

## East Branch Oswegatchie River – Fine Section

### Vitals

Locale: Fine, New York

What It's Like: Typical New York style pool-drop. A beast if you run everything, otherwise mediocre.

Class: III-V (V+)

Scouting/Portaging: Easy.

Level: West Branch Oswegatchie: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?04262500> Also visual at the put in.

Time: 3-4 hours.

When To Go: Spring snowmelt, or after rain. Doesn't need a lot of water to reach minimum flow.

Info From: Many visits.

Other Beta: None.

### Description

The East Branch of the Oswegatchie is a typical New York stream. There are long flat sections interspersed by big bedrock rapids. On most New York Rivers the ratio of flat water to rapids is reasonable - unfortunately the flat water wins the battle on this one. Many of the rapids on this section are fun, powerful drops. However, there are a handful of real class V and V+ rapids on this section that make this, were you to run everything, probably the stoutest of all the sections in the Oswegatchie River system. This is the kind of river you run once every few years, just to remind yourself how big the big ones actually are and how many rapids there aren't. There are only about 5 good rapids on this stretch, but they are quite good. Do it once to check it out.

The East Branch of the Oswegatchie - also known as the Fine section - has a simple shuttle with an easy put in and take out. It is just south of the well loved Twin Falls section of the Grass. In fact, it's a good option to run if you go to the Grass and it's a little too low for your taste. Check the map linked above for directions on the shuttle - the general area is between Cranberry Lake and Harrisville with the river starting in the small town of Fine along route 3 - Fine is one of many amorphous small towns along that road.

This one is good at a wide range of flows, and can be run lower levels than a lot of rivers in the area - 500 cfs on the gauge means there should still be water. As levels rise, expect some of the rapids to pack some major punch. You should take this flow info with a grain of salt - there is a dam upstream of the put in and two dams along the river section that do play a role in river flow. Often the rapids below the dams will be almost dry even when the rest of the river is high.

The put in is where the shuttle road (route 58) comes right next to the river - see the map link above for specifics. You could probably sort out something further downstream as well. Heading downstream on the shuttle road, stay on river right. You will eventually drive away from the river, at which point you'll need to keep an eye out for Colony Road on the left - turning off of route 58 will quickly bring you to a bridge over the river, which is the take out. The last rapid of the section is just below the bridge.

Once on the water, a short flat section leads to some warm up class II-III and underneath two road bridges. After the second bridge you'll get to the first long flat section of the river. There are two great rapids that come after this flat section, after which you reach the main event of the Fine section.

The main channel starts off with a huge class V+ cataract. Runnable, but massive. Following the main channel there is a big hole, then a steep slide into another big hole. There are 'sneak' channels on the left of these big rapids, and a good side channel with some unique rapids that are worth going to check out on river right. The river right channel breaks off just before the massive cataract.

Following the big section of whitewater is a small lake above the first dam that you have to portage around - this dam is quite tall. Carry around on the right and be ready for a steep scramble back to the water. The section below the dam may

or may not have enough water to paddle. Rounding the corner after this dam comes a second, smaller dam that also may or may not be putting water into the rapids below it - it's a surprise every time. All the water comes back in the river shortly after the second dam and in few minutes you'll be at the take out bridge and the final rapid - it has many options. All you have to do is bushwack from the bottom through the woods up to where you parked!

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