

Rapids and Waterfalls on the Manigotagan River Canoe Route

This document lists and describes the whitewater along the Manigotagan River between Highway #314 and the government dock in the community of Manigotagan starting with the rapids closest to Highway #314. The descriptions were originally created in 2006. If you find any discrepancies, please let us know (e-mail to gistech@mbeconetwork.org). To find out more about the river, its history, environmental information and other information that may be of interest to paddlers, visit our website at www.mbeconetwork.org/canoemap.

Note that the naming of whitewater along the Manigotagan River is inconsistent and varies by author. This is due to the river's long and diverse history. We include a table (see Table 1) with the names we have found in various publications and through consultations. Since some names are used for both rapids and waterfalls, the naming mix-up can lead to very dangerous situations.

Always scout rapids before running them – conditions vary and you may not be where you think you are.

Table 1: Whitewater Names

No.	Name	Name on other sources
0	Unnamed Rapids (Set of 3)	
1	Long Lake Rapids	
2	Juniper Rapids	
3	Sloperock Falls	
4	Devils Sleuce	
5	Unnamed Waterfall	
6	Quesnel Lake Dam	
7	Duncan Falls	
8	Elbow Rapids	
8a	Rough Knuckle Rapids	
9	Wendigo Rapids	
10	Clearwater Rapids	Small Rapids (1)
11	Turtle Falls	
12	Kettle Rapids	
13	Charles Falls (1, 2, 4)	
13	Pillow Falls (3)	
14	Pillow Falls (1, 2, 4), Steep	
14	Rock Falls (3)	
15	Perry Davis Rapids	
16	Sand River Falls	
17	Joe Steele Rapids	
18	Flour Rapids	
19	Emma Janes Rapids	Emma Jakes (4), Riffle-rope ... (1)
20	Boulder Rapids	Emma Jones (1)
21	Rifle Rapids	Boiler Rapids (4), Boulder Rapids (1)
22	Crooked Current Rapids	Onion Patch (1, 4)
23	Onion Patch (3)	Skunk Rapids (1, 2, 4)
24	Big Eddy Rapids	
25	Cascade Rapids (2, 4)	
25	Big Skunk Rapids (3)	
25a	Little Skunk Rapids	
26	Engineer Rapids	
27	Old Woman Falls	
28	Joses Chute	Towsays Chute (1)
29	Jack Pine Rapids	Burntwood Rapids (4)
30	Poplar Rapids (4)	
30	Cascade Rapids (3)	
31	Poplar Falls	
32	Wood Falls	

Collected by the Manitoba Eco-Network, Dec. 2007- Feb. 2008

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Conditions vary and you may not be where you think you are.

Sources:

- (1) Bérard, Réal. 1979. *The Bird-Manigotagan Waterways Map*. Manitoba Department of Natural Resources, Parks Branch.
- (2) Buchanan, John. 1997. *Canoeing Manitoba Rivers*. Vol. 1 South. Rocky Mountain Books. Calgary, Alberta. ISBN 0-921102-55-0(v.1)
- (3) Simard, Charles. Community of Manigotagan Resident and River Steward. Personal Conversations. 07/2006, 04/2007, 12/2007
- (4) Wilson, Hap and Stephanie Aykroyd. 1998. *Wilderness Rivers of Manitoba. Journey by Canoe through the Land where the Spirit Lives*. Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association. Merrickville, Ontario. ISBN 1-895465-26-5

[0] First Set of Rapids: 1 of 3

Rapids Class: Class I to Class II

Rapids Description: These rapids can be run depending on debris, water level and skill. River left was blocked by a beaver dam and low water, so we had to run river right.

Portage Length: 102 metres

Portage Side: River left. During low water, the portage trail across the island is also accessible.

Portage Description: Rarely used

Historic/Environmental Comment: The historic portage trail was destroyed in the last fire. It went along the north bank and was approximately 1km long, passing all three rapids of this set in one long portage. (5)



Figure 0.1: First set of rapids – 1 of 3 – View river left during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

Source:

- (5) Jansson, Stu. Manitoba Trapper's Association. Personal Communication. January 2007.

[0a] First Set of Rapids: 1 of 3 (Portage over island)

Rapids Class: Class I to Class II
 Rapids Description: Possible to run depending on debris, water level and skill. River left was blocked by beaver dam and low water, so we ran river right.
 Portage Length: 29 metres
 Portage Side: Over island
 Portage Description: Accessible during low water

Historic/Environmental Comment: The historic portage trail was destroyed in the last fire. It went along the north bank and was approximately 1km long, passing all three rapids of this set in one long portage. (5)



Figure 0a.1: Looking back to the first set of rapids. Photo by A. Kirch



Figure 0a.2: First set of rapids – 1 of 3. Photo by A. Kirch

Source:

(5) Jansson, Stu. Manitoba Trapper's Association. Personal Communication. January 2007.

[0b] First Set of Rapids: 2 of 3

Rapids Class: Class I to Class II during low water, probably more during higher water.
 Rapids Description: These rapids begin approximately 75 metres after the previous rapids. We were able to lift the canoes over the beaver dam and ledge. We probably could have run these rapids in higher water. However, there is a steep drop at the end which may create a big wave during higher water.
 Portage Length: 29 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: Portage clearly marked

[0c] First Set of Rapids: 3 of 3

Rapids Class: Class I to Class II
 Rapids Description: Depending on conditions, there may be a run able channel on river left
 Portage Length: 155 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: You can see the portage take-out from the previous rapids, look for bedrock outcrop on river left



Figure 0c.1: First set of rapids - Looking back to 2 of 3. Photo by A. Kirch.

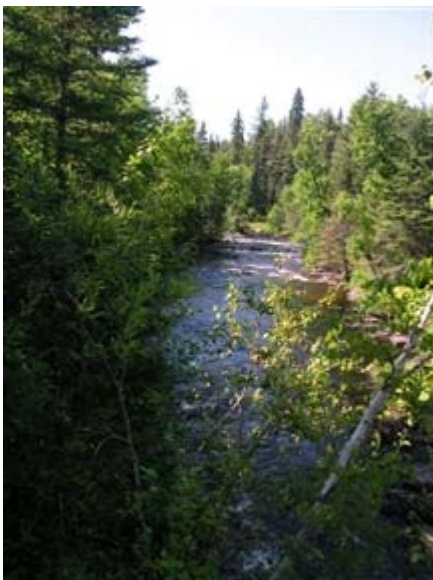


Figure 0c.2: First set of rapids – 3 of 3. Photo by A. Kirch

**[1] Long Lake Rapids and
[2] Juniper Rapids**

Rapids Class: Class II depending on the conditions
 Rapids Description: Rocky
 Portage Length: 190 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: Clearly marked. Hard, steep portage

Check out the video in the Points of Interest Layer on the interactive map!



Figure 1.1: Portage take-out during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 1.2: Lining the canoes during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

[3] Sloperock Falls

Rapids Class: 1m waterfall
 Rapids Description: Waterfall
 Portage Length: 65 metres
 Portage Side: River right
 Portage Description: Clearly marked, well used path over steep bedrock ledge



Figure 3.1: Portage take-out during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

[4] Devils Sluice

Rapids Class: N/A

Rapids Description: Impassable at any water level, pour through or sieve visible at low water, dangerous. When we were there, there also was a log across the rocks at neck height.

Portage Length: 90 metres

Portage Side: River right

Portage Description: Gentle, with steep decline near the put-in. The sign was obstructed by tree branches, but the path is well used.



Figure 4.1: Portage take-out during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 4.2: Portage take-out during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

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Conditions vary and you may not be where you think you are.

[5] Unnamed Waterfall

Rapids Class:	N/A
Rapids Description:	Waterfall
Portage Length:	57 metres
Portage Side:	River right
Portage Description:	Clearly marked and easy portage. Take-out can be difficult in low water as you may need to carry gear over boulders.



Figure 5.1: During very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 5.2: Portage take-out during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

[6] Quesnel Lake Dam

Rapids Class:	Class IV to Class V
Rapids Description:	Impassable during low water
Portage Length:	97 metres
Portage Side:	River right
Portage Description:	Marked with orange triangle just after small bay. The long portage path is wide enough for ATVs. The incline is semi-steep and over open bedrock.



Figure 6.1: Below Quesnel Lake Dam – View upstream from put-in during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 6.2: Quesnel Lake Dam - Photo taken during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 6.3: Quesnel Lake Dam Portage Trail- View towards put-in during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

[7] Duncan Rapids

Rapids Class:	Class III
Rapids Description:	This is a short, but very difficult rapid to run.
Portage Length:	211 metres
Portage Side:	River right
Portage Description:	The portage is steep at the beginning, but levels off. There is a wet and muddy area, which is covered with logs for easy – and dry - passage. The put-in is nice.

History:

Duncan Rapids are named after a local trapper, Duncan Twohearts, who was born in 1864. He was the first person who found gold in the area and was thus instrumental in starting the “East Manitoba Gold Rush”. To find out more check out our interactive website at www.mbeconetwork.org/canoemap



Figure 7.1: Duncan Rapids sign. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 7.2: View of the portage take-out for Duncan Rapids. Photo by A. Kirch.

[8] Elbow Rapids

Rapids Class:	Class II-III depending on water levels.
Rapids Description:	Conditions vary with water levels. These rapids are more difficult than they appear.
Portage Length:	75 metres
Portage Side:	River left
Portage Description:	The portage is well-used and easily accessible.



Figure 8.1a: Elbow Rapids as seen from downstream during very *low* water.
Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 8.2: Lining Elbow Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 8.1.b: Elbow Rapids as seen from downstream during *high* water.
Photo by J. Avent.



Figure 8.3: Elbow Rapids take-out during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 8.4: Elbow Rapids portage trail. Photo by A. Kirch.

[8a] Rough Knuckle Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I

Portage: N/A

[9] Wendigo Rapids

Rapids Class: Class IV

Rapids Description: Two sets of rapids. The first set of the rapids can be run river right during high water. The second set must be portaged – don't miss the take-out!

Portage Length: 453 metres if you portage both rapids

Portage Side: River right

Portage Description: The portage access is difficult in low water due to boulders. This is the longest portage on the river. However, you may be able to run the first set of the rapids in high water. The take-out before the second set is close to the rapids and very steep.

Name / History: The term, Wendigo, is derived from the Algonquian root word "witiku". The legend of Wendigo also varies throughout the world depending on where you are and who you talk to. Charles Simard, Manigotagan River Steward, says that this one here is "a devil of a portage – and - something always happens to me there".

Always scout rapids before running them.
Conditions vary and you may not be where you think you are.



Figure 9.1: Wendigo Rapids during very high water. Photo by J. Avent.



Figure 9.2: Take-out before the second set of rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

[10] Clearwater Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I or less

Rapids Description: This is a very light set of "rapids". Depending on the water levels, they are more like a swift.

Portage Length: N/A



Figure 10.1: Clearwater Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

[11] Turtle Falls

Rapids Class: N/A

Rapids Description: Waterfall, must portage.

Portage Length: 140 metres

Portage Side: River right

Portage Description: This is a difficult portage, especially when wet and muddy. The beginning is steep and there is poison ivy near the end.



Figure 11.1a: Approaching the take-out during *very low* water. Photo by A.Kirch.



Figure 11.1b: Approaching the take-out during *very high* water. Photo by J. Avent.



Figure 11.2a: View of Turtle Falls during *very low* water from the edge of the campsite. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 11.2b: View of Turtle Falls during *very high* water from the edge of the campsite. Photo by J. Avent.

[12] Kettle Rapids

Rapids Class: Looks like Class I – but is actually difficult to run (see below)

Rapids Description: There is a ledge on river right that has the potential to swamp your canoe, followed by a submerged rock that could result in a pinned canoe (6). In high water these rapids can sometimes be run down the middle (6).

Portage Length: 92 metres

Portage Side: River right

Portage Description: Very difficult with steep inclines and declines, roots and rock outcrops. Perhaps, too difficult to get your gear up and down in the rain when the rocks are slippery. Watch for poison ivy near the take-out.



Figure 12.1a: Lining Kettle Rapids during very *low* water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 12.1b: Kettle Rapids during very *high* water. Photo by J. Avent.

Source:

(6) Paddle Manitoba. 1998. The Manigotagan River.

<http://www.paddle.mb.ca/MRCA/MGTN/Manigotagan.html>. Accessed 11/2006.

[13] Pillow Falls (1, 2, 8)

[13] Steep Rock Falls (7)

Rapids Class: N/A

Rapids Description: Waterfall, must portage

Portage Length: 99 metres

Portage Side: River right

Portage Description: Good access to the portage. Portage is over bedrock for a large part and very steep at the end. However, the path may be difficult when wet due to slippery rocks.

Check out the video in the Points of Interest Layer on the interactive map!



Figure 13.1a: Falls during very *low* water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 13.1b: Falls during very *high* water. Photo by J. Avent.

[14] Pillow Falls (1, 2, 8)

[14] Steep Rock Falls (7)

Rapids Class: N/A

Rapids Description: 4.5m waterfall - must portage.

Portage Length: 40 metres

Portage Side: River right

Portage Description: The portage is steep but short. The decline near the end is steep over bedrock.



Figure 14.1: Falls during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 14.2a: Falls during very *low* water
Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 14.2b: Falls during very *high* water
Photo by J.Avent

[15] Perry Davis Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I, could be Class II during high water.
 Rapids Description: Lots of boulders, conditions will vary.
 Portage Length: 23 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: Fairly easy and flat portage through forest. Beginning to overgrow. Nice take-out and put-in.

Check out the video in the Points of Interest Layer on the interactive map!



Figure 15.1: Perry Davis Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch

[16] Sand River Falls

Rapids Class: Class II – scout first: there are some waves that might get high depending on water levels.
 Rapids Description: Conditions vary. Watch out for boulders.
 Portage Length: 102 metres (52 metres from second take-out)
 Portage Side: River right.
 Portage Description: Two nice take-outs with good access. Fairly level and easy, except at the beginning.



Figure 16.1: Approaching Sand River Falls during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch



Figure 16.2: Morning mist at Sand River Falls. Photo by T.Lutz

[17] Joe Steele Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I
 Rapids Description: Difficulty varies with conditions. Watch out for obstacles.
 Portage Length: 48 metres
 Portage Side: River right
 Portage Description: Portage hard, difficult to find
 Name/History: "This set of rapids is named after Joe Steele who is buried here. He drowned while he was going up to Beresford to get married." Charles Simard, River Steward.

[18] Flour Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I (Class I or II in lower waters)
 Rapids Description: Difficulty changes with water levels
 Portage Length: 72 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: Easy portage. Portage access more difficult in low waters.
 Name / History: "A barge carrying flour capsized here. The flour spilled and you may still find some bannock if you are lucky!" Charles Simard, Manigotagan River Steward.



Figure 18.1: Approaching Flour Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch



Figure 18.2: Flour Rapids during very low water. Photo by L. Dykman

[19] Emma Janes Rapids

Rapids Class:	Class I
Rapids Description:	Can run river left
Portage Length:	68 metres
Portage Side:	River left
Portage Description:	Good portage access. Portage over bedrock outcrop with fire regrowth.
Name / History:	"Emma Janes drowned here". Charles Simard, River Steward.



Figure 19.1: Approaching Emma Janes Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch

[20] Boulder Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I
 Rapids Description: Lots of boulders and a ledge at the bottom.
 Portage Length: 41 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: Poorly defined end-point, as it seemed that the portage finished in the middle of the rapids.
 Name/History: This set of rapids got its name from the size of the boulders.

[21] Rifle Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I
 Rapids Description: Channel in the centre of the rapids
 Portage Length: 45 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: Easy and short portage. Put-in can be difficult during low water.

[22] Crooked Current Rapids

Rapids Class: Class I
 Rapids Description: Long Class I rapid which turns right, entering a small pool and then another rapid
 Portage Length: N/A
 Portage Side: N/A
 Portage Description: Portage is completely overgrown. No access.



Figure 22.1: Take-out at Crooked Current Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch

[23] Skunk Rapids (1, 2, 8)

[23] Onion Patch (7)

Rapids Class: Class II
 Rapids Description: We had to line the canoes during low water. Most likely a straight shoot.
 Portage Length: 140 metres
 Portage Side: River left
 Portage Description: Access to take-out was hard in low waters due to marsh. The portage path is wide, well used, fairly flat. However, it was starting to grow in.



Figure 23.1: Approach during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 23.2: Scouting (high water).
 Photo by J. Avent.



Figure 23.3: Running the rapids during very high water. Photo by J. Avent.

Name/History: The name "Onion Patch" originates from the days of the first gold rush when the cooks from the barges that carried equipment to the gold mines, used to find onions here. – Charles Simard comments: An apple a day keeps the doctor away – an onion a day keeps everyone away!

[24] Big Eddy Rapids

Rapids Class: Class III and Class I

Rapids Description: The first, difficult, set of rapids runs over two ledges and discharges into a large pool. The second set was hardly noticeable during very low water. Note that you will need to cross the washout from the first set of rapids if you decide to portage.

Portage Length: 77 metres

Portage Side: River left

Portage Description: Nice easy portage take-out, steep near the end. The portage trail is beginning to overgrow.

Name/History: The rapids were named after the big pool (eddy). "During the early sawmill days, they used to put the logs onto the river ice in the winter and let them float downstream in the summer. When they reached Big Eddy Rapids, the logs easily passed the first set of rapids, but then they just circled around and around all day. In the evening they would finally clear out. They were just not able to move the logs on during the day." (Charles Simard, River Steward)



Figure 24.1: Big Eddy Rapids during low water as seen from the campsite in the centre of the rapids. Photo by A. Kirch

[25] Cascade Rapids (2, 8)

[25] Big Skunk Rapids (7)

Rapids Class: Class IV

Rapids Description: 1.5m Waterfall

Portage Length: 180 metres (150 metres from alternative take-out)

Portage Side: River right

Portage Description: There are two portage take-outs. You need to approach over a boulder field in low water. The first take-out is steep.

Name/History: The name "Big Skunk Rapids" probably originates from someone being sprayed by a big skunk – so watch out!



Figure 25.2: Rapids during very low water. Photo by T. Lutz.

Always scout rapids before running them.
Conditions vary and you may not be where you think you are.

[26] Engineer Rapids

Rapids Class: Class II

Rapids Description: This set of rapids is more dangerous than it appears. A ledge on river right may produce a dangerous souse hole at some water levels.

Portage Length: 143 metres

Portage Side: River left

Portage Description: Well-used portage, fairly level, parallel to the rapids. Two different portage put-ins depending on water levels.



Figure 26.1: Engineer Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 26.2 Engineer Rapids during very low water. Photo by A. Kirch.

[27] Old Woman Falls

Rapids Class: N/A
 Rapids Description: Waterfall, must portage.
 Portage Length: 17 metres over the island, 52 metres on river left portage.
 Portage Side: River left and over an island.
 Portage Description: Two portages with good access, one river left and the other over an island. The island portage is shorter.



Figure 27.1: Old Woman Falls – River left during very *low* water. Photo by L. Dykman.



Figure 27.2: Old Woman Falls – River left during very *high* water. Photo by J. Avent.



Figure 27.3: Old Woman Falls – River right during very *low* water. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 27.3: Old Woman Falls – River right during very *high* water. Photo by J. Avent.

Check out the video in the Points of Interest Layer on the interactive map!

[28] Joses Chute

Rapids Class: Class I
 Rapids Description: Ledge, approximately 30 cm high. Might not be noticeable during higher water.
 Portage Length: N/A
 Portage Side: N/A
 Portage Description: N/A

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[29] Jack Pine Rapids

Rapids Class: Class II
 Rapids Description: This is a long set of rapids with a sharp bent at the end.
 Portage Length: 149 metres
 Portage Side: River right
 Portage Description: Easy portage, slightly steep at the beginning. Portage access is before the triangular sign. Portage would be muddy during lower water.



Figure 29.1: Jack Pine Rapids during very high water. Photo by J. Avent.

[30] Poplar Rapids (8)

[30] Cascade Rapids (7)

Rapids Class: Class IV or higher
 Rapids Description: This would be a very difficult run. We advise to portage.
 Portage Length: 90 metres
 Portage Side: River right
 Portage Description: There is a sign for a portage on river right, but it is completely overgrown. The portage access is approximately 50 metres upstream from the sign.



Figure 30.1: Approach during very low water. Photo by L. Dykman.

[31] Poplar Falls

Rapids Class:	N/A
Rapids Description:	4.5m Waterfall, must portage
Portage Length:	139 metres
Portage Side:	River right
Portage Description:	Second last portage of the canoe trip. The portage take-out is easy, but muddy and rocky during low waters. The portage trail is steep during the second half and the ground was very slippery even though it had not rained in a while.



Figure 31.1a: Poplar Falls during very *low* water.
Photo by L. Dykman.



Figure 31.1b: Poplar Falls during very *high* water
Photo by J. Avent.

[32] Wood Falls

This is the take-out where Highway #304 crosses the Manigotagan River. However, if you want to do the entire canoe trip you are not finished yet, but need to portage, across the highway. It is another 2.5 kilometres to the Manigotagan government dock, where you can drive your vehicle right to the water's edge.

Rapids Class:	N/A
Rapids Description:	Waterfall, must portage
Portage Length:	265 metres
Portage Side:	River right
Portage Description:	Last portage of the canoe trip. The portage take-out is easy, cross the highway and stay as far left as possible to get to the put-in.



Figure 32.1: Approaching Wood Falls. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 32.2: View from Wood Falls take-out towards Highway #304. Photo by L. Dykman.



Figure 32.3: Wood Falls during very high water. Photo by J. Avent.



Figure 32.4: View from the put-in below Wood Falls. Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 32.5: The government dock in the community of Manigotagan in January. Photo by A. Kirch.