

# SALT PONDS COALITION: QUONOCHONTAUG POND



## MAP LEGEND

WATER ACCESS	POINTS OF INTEREST	PARKING
WATER	WATER TRAIL ROUTE	ROADS
CAUTION	CONSERVATION LAND	

**LEVEL** Beginner/Intermediate (wind)

**START/END** Quonochontaug Breachway DEM Launch

**RIVER MILES** 4.5 miles round trip

**TIME** Approximately 2 hours

**DESCRIPTION** Flatwater

**SCENERY** Coastal woodlands, coastal barrier, salt marshes, and birds

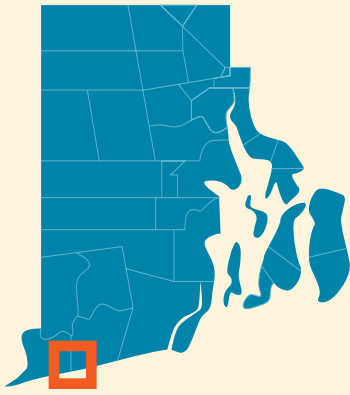
**ACCESS** DEM Fishermen's Access, end of West Beach Road, off Route 1, in Charlestown

### TOUR THE PERIMETER OF THE POND

The DEM facility is open year – round and free of charge. Porta-Johns are there in the summer months. From the launch, loop to the east toward Bill's Island . South of Bill's Island is an extensive salt marsh full of small channels to explore at high tide. Both Bill's Island and the marshes are held in conservation trust and offer habitat for a variety of migratory birds. Southeast of Bill's Island is "Whistling Chimneys" , a private residence which was originally a trading post owned by General Stanton. General Stanton was given all of Quonochontaug by the Chief Sachem of the Narragansett tribe after rescuing the Chief's daughter. Heading north across the pond you will come to

Picnic Rock , the rocky islands not far off of the Shady Harbor shoreline. Heading west from there you will pass some lovely homes along the communities of Shady Harbor, Ninigret Cove and then Shelter Harbor. Shelter Harbor was a music colony early in the twentieth century, now a residential area. All of the roads are named after composers. Continue west through the narrows between Nope's Island and Shelter harbor and you will soon encounter a rock pile just a few degrees to starboard. If the wind is light it can be fun to paddle around the rocky shallows and see what you can spot. As you loop around to the north of the rock pile you are in an area called Harmonic Cove. The neighborhood to the east is part of Shelter Harbor and the houses to the north are in Haversham. From this point you can head due south and land on the sandy beach known as Ski Beach . This is a good spot to stretch your legs and if you like you can follow a path across the dunes and check out the ocean beach. If you are feeling strong you could continue your paddle to the west and check out the Weekapaug Inn, which is the large structure at the end of the pond. The Inn was rebuilt on that site after the original beachfront Inn was

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## “QUONNIE” POND

Quononchontaug Pond is in the towns of Charlestown and Westerly. Much of the shoreline is kept in its natural state by state and federal agencies, and local conservation groups. Windsurfing, kayaking, fishing, and swimming are popular activities. Resources support both commercial and recreational fishing, including bluefish and striped bass.



destroyed by the Hurricane of 1938 and it underwent major renovation during 2011/12. In front of the Inn is Judges Rock where the race committee used to observe the sail boat races. The opening to Weekapaug harbor is just to the left of the Inn.

Traveling back to the east along the barrier beach, you will encounter an orange and white “No Shellfishing” sign. From this sign down to Nope’s Island ⑦ is a spawner sanctuary that is routinely stocked with shellfish by volunteers of the Salt Ponds Coalition and The Nature Conservancy. Most of the barrier beach along this stretch is held in conservation trust by a variety of land trusts. During the spring, waters and marshes adjacent to Nope’s Island are full of mating horseshoe crabs. Between Nope’s Island and the current breachway is what remains of the original Quonochontaug Breachway ⑧. It no longer connects to the sea and is a wonderful place to paddle. The beach at the end of the old channel is privately owned by the Rhode Island Mobile Sportsfisherman, so please seek permission if you would like to land. Off to the left of their parking lot, in the beachgrass and dunes, are a few stonewall remains of old lifeboat station 6 of the U.S. Life Saving Service. Coast Guardsmen conducted rescues by rowing six-man lifeboats through the surf or out the old breachway. When returning to the launch site, beware of strong currents through the breachway ⑨. It is best to paddle north where the channel widens into sand flats and to stay out of the walled portion of the channel. Powerboat traffic may be heavy in this area during the summer months.

### QUONNIE POND

Quonnie Pond, as it is affectionately known, is a mostly pristine coastal lagoon shared by the Towns of Charlestown and Westerly. There are several small brooks which flow into Quonnie, with little development around them.

The West Beach neighborhood along the breachway was a summer tourist spot full of hotels and rooming houses, all lost in the 1938 hurricane. All along the pond are beautiful Victorian “summer cottages”, many held by the same families for generations.

The existing breachway was straightened and dredged in 1962. The DEM fishermen’s access is a very popular spot for fishing, although currently very much in disrepair. Recently fly-fishing from kayaks has become very popular.

The shoreline is part of the Atlantic Flyway, a major migratory bird resting area. Birders come from all over to spot shorebirds and waterfowl. The pond is also used heavily for recreation, shellfishing, sailing, and kayaking to name a few.

Quonnie is a well-protected “gem”. Early on, folks provided for its preservation and protection. Most of the properties around the pond have large acreage, and have been passed undeveloped along generations. In addition, groups like the local fire districts, the Nope’s Island Association, Weekapaug Foundation, South County Conservancy, the state and other land trusts have maintained many acres as undeveloped habitat. Visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of this magnificent salt pond.

**ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET AND CARRY A WHISTLE OR OTHER SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE, PREFERABLY ATTACHED TO YOUR LIFE JACKET. PADDLERS SHOULD CHECK WATER LEVEL AND TIDES, WEATHER, AND WATERWAY CONDITIONS PRIOR TO EVERY TRIP. REMOVE WHAT YOU BRING, CLEAN UP MORE IF YOU CAN. PLEASE RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY. REPORT ANY PROBLEMS YOU ENCOUNTER TO CHARLESTOWN HARBOR MASTER AT 401-641-3083 AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.**



Salt Ponds Coalition (SPC), incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation in 1985, is the oldest continuously operating volunteer marine water-quality monitoring program in the nation. SPC conducts public outreach programs and works to focus legislative and regulatory attention on protecting our valuable salt pond resources for the benefit of wildlife and people. [www.saltpondscoalition.org](http://www.saltpondscoalition.org)

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) protects and preserves Narragansett Bay and its watershed through partnerships that conserve and restore natural resources, enhance water quality and promote community involvement. NBEP supports the RI Blueways Alliance which is dedicated to creating a comprehensive water trail network to link Rhode Island’s rivers, lakes and ponds to Narragansett Bay and to the rivers in Massachusetts that flow into the bay. The trail will be used to promote safety, conservation, recreation and economic development. [www.ExploreRI.org](http://www.ExploreRI.org)



Watershed organizations throughout the Narragansett Bay watershed showcase paddling opportunities on downloadable paddle maps. The full list of maps is available at [ExploreRI.org](http://ExploreRI.org).

