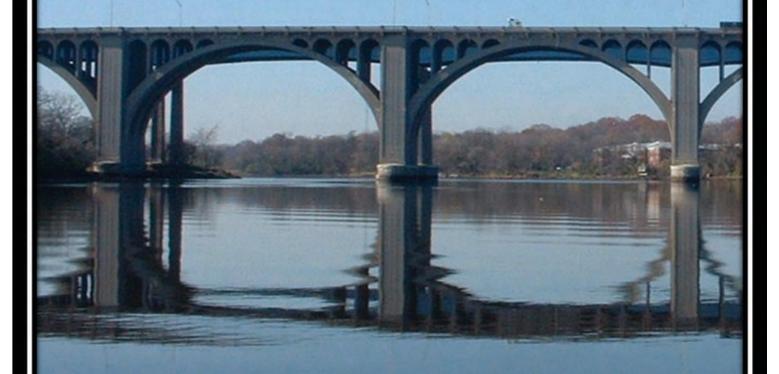


Branchburg to Perth Amboy

Confluence of North Branch, South Branch & Raritan River to Raritan Bay



Created by the Raritan **RIVERKEEPER**\* in 2009 with a grant from The Watershed Institute.

#### A Guide to Raritan River Access Points – Introduction

The Raritan River is a wonderful resource for boaters, especially those exploring the river by canoe or kayak. Scenery along the river ranges from gritty urban settings and small river towns, to picturesque farm country, woodland and bay. Birdlife is especially plentiful, and boaters should always pack a pair of binoculars and keep them at the ready for the sudden appearance of raptors, songbirds, and aquatic birds such as egrets and herons.



This guide offers a detailed description of river access points along the thirty mile length of the Raritan River, beginning at Old York Rd. in Branchburg (near where the north and south branches meet to form the main trunk of the Raritan River), winding east through such towns as Raritan, Manville, Bridgewater, Piscataway, New Brunswick, Highland Park, Edison, Sayreville and Perth Amboy, where the stream flows into Raritan Bay. This guide identifies a dozen put-in and take-out points, that give boaters an opportunity to create a wide variety of day paddling trips, as short or as long as you wish to make them.

This guide also includes a description of significant river hazards dotting this thirty mile stretch. There are five significant dams and two weirs, all of which must be portaged around except for the Fieldville Dam, which blocks only half the river. These hazards are dangerous obstructions and should be treated with respect and great caution by boaters.

This guide was created in 2009 by the Raritan Riverkeeper and NY/NJ Baykeeper with a generous grant provided by the Watershed Institute. If you have updates for this document, or other comments, please phone us at 732-442-6313 or email us at raritan.riverkeeper@verizon.net.

Liability Issues and Disclaimer: Mileage in this guide is approximate. Paddling times between points are not given, as they vary depending on river current at high and low flow times. There may be a variety of hazards found along the river not mentioned in this document, and boaters are fully responsible for their own safety. Boating safety precautions should always be observed, such as wearing personal floatation devices, carrying sufficient food and water, and knowing weather forecasts and river conditions. The Raritan, like any waterway, can be dangerous, and no one should paddle it without an understanding of basic boating skills. This guide is not an all-inclusive definitive document. All users of this guide do so entirely at their own risk. The maps are meant to help boaters locate river access points, not for use in navigation. Every attempt has been made to ensure the information contained herein is valid at the time of publication.

### The Raritan River – A Brief Natural and Unnatural History

The Raritan has a proud, but sometimes troubled history. Its watershed is huge, with its north and south branches, main trunk, and all tributaries draining an 1100 square mile watershed. The Raritan is also the longest river totally contained within New Jersey's boundaries. It flows through seven counties and 100 municipalities, and it has seen both glory days and great degradation over the past three centuries.



In colonial times and through the 19th Century, the Raritan was viewed as an economically lucrative shortcut across the state, avoiding the long boat trip around Cape May. In 1830, three thousand Irish immigrants began handshovelling a canal that paralleled the Raritan and its tributary the Millstone River—an artificial waterway meant to join the Delaware River and Raritan Bay. The triumphal opening of that canal in 1834 was celebrated with a ceremonial barge ride along the new Delaware and Raritan Canal by state governor Peter Vroom, ending at New Brunswick with a 24 gun salute (though no one saluted the hundreds of Irish laborers who died in a cholera epidemic while building the canal). In the 1860's, Civil War gunboats cruised the Raritan and the D&R Canal on their way to seeing battle in the South.

The river also spawned significant factory towns along its length, such as New Brunswick and Perth Amboy, creating a booming 19th Century economy and a lingering legacy of industrial pollution throughout the 20th Century. Raritan Riverkeeper Bill Schultz can still remember boyhood days in the 1960s when he could not swim in the Raritan River without coming home with oil spots on his body requiring a scrubbing with kerosene. The Raritan Riverkeeper, NY-NJ Baykeeper, and other environmental groups have worked long to see the Raritan cleaned up, and they, along with federal, state and municipal officials have seen great progress.

The Raritan River in the 21st century is a river in recovery. While still suffering from pollution, the stream continues to get cleaner, the result of grassroots environmental advocacy and strong state and federal water protection legislation such as the U.S. Clean Water Act. However, development pressures are growing along the Raritan, as green

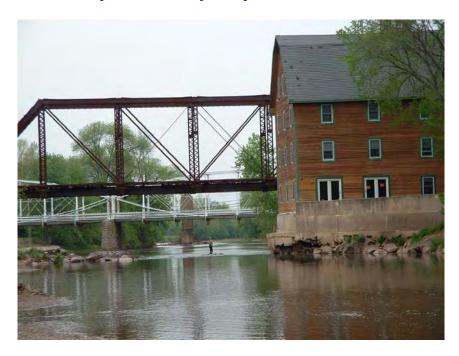
open space is fast swallowed up by home and commercial construction. Stormwater runoff, containing high nitrogen and toxic loads, is also a growing threat to the river – a threat that Raritan Riverkeeper, NY/NJ Baykeeper and other groups continue to address.

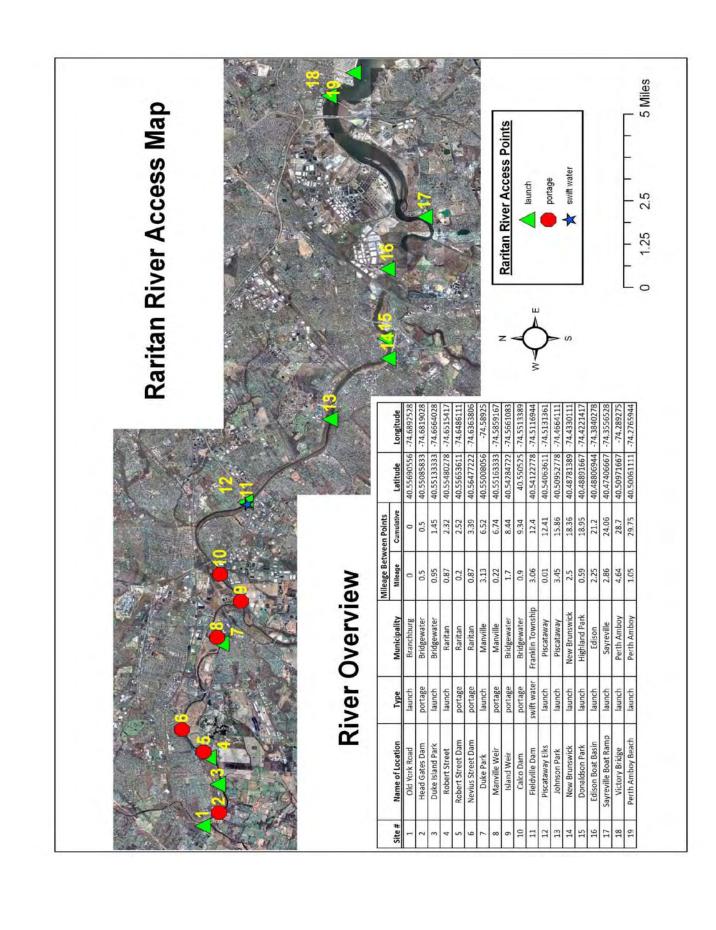
Today's Raritan River boasts considerable wildlife. More than 200 species of bird can be spotted along the Raritan, living, breeding and migrating within its Piedmont flora. The word "Raritan" is believed to be Algonquin for "stream overflows," a translation that aptly describes the river's repeated annual flooding, water which nourishes stretches of northern deciduous floodplain forest. Black cherry, black locust, red and silver maple, elm and ash trees are all fed by the seasonal spill of water and rich silt overflowing the river's banks.

Paddlers who may make frequent landings ashore, also need to know that another common plant thrives in the riverside sun. Poison ivy is prolific, and it grows in all its forms: as groundcover, a woody shrub, and tree-clinging vine (*leaves of three*, *let it be!*).

Wildlife also abounds along the Raritan, surprising those who might expect an entirely urban landscape. Mallards, cormorants and herons patrol the waters. Dead floodplain snags provide hollow cavities for raccoons, opossums, kingfishers and woodpeckers. Local corn fields and other vegetable crops provide food for browsing deer and wild turkeys (much to the annoyance of local farmers).

Then there are fish. The Raritan is a boon to anglers, with largemouth and smallmouth bass, trout, shad, chain pickerel, sunfish and yellow perch being common. The river's tidal stretches host striped bass, fluke, winter flounder, weakfish and bluefish. Anglers should check current New Jersey state fish advisories before consuming any fish taken from the Raritan River. Statewide Estuarine & Marine advisories for the tidal portion of the river are listed at: <a href="http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/fishadvisories/statewide.htm">http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/fishadvisories/statewide.htm</a>





# Raritan River Access Point #1: Old York Rd., Branchburg; Launch

Location: Old York Road crosses Route 202 in Branchburg, Somerset County. The launch point is <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> mile southeast of Route 202, at a bridge over the North Branch, just short of where it joins the South Branch to become the Raritan River. Parking is located at: 40°33'24.58" E. 074°41'21.28"W. Nearest intersection is Old York Road & York Place, Branchburg.

Access Info: Wide pull-off on the west side of the North Branch crossing, with room for several cars. The Old York Road bridge over the North Branch was replaced in 2009. The parking area on the north side of the road is acceptable for loading/unloading paddle craft and suitable for leaving a vehicle for several hours. The launch site is to the south of the bridge.

**Facilities:** None. Nearest food, restrooms, etc. along Rte. 202.

#### **Non-Emergency:**

Branchburg Police Dept.: 908.526.3830. The Branchburg Police Dept. is located 0.7 miles west on Old York Road near Rte. 202.

Emergency: 911.

Old York Road--Launch





**Next Point Downriver:** Headgates Dam, 0.5 miles.

# Raritan River Access Point #2: Headgates Dam, Bridgewater; Hazard

Location: The dam is 0.5 mile downriver from the Old York Road access point, and is found downriver from the confluence of the North Branch, South Branch, and Raritan Rivers. It is part of Duke Island Park, but is in a fairly isolated area. Dam is located at: 40°33'03.11"N 074°40'54.81"W

Access Info: As you head downstream, portage on the right. This dam is hard to see from upriver and creates a dangerous hydraulic on its lower side. There is one warning sign on the left bank approaching the dam headed downriver. DO NOT TRY TO RUN THIS DAM.

Facilities: None. Park Office: 908.722.7779.

Non-Emergency: Bridgewater Police: 908.722.4111. Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver**: Duke Island Park Launch, 0.95 miles.









### Raritan River Access Point #3: Duke Island Park, Bridgewater; Launch

Location: Off Old York Road, 2.1 miles east of Route 202, 2.4 miles west of Route 206. Parking is located at 40°33'04.80"E. 074°39'59.05"W. The nearest intersection is Old York Road & Park Drive Bridgewater.

Access Info: The most secure parking area is across from the park office. This spot is 385 feet to the river. (Closest parking to the river is at the west, or upstream, end of the park, about 200 feet from the river).

Facilities: Duke Island Park Office 908.722.7779.
Restrooms in park office. This is a county park and well maintained. The park office is staffed by Park Rangers who have been very helpful in the past.

#### **Non-Emergency:**

Bridgewater Police Department: 908.722.4111. Emergency: 911

Next Point Downriver: Robert Street Launch, 0.87 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #4: Robert Street, Raritan; Launch

Location: Robert Street runs off Old York Road at Old York Pizza, in Raritan Borough. It is 2.6 miles east of Route 202, and 2.0 miles west of Route 206. Wayne Ave., found on many maps no longer exists, Edgewater Ave. is unsigned. Park & launch at 40°33'17.53"N. 074°39'05.47"W. This area is part of Duke Island Park.

Access Info: A pathway from the Duke Island Park runs through this area, but it is not well patrolled or secure. The roadway leads toward the Robert Street Dam which has a reputation of some gang activity. In 2009 Somerset County has signed the area "No Parking Bike Path". The launch offers good access to the river, but no parking.

Facilities: None.

**Non-Emergency**: Duke Island Park Office: 908.722.7779; Raritan Police Department:

908.725.6700 **Emergency:** 911

**Next Point Downriver**: Robert Street Dam, 0.2 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #5: Robert Street Dam, Raritan; Hazard

**Location:** 1,000 feet downstream from the Robert Street launch point in Raritan Borough. 40°33'23.54"N 074°38'55"W.

Access Info: This dam is in Duke Island Park spanning between the Park and the private property of Duke Farms. This is a very dangerous dam; it is hard to see from upriver and has a powerful hydraulic. There are no warnings approaching the dam. DO NOT TRY TO RUN THIS DAM. Portage can be made on either side of the river depending on seasonal plant growth.

Facilities: None.

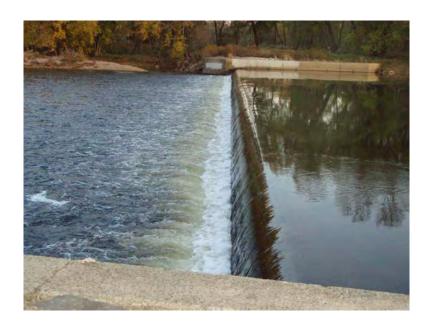
**Non-Emergency**: Park Office: 908.722.7779; Raritan Police Department:

908.725.6700 **Emergency:** 911

**Next Point Downriver:** Nevius Street Dam, 0.87 mile.







# Raritan River Access Point #6: Nevius Street Dam, Raritan; Hazard

**Location**: Between Nevius St. and Lyman St. in Raritan Borough. Dam is located at 40°33'53.19"N 074°38'11"W.

Access Info: The dam is located between two bridges that are about 250 feet apart, making it easy to locate. There is no signage denoting the dam approach. This is a dangerous dam with a strong hydraulic and requires a portage. Portage is on the right headed downriver. DO NOT TRY TO RUN THIS DAM.

Facilities: None.

Non-Emergency: Raritan Police Department: 908.725.6700. Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver**: Duke Park Launch,

Manville, 3.13 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #7: Duke Park, Manville; Launch

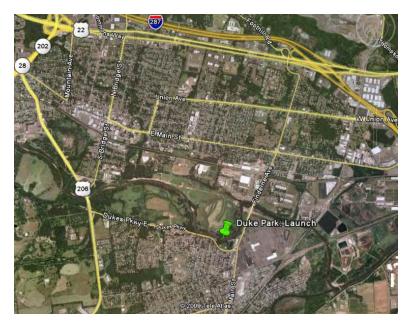
Location: This is a municipal park off Dukes Parkway, and immediately off Manville's North Main Street. It is 1.4 miles east of Rt. 206 on Duke Parkway East. The closest intersection is Dukes Parkway & N. 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. Manville. Park at 40°33'00.29"N. 074°35'21.30"W.

Access Info: Parking is good and adjacent to the river. Launch is off a steep slope, usually 3'-5' down to the river. Tree trunks extending into the river make for decent launch spots.

Facilities: This access point is in a municipal park with some facilities that are sometimes open, but not usually well maintained. Parking across the roadway from the river is secure; parking along the riverbank may invite a problem if it blocks access to local fishermen. There are some restaurants in the area, but they are a ¼ mile away.

Non-Emergency: Manville Police Department: 908.725.1900. Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver:** Manville Weir, 0.22 miles.







# Raritan River Access Point #8: Manville Weir; Hazard

**Location**: At the lower end of Duke Park in Manville. 40°33'05.89"N. 074°35'09.30"W.

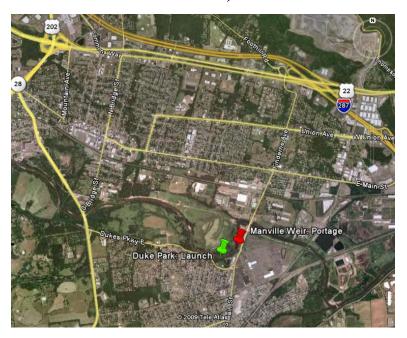
Access Info: A small dam that, depending on river height, should be portaged on the left headed downriver. There is no signage denoting the dam approach.

Facilities: None.

**Non-Emergency**: Manville

Police Department: 908.725.1900. **Emergency:** 911

**Next Point Downriver:** Island Weir, 1.7 miles.







# Raritan River Access Point #9: Island Weir, Bridgewater; Hazard

Location: This dam is in Bridgewater, at the confluence of the Raritan and Millstone Rivers. The dam is located at 40°32'34.23"N. 074°33'58.03"W. The portage is at 40°32'36.13"N. 074°34'03.54"W. on water company property.

Access Info: This is a very significant and dangerous dam. DO NOT TRY TO RUN THIS DAM. Upriver of the dam is usually marked by buoys. The portage area is on the left headed downriver and is signed. The portage is under video surveillance and security personnel will often visit paddlers. Be sure to take a look at the fish ladder which runs along the portage path.

Facilities: None.

#### **Non-Emergency**:

Bridgewater Police Department; 908.722.4111.

Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver**:

Calco Dam, 0.7 miles.









### Raritan River Access Point #10: Calco Dam, Bridgewater; Hazard

**Location:** This dam spans Bridgewater on the left and Franklin Township on the right headed downriver. Located at 40°33'01.88"N. 074°33'04.83"W.

Access Info: This dam's hazard depends on river height. It should be portaged on the right headed down river. The dam is notched on river left. There is no signage denoting the dam approach.



Facilities: None.

**Non-Emergency**: Franklin

Township Police

Department: 732.873.5533

Bridgewater Police

Department: 908.722.4111.

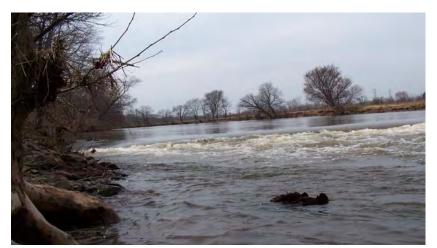
Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver:** 

Fieldville Dam and Piscataway Elks Launch,

3.06 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #11: Fieldville Dam, Franklin Twsp.; Hazard

Location: Immediately upriver from Raritan River Access Point #12, the Piscataway Elks Launch. Located at 40°32'26.28"N. 074°30'47.29"W in Franklin Township.

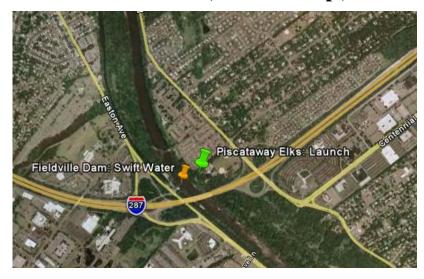
Access Info: This is a breached dam and no portage is needed. Stay to the left half of the river headed downriver.

Facilities: None.

Non-Emergency: on the left, Franklin Township Police Department: 732.873.5533. On the right, Piscataway Police Department 732.562.1100. Emergency: 911

Next Point Downriver:

Piscataway Elks Launch, located 10 yards downriver of the Fieldville Dam.







### Raritan River Access Point #12: Behind Piscataway Elks; Launch

**Location:** Off River Road, 280 yards north or upstream of I-287. Park at 40°32'28.42"E. 074°30'42.10"W. The nearest intersection is River Road and Birchview Drive in Piscataway.

Access Info: Turn at
Birchview Gardens apartment
complex; go past the Elks
facility and into Bakelite or
Riverside Park. Parking is in
this municipal park. The signs
posted in 2011 are to warn
parents of children in the park
of the river at the rear of the
park, not to discourage
paddlers from launching.
There is no ordinance or
policy against launching
paddlecraft from the ramp

**Facilities:** There are restroom facilities in the park, but they are not readily accessible from the river. Their availability may be dependent on other activities in the park.

#### **Non-Emergency:**

Piscataway Police Department: 732.562.1100.

**Emergency:** 911

#### **Next Point Downriver:**

Johnson Park Launch, Piscataway, 3.45 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #13: Johnson Park, Piscataway; Launch

Location: Johnson Park is a Middlesex County park. Take Johnson Drive, (one way) from Landing Lane upstream or westerly 250 yards. Park at 40°30'34.30"N. 074°27'59.07"W. in Piscataway. The nearest intersection is Landing Lane and River Road

Access Info: This is the only parking lot in Johnson Park on the river side of the roadway. The launch point is tidal and the riverbank is sometimes muddy.

Facilities: There is good parking here with restrooms and a gravel roadway down to the riverbank. The County has laid in a gravel path to the river for loading and unloading of boats, (no parking allowed at the river). Park in the lot adjacent to the restrooms, which are clean and usually open. The park is open until dusk daily.

Non-Emergency: Middlesex County Park Rangers: 732.745.3800; Piscataway Police Department: 732.562.1100. Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver**: New Brunswick Launch, 2.5 miles.







# Raritan River Access Point #14: New Brunswick; Launch

**Location:** New Brunswick's Boyd Park, just downstream of the Rutgers Boathouse. Located at 40°29'16.12"N. 074°25'58.85"W.

Access Info: The boat launch ramp was under construction, as was the adjacent parking area, as of the summer, 2009.

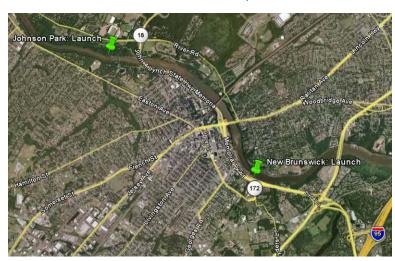
**Facilities**: To be determined.

**Non-Emergency:** New Brunswick Police Department: 732.745.5200.

**Emergency:** 911

#### **Next Point Downriver:**

Donaldson Park Launch, Highland Park, 0.59 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #15: Donaldson Park, Highland Park; Launch

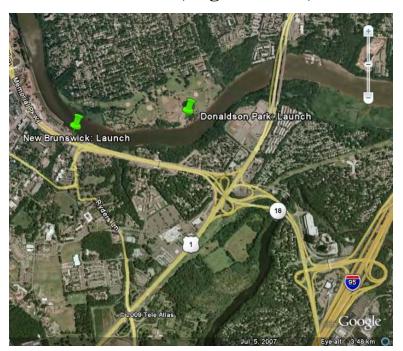
**Location:** Found within Donaldson Park, a Middlesex County park, in the town of Highland Park. Take either 2<sup>nd</sup> Street or 3<sup>rd</sup> Street south from Route 27 to reach the park entrance. Parking is adjacent to the boat ramp at 40°29'20.08"E. 074°25'19.72"W.

Access Info: The boat ramp is at the downstream end of the park. Good parking is adjacent to the boat ramp. The area is tidal and the riverbank could be muddy.

**Facilities:** Some Park Rangers will require paddlers to land/launch next to the ramp, rather than on it, if they lack a permit. Season permits are required for launching all vessels from the ramp. Permits can be obtained from the Parks Administration (732-745-3900; Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm). The parking area is large and well patrolled. Restroom facilities are available in the park, but not near the ramp area. The park closes at dusk.

Emergency: Middlesex County Park Rangers: 732.745.3800; Highland Park Police Department: 732.572.3800.

**Next Point Downriver:** Edison Boat Basin Launch, 2.25 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #16: Edison Boat Basin; Launch

Location: Municipal boat launch is at the end of Meadow Road, 1.1 miles from Woodbridge Avenue. Park adjacent to the boat ramp at 40°29'17.05"E. 074°23'02.50"W.

Access Info: This is a municipal facility and the Edison Police Department has been known to ticket vehicles not parked in lined spaces. A permit is NOT needed if a trailer is not used on the ramp. Trailers parked in the lot without a permit may be ticketed. The ramp is an easy in/out at all tide levels.

Facilities: There are seasonal porta-john facilities. There are no nearby commercial establishments. No other amenities available. Paddle craft can use the ramp without fees, but be sure to park in a lined space.

**Non-Emergency**: Edison Police Department: 732.248.7400.

Emergency: 911

#### **Next point down river:**

Sayreville Boat Ramp Launch, 2.86 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #17: Sayreville Boat Ramp; Launch

**Location:** Sayreville Municipal Boat Ramp is at the end of River Road in Sayreville, 0.25 mile from Main Street. Park at 40°28'26.64"N. 074°21'20.35"W.

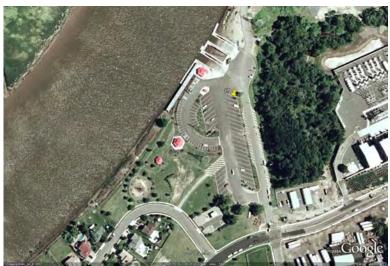
Access Info: There is good parking with two boat ramps. There is a charge for launching ANY watercraft, trailered or not, by order of Sayreville municipal ordinance. The non-resident fee for 2009 was \$20. Parking is secure with an attendant on duty seasonally. Use permits are enforced year round.

Facilities: There are restroom facilities in the park, but not adjacent to the boat ramp. Wash down is available.

Non-Emergency: Sayreville Police Department: 732.727.4444. Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver**: Victory Bridge Launch, 4.64 miles.







### Raritan River Access Point #18: Victory Bridge, Perth Amboy; Launch

**Location**: Municipal park adjacent to the Route 35 Bridge at 40°30'34.98"N. 074°17'21.38"W. The nearest intersection is Smith Street and Riverview Drive.

Access Info: There is a steep rocky slope down to the river. At low tide, a firm mud flat extends up to 40 feet from the riverbank to the waterline.

**Facilities**: Paved and unimproved parking areas are adjacent to the river. No other facilities are available.

Non-Emergency: Perth Amboy Police Department: 732.442.4400. Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver**: Perth Amboy Second Street Launch, 1.05 miles.







# Raritan River Access Point #19: Second Street, Perth Amboy; Launch

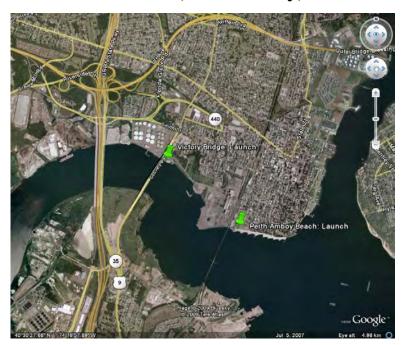
Location: This Perth Amboy municipal beach fronts Raritan Bay. Park at 40°30'02.19"N. 074°16'35.75"W. The nearest intersection is Second and Lewis Streets.

**Access Info**: There is a paved loading area 25 yards from the shoreline. A municipal ordinance forbids the landing of any watercraft on the beaches. The area located on the bay-side of the railroad bridge is not considered a beach area, and landings have been permitted on the first beach section at the end of Second Street (an area that was once a boat ramp, but is now sand covered).

**Facilities**: There is good parking in a municipal lot adjacent to the launch site.

Non-Emergency: Perth Amboy Police Department: 732.442.4400. Emergency: 911

**Next Point Downriver:** None.







#### NY/NJ **BAYKEEPER**®

Baykeeper's mission is to protect, preserve, and restore the ecological integrity and productivity of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary, its tributaries, and watershed. NY/NJ **BAYKEEPER**® is the citizen guardian of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary. Since 1989, Baykeeper has worked to protect, preserve, and restore the environment of the most urban estuary on Earth - benefiting its natural and human communities.

Through our Estuary-wide programs we seek to end pollution, improve public access, conserve and restore public lands, restore aquatic habitats, encourage appropriate and discourage inappropriate development, carry out public education, and work with federal and NY/NJ state regulators and citizen groups as partners in planning for a sustainable future for the Hudson-Raritan Estuary watershed.

#### Raritan RIVERKEEPER®

The Raritan **RIVERKEEPER**®, as a program of Baykeeper, stops polluters, champions public access, and influences land use decisions. The Riverkeeper pursues opportunities for land preservation and habitat restoration, and partners with other groups to advocate for the Raritan River's environmental importance, as well as its value as a recreational and cultural resource.

For more information, or to make a donation to NY/NJ **BAYKEEPER**® or Raritan **RIVERKEEPER**®, please contact:

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