawnee, WV

Informal (5/3/24)

- Legend**
- Walking Access...
 - Paddling Start.....
 - Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
 - Number of cars.....(#)



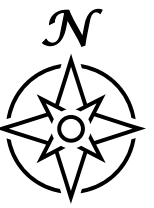
11-32-84

11-32-105


Access:
37.408324963892085,
-81.14036418140951


Parking (1):
37.408087055303845,
-81.14022637896615








Legend

Access..... 

Hazard..... 

Rapids..... 

Mileage..... 

Novice..... 

Intermediate..... 

Expert..... 

Pipestem Gauge*:

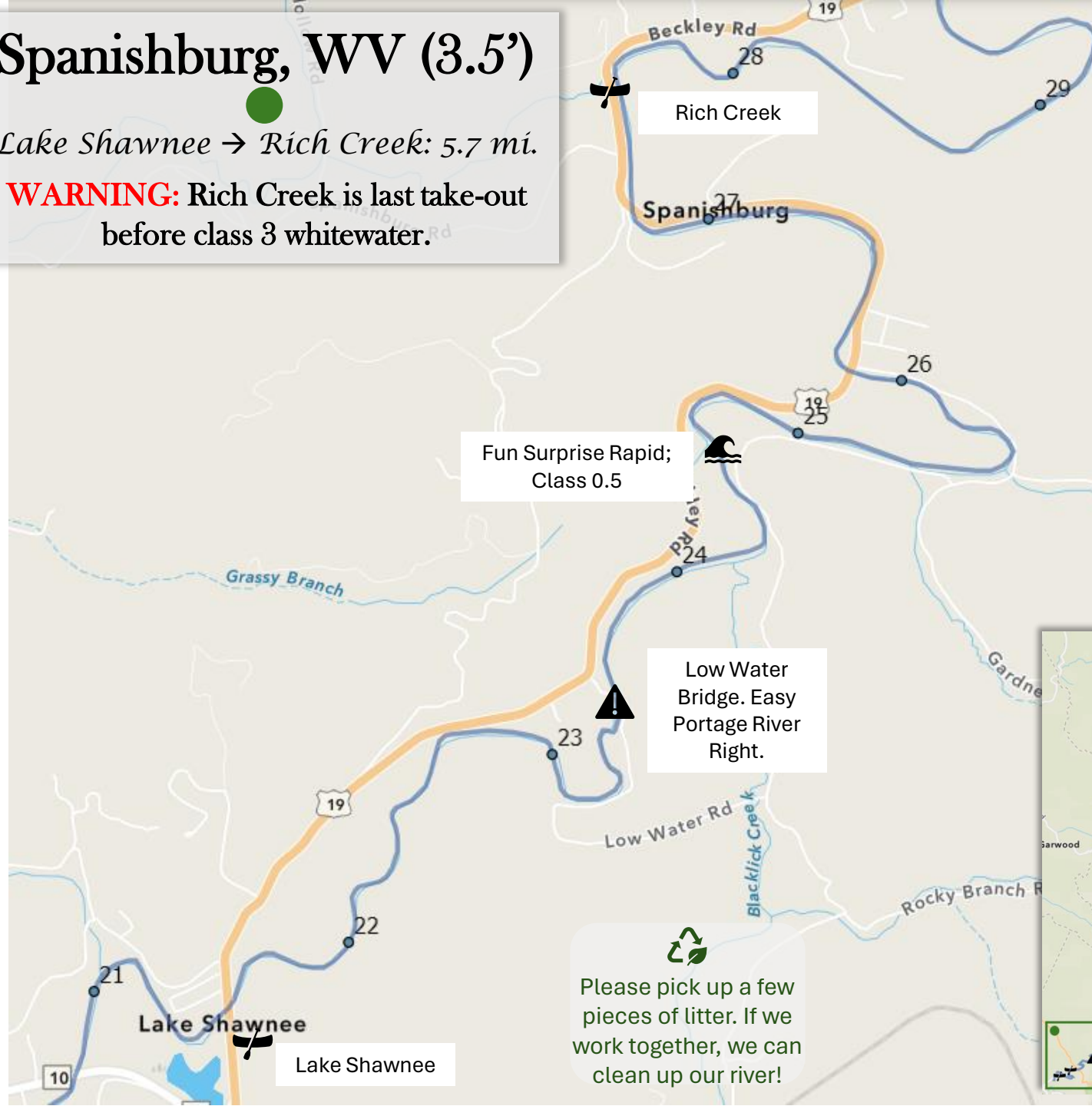
<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>

*All water levels based on Pipestem Gauge

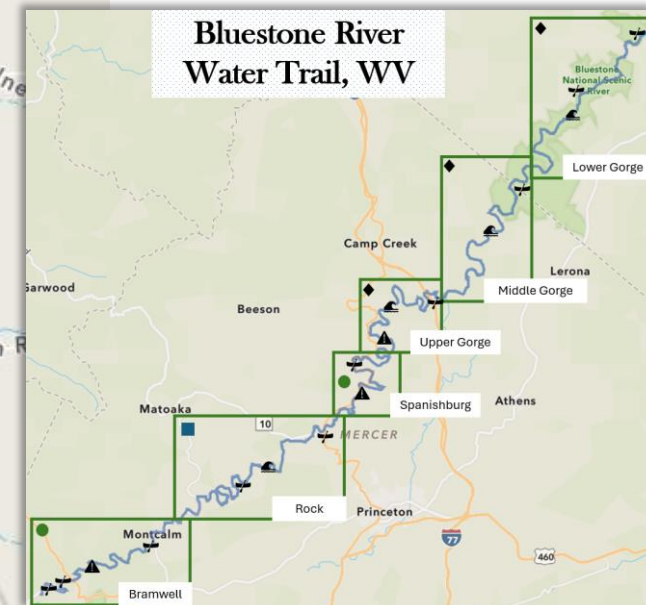
Spanishburg, WV (3.5')

Lake Shawnee → Rich Creek: 5.7 mi.

WARNING: Rich Creek is last take-out before class 3 whitewater.



Please pick up a few pieces of litter. If we work together, we can clean up our river!





Lake Shawnee, WV

Informal (5/3/24)

- Legend**
- Walking Access...
 - Paddling Start.....
 - Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
 - Number of cars.....(#)

195

169

161

153

143

135

11-32-84

Beckley Rd

11-32-105

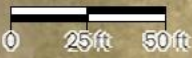
Access:
37.408324963892085,
-81.14036418140951

Parking (1):
37.408087055303845,
-81.14022637896615



11-32-



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Legend

- Walking Access... 
- Paddling Start..... 
- Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
- Number of cars.....(#)

Rich Creek, WV

Informal (5/3/24)



11-26-15

Access:
37.44471914624391,
-81.12172669118696

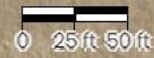
11-26-73

11-19-


Beckley Rd

Parking (3):
37.44408247350268,
-81.12149732190385

11-26-16



Legend

Access..... 

Hazard..... 

Rapids..... 

Mileage..... 

Novice..... 

Intermediate..... 

Expert..... 

Pipestem Gauge*:

<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>

*All water levels based on Pipestem Gauge

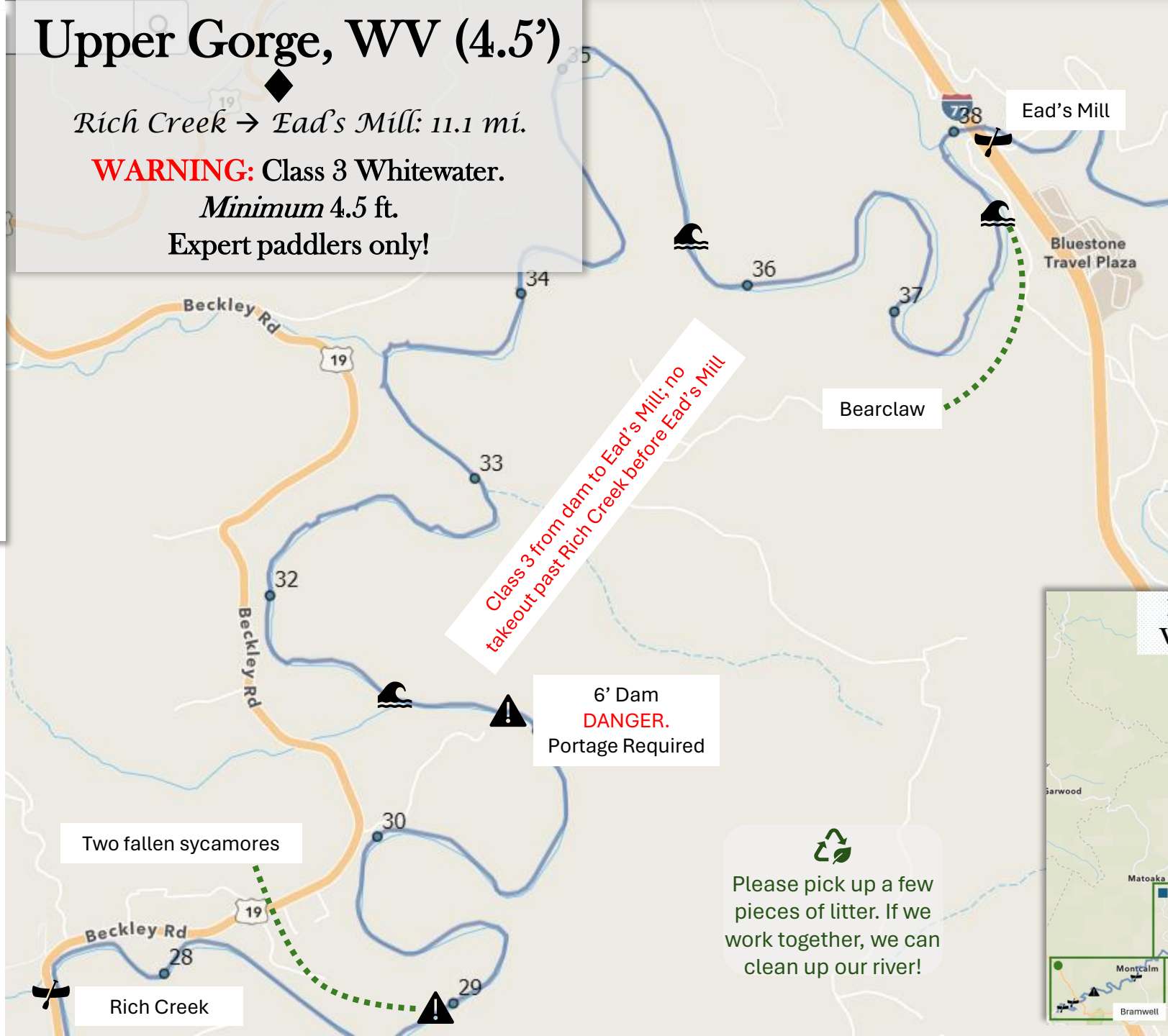
Upper Gorge, WV (4.5')

Rich Creek → Ead's Mill: 11.1 mi.

WARNING: Class 3 Whitewater.

Minimum 4.5 ft.


Expert paddlers only!

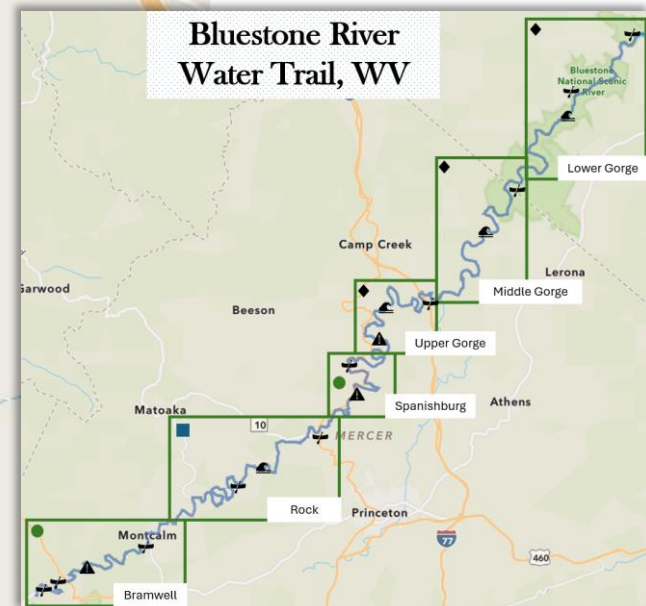


Class 3 from dam to Ead's Mill; no takeout past Rich Creek before Ead's Mill



**6' Dam
DANGER.
Portage Required**

Two fallen sycamores


Please pick up a few pieces of litter. If we work together, we can clean up our river!



Legend

- Walking Access... 
- Paddling Start..... 
- Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
- Number of cars.....(#)

Rich Creek, WV

Informal (5/3/24)



11-26-15

Access:
37.44471914624391,
-81.12172669118696

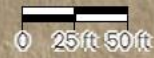
11-26-73

11-19-



Beckley Rd

Parking (3):
37.44408247350268,
-81.12149732190385

11-26-16



Legend

- Walking Access... 
- Paddling Start..... 
- Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
- Number of cars.....(#)

Ead's Mill, WV

Informal (5/3/24)



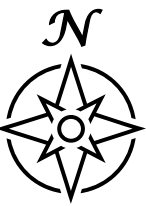
06-24-12



Access:
37.479035509010586,
-81.07145941103418

Parking (4):
37.47888331011247,
-81.07173971727242





Middle Gorge, WV (4.5')

Ead's Mill → *Pipestem*: 10.1 mi.

WARNING: Class 3 Whitewater.

Minimum 4.5 ft.

Expert paddlers only!



Legend

Access.....

Hazard.....

Rapids.....

Mileage..... 1

Novice.....

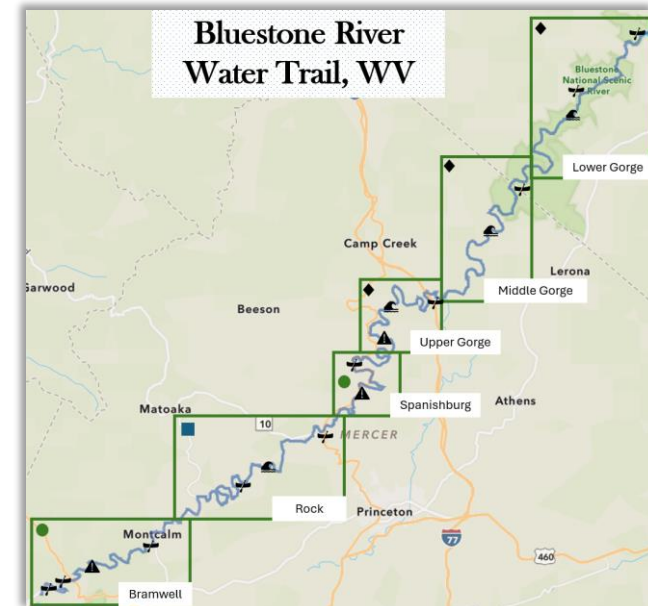
Intermediate.....

Expert.....



Pipestem Gauge*:

<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>

*All water levels based on
Pipestem Gauge



Legend

- Walking Access... 
- Paddling Start..... 
- Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
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Ead's Mill, WV

Informal (5/3/24)

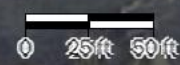




06-24-12



Access:
37.479035509010586,
-81.07145941103418

Parking (4):
37.47888331011247,
-81.07173971727242



- Legend**
- Walking Access... 
 - Paddling Start..... 
 - Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
 - Number of cars.....(#)

Pipestem, WV

Approved (5/3/24)

NOTE: Access is via Pipestem Aerial Tram: sometimes closes for inclement weather, could result in getting stranded at bottom of Gorge. Call Pipestem Resort State Park for current information and pricing: 304-466-1800.

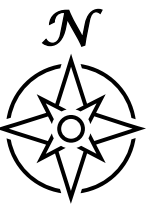


Mountain Creek Lodge

Burke's Nat'l Scenic River

Access:
37.53776109886035,
-81.00805076597695

Parking (100+; top of tram):
37.53380642466971,
-80.9976221111783



Lower Gorge, WV (4.5')

Pipestem → Bluestone State Park: 10 mi.

WARNING: Class 3 Whitewater.
Minimum 4.5 ft.
Expert paddlers only!

Legend

Access.....

Hazard.....

Rapids.....

Mileage..... 1

Novice.....

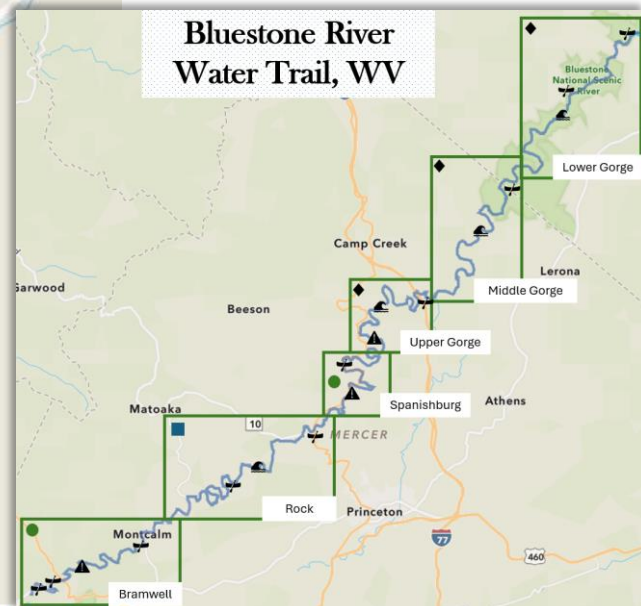
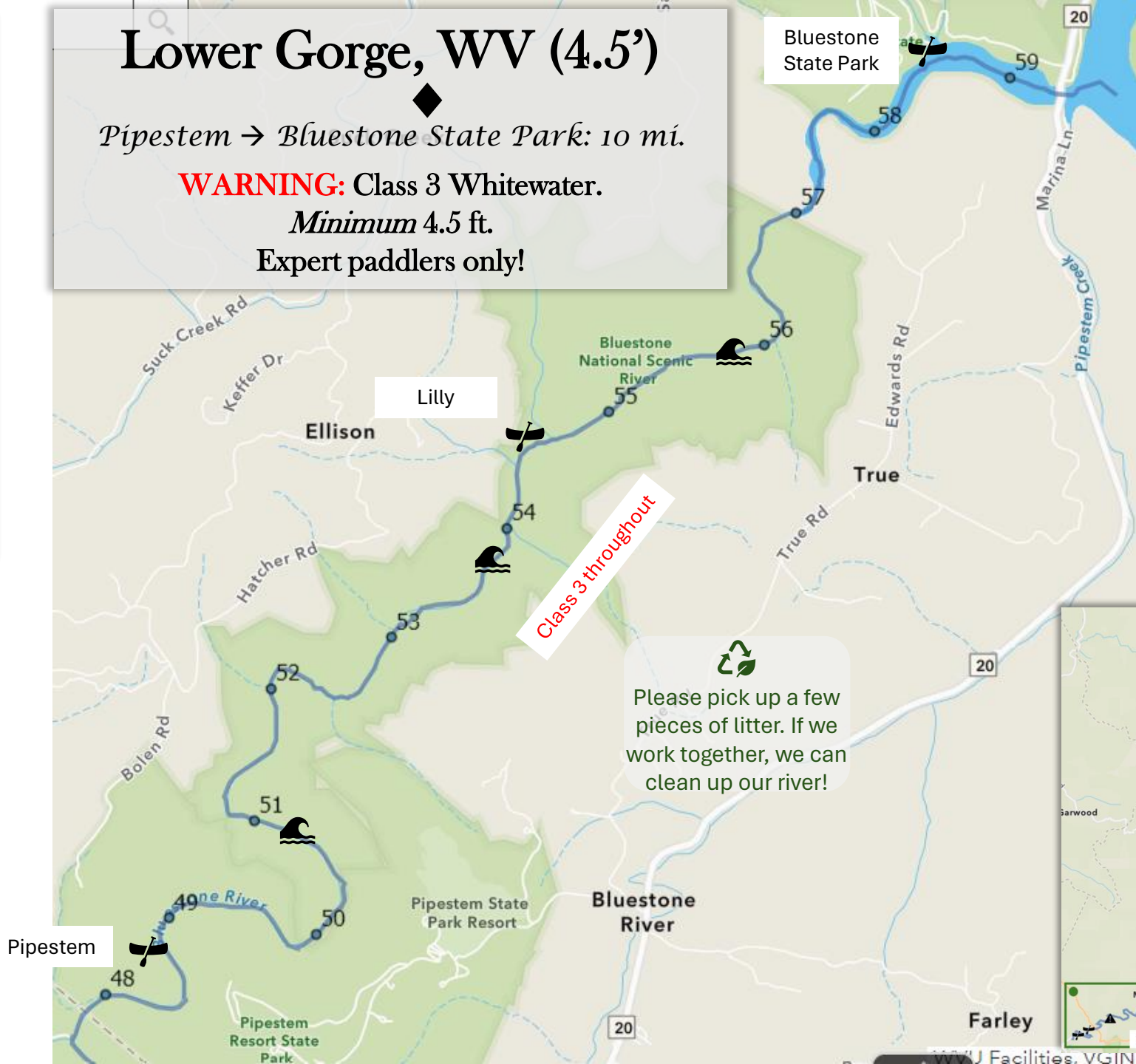
Intermediate.....



Expert.....

Pipestem Gauge*:

<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PIPW2>

*All water levels based on Pipestem Gauge



- Legend**
- Walking Access... 
 - Paddling Start..... 
 - Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
 - Number of cars.....(#)

Pipestem, WV

Approved (5/3/24)

NOTE: Access is via Pipestem Aerial Tram: sometimes closes for inclement weather, could result in getting stranded at bottom of Gorge. Call Pipestem Resort State Park for current information and pricing: 304-466-1800.




Mountain Creek Lodge


Burke State Nat'l Scenic River

Access:
37.53776109886035,
-81.00805076597695

Parking (100+; top of tram):
37.53380642466971,
-80.9976221111783

Legend

Walking Access... 

Paddling Start..... 

Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal

Number of cars.....(#)

Lilly, WV

Approved (5/3/24)





Parking (10+):
37.58395696431268,
-80.97167382444356

Access:
37.58330654484337,
-80.97073505132515

Bluestone Nat'l Scenic River

Lilly

Legend

- Walking Access... 
- Paddling Start..... 
- Site Status..... *Approved*
Informal
- Number of cars.....(#)

Bluestone State Park, WV

Approved (5/3/24)



Parking (10+):
37.616326357101535,
-80.93326653258713

Access:
37.61517762952199,
-80.93119407748047

Bluestone Nat'l Scenic River

Bluestone River Water Trail, WV



Access Detail

Name (Status)	River Mileage	Distance to Next Access	Parking	River side	Class	Rapids / Hazards	Ideal Stage	Notes
Coopers (Approved)	0	1.5	Four cars, grass	River Right	0.5	Minor 6 inch drop mile 0.5; likely to get wet in recreational kayak	3.5 ft	Challenging access; upstream ferry to River Left, then turn right and go down fifty foot swift section. Go to the right of cooler-sized boulder and avoid rocky shore river left to exit into calm section
Bramwell Firehouse (Approved)	1.5	6.1	Six cars, Brawell Firehouse, gravel	River Left	0.5	Swift sections near Lorton Lick inlet	3.5 ft	Fairly easy access. Walk down slope to riverside from parking. Launch pointed upstream the turn downstream (left).
Old School Grocery (Approved)	7.6	8.9	Ten cars, gravel	River Right	1	Shallow water and rapids Old School Grocery to Lake Shawnee.	4.5 ft	Most challenging section before Gorge. Too shallow at less than 4.5 ft; above 4.5 ft sustained class 1. Beautiful, but requires appropriate conditions and experience.
Rock River Road (Informal)	16.5	5	Two cars, roadside	River Right	1	Shallow water and rapids Old School Grocery to Lake Shawnee.	4.5 ft	Most challenging section before Gorge. Too shallow at less than 4 ft; above 4 ft up to class 2. Beautiful, but requires appropriate conditions and experience.
Lake Shawnee (Informal)	21.5	5.7	One car, roadside	River Right	0.5	Low water bridge mile 23.5; easy portage River Right. Fun small rapids before and after low water bridge.	3.5 ft	Arguably most lovely section before Gorge. Farmland and rising hills. Lots of wildlife: snapping turtles, deer, Canada geese
Rich Creek (Informal)	27.2	11.1	Two cars, roadside	River Left	3	Fallen sycamores mile 29; difficult portage. Dam mile 31; easy portage. Sustained rapids; Bearclaw mile 37.6	4.5 ft	Spanishburg is last take-out before class 3 whitewater! Sustained rapids, <i>minimum</i> 4.5 ft. Gorge walls begin to rise; remote and scenic with two big waterfalls River Left.
Eads Mill (Informal)	38.3	10.1	Four cars, gravel	River Right	3	Sustained class 3; most serious section.	4.5 ft	Parking on left side of Eads Mill Rd heading north before bridge. Access below bridge.
Pipestem (Approved)	48.4	6.1	N/A	River Left	3	Whitewater beyond	4.5 ft	Access via Pipestem Aerial Tram. Call ahead for hours and cost. IMPORTANT: Tram closed until at least August, 2024. Call 304-466-1800 for updates.
Lilly (Approved)	54.5	3.9	10+ cars, gravel	River Left	3	Whitewater beyond	4.5 ft	Long drive, remote site. Accessed via the NORTH side of the gorge.
Bluestone Lake (Approved)	58.4	End of Watertrail	10+ cars, gravel	River Left	N/A	N/A	4.5 ft	Watertrail ends in Bluestone State Park. 1.5 mile flatwater paddle. May be able to take out at unofficial site further up, but uncertain

