

Strategic Plan & Guidance for Land Acquisition

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

2017- 2027

Historical Context

In 1911, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFWD) began what has become a long, rich history of land acquisition when it acquired what is now known as Sandbar Wildlife Management Area. Today, VFWD owns over 135,000 acres of land consisting of 90 WMAs, 5 fish culture facilities, 2 flag-ship conservation camps, 120 access areas, and hundreds of riparian properties throughout Vermont. In addition, VFWD holds interest in several thousand acres of other important wildlife habitat and natural communities through more than sixty conservation easements. Many of those easements also provide the public with access for wildlife-based recreation.

The mission of the VFWD is the conservation of fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont. Land conservation and management is an essential part of VFWD's ability to achieve its mission and fully represent the public's interests in fish and wildlife conservation. Lands owned and managed by VFWD provide important habitat for a wide array of native plants and animals, as well as permanent, guaranteed public access for fish and wildlife-based activities. Public opinion surveys continue to highlight the importance of public land, and land specifically owned by the VFWD to their outdoor recreation interests. While the land conserved by VFWD and others provides outstanding habitat for fish, wildlife, plants and people, there is still much conservation work to be done. Therefore, we need to be strategic and thoughtful with what land we acquire, and mindful of the challenges presented by limited resources to accomplish this important work.

The majority of Vermont is held in private ownership (80%). Of the 20% of Vermont that is in some form of conservation, only 7.5% is owned by the State of Vermont, and only 3% is owned by the VDFW. Owning and managing land is an essential part of successfully achieving our mission. In 1999, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources developed a plan to guide the conservation of land by all its departments. The priorities established in that plan were based on an analysis of Agency land ownership at that time and broad public input. Those priorities hold true today and include: 1) recreational values; 2) ecological values; 3) forest resources; and 4) additions to existing Agency lands. This guidance document relies on the principles in the 1999 ANR land conservation plan and creates specific guidance for the VFWD's decisions for future land acquisition. It also takes into account climate change more directly than the 1999 ANR land conservation plan by considering Vermont Conservation Design¹ as the underpinning to the lands we as an Agency should be acquiring.

In addition to the broad principles and priorities identified in the Agency's plan, VFWD wants to also create a road map for strategic decision-making for the next 10 years to further guide land conservation. The need for this refined structure is made evident by the growing array of land conservation opportunities throughout Vermont. With both limited funding and stewardship capacity, it's critical that the Department make strategic decisions that best emphasize our priorities. The current decision-making process VFWD applies to new acquisitions, while thorough, creates challenges for turning down opportunities and ensuring that conservation is indeed focused in the most appropriate areas of Vermont. Parcels that have no clear funding are often not pursued by default, risking the loss of important opportunities. If these opportunities are in fact priorities, then new, alternative funding initiatives should be explored by the VFWD and ANR administration.

¹ Vermont Conservation Design was completed in August in 2015 by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the Vermont Land Trust with the goal of protecting and enhancing ecological function across the landscape into the future.

Decision-Making Process

Before highlighting a way to refine our work, it is important to understand how decisions are currently made on parcels that are offered to VFWD. Figure 1 depicts the process for responding to land acquisition opportunities. This process is reflected in the VFWD land acquisition protocol. This process is comprehensive in terms of coordination at all levels of the VFWD.

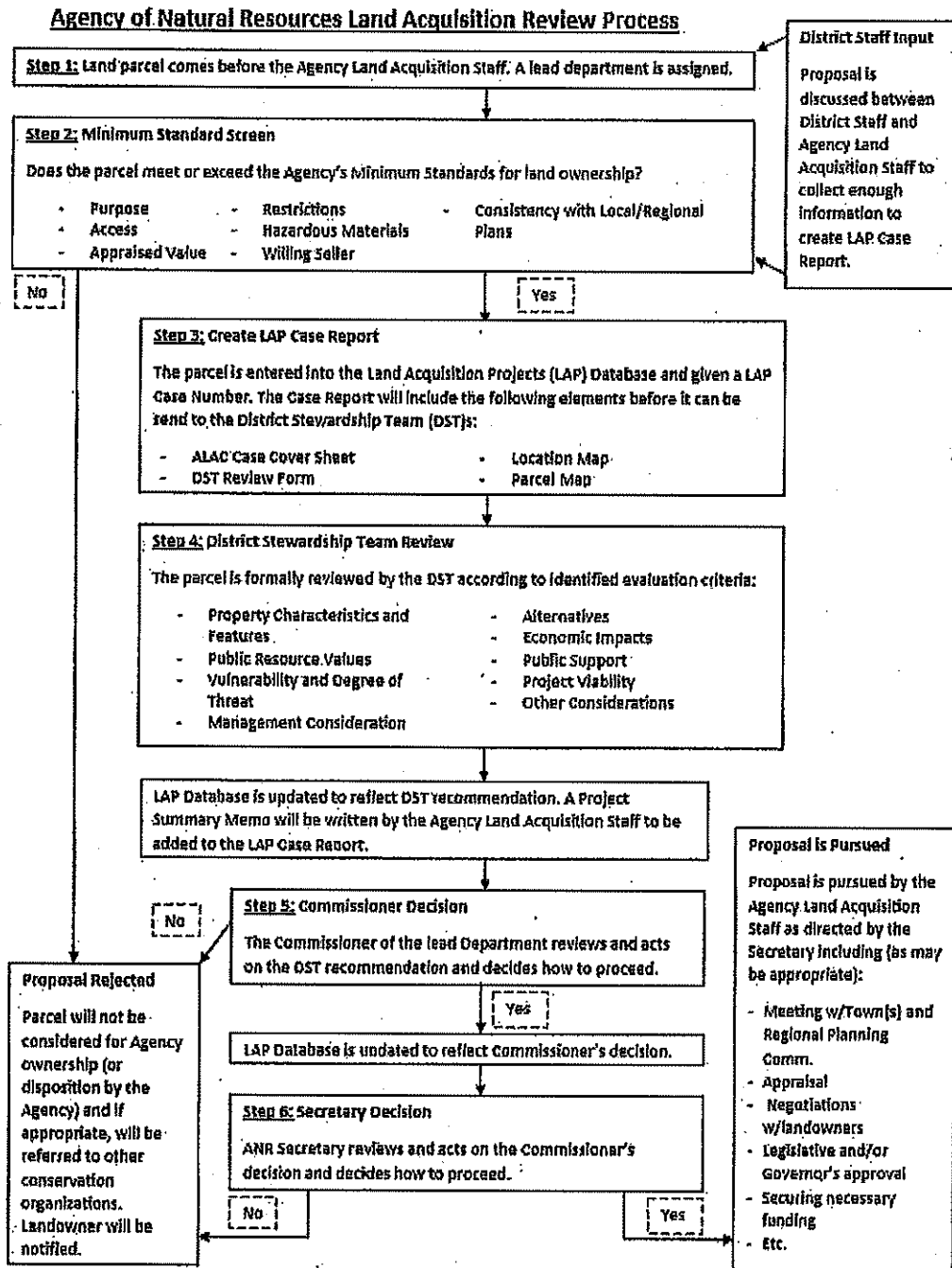


Figure 1. Decision-making process employed by the Wildlife Division to prioritize parcels for acquisition.

If projects rank high by VFWD stewardship staff, other VFWD biologists and ecologists, as well as the District Stewardship Teams, then the Land Acquisition Coordinator, in consultation with the Land and Habitat Program Manager, makes recommendations to the Commissioner and other leadership based on funding availability. Projects are selected based on a variety of criteria including ecological value, public access value, management opportunities, and regional equity, among others.

Conservation Opportunities

There are many factors that influence a landowner's interest in conserving their land including economic, social, spiritual, family heritage, among many others. Factors such as a slow economy may encourage landowners to divest of their land. Due to the recent recession, as well as other factors such as a shifting economy related to the timber market and increasing property taxes, there are currently numerous properties changing hands in Vermont and the northeast. As a result, this is a unique moment in time for the conservation community to acquire parcels that are significant acreages and undeveloped. Many of these parcels, currently owned as timberlands, are likely to be developed and at the very least parcelized making it more expensive and difficult to conserve these lands in the future. Indeed, this is an important opportunity for conservation in Vermont.

Criteria for Prioritizing Land Acquisition Projects

There are several criteria that are essential to consider when determining whether to acquire a piece of land:

1. Ecological value (presence of important wildlife habitats, natural communities);
2. Public Use and Access Values (improving or creating new public access to existing WMAs, or creating a new WMA);
3. Management value (enhances or supports VFWD's ability to effectively manage a WMA);
4. Funding (is there a source of funding to support the project); and
5. Partners (is there another organization that is better suited, already working in that area, or already owns land near or adjacent to the property).

Although these criteria are broad, they create a practical, straightforward framework from which to build upon the ANR conservation plan.

Creating Focus Areas for Conservation – Establishing a Work Plan

Establishing focus areas for land acquisition is a useful approach for being more strategic with land acquisition. By establishing focus areas, the VFWD will target the spending of Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds through the Wildlife Division's LAND grant to these areas for the next ten years, as well as staff time to find other funding sources for priority projects. In order to prioritize these areas, land acquisition staff met with each District Stewardship Team to review Wildlife Management Areas in each district and to evaluate and identify those that could serve as anchor blocks to invest in large-scale conservation through Department ownership. These meetings were also used as an opportunity to document all known acquisition needs at WMAs, including key inholdings and Rights-of-Ways or parcels specifically for access that will not be tied to focus areas. In addition to WMAs, staff also considered areas where we see a need and opportunity to establish new WMAs. Below are the factors considered in identifying focus areas:

1. Existing partner conservation efforts (i.e., don't focus resources where other organizations are working to conserve land such as TNC, TPL, TCF, USFS);
2. Significant ecological areas (e.g., natural communities, habitats, rare species, overlap with Vermont Conservation Design) unique within the broader context of Vermont biophysical regions;
3. Significant social benefits (e.g., improved public access to wildlife-based activities, or public access in areas where such access is limited);

4. Building upon existing significant public investments of conserved land (i.e., areas where the Department already owns significant acreage and it makes sense to continue to expand the conservation ownership for ecological, social, or management reasons);
5. To a certain extent, #4 relates to acquisition of important inholdings within existing WMAs which remains an important consideration (i.e., prioritize acquisition of most critical inholdings for management and access purposes); and
6. Available funding may provide conservation opportunities in certain regions of Vermont that fit the Department's interests (e.g. Duck Stamp Funds and Recovery Land Acquisition Grants).

All five districts identified several focus areas that are highlighted on the district spreadsheets (Attachment 1). A total of 18 focus areas were identified across the five districts. While all of these areas are worthwhile for conservation attention, the purpose of this planning effort is to identify a reasonable number of highly unique areas around Vermont that reflect multiple priority interests of VFWD. Therefore, twelve (12) focus areas are recommended to consider expansion or development of WMAs (Attachment 2). These areas represent WMAs in all 5 districts, intersecting with at least 6 biophysical regions, and addressing a broad range of public access, habitat management, and ecological benefits and functions (See Attachments 3 and 4 for maps of the area). While this may seem to represent a broad set of land acquisition focus areas, it remains important for VFWD to have flexibility to pursue important conservation opportunities based, in part, on funding and partner-based opportunities (e.g., unique funding for wetland conservation through VT Duck Stamp Funds and NAWCA; federal RLAG funding for federally listed species).

This focus area approach to VFWD land conservation raises the question as to how we respond to important conservation opportunities outside these areas. At this time, we recommend exercising discretion to either reject or consider such opportunities with the understanding that projects considered for VFWD attention outside a focus area must be of a highly unique value with respect to the 5 selection criteria listed above (e.g., an inholding or timber rights on a WMA that is critical to our management needs). Subcriteria will be established to guide determinations for "highly unique".

Louis Porter, Commissioner

3/30/17
Date

| Barre District Land Acquisition | | |
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| Wildlife Management Areas as Focus Areas: <i>Areas where we want to be proactive with conservation efforts leading to large-scale conservation through Department ownership.</i> | | |
| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Pine Mountain WMA | Significant ownership in a high priority forest interior block. Significant natural communities and rare species just off of ownership. Large ownerships still exist around WMA. | Green Acres parcels; landowner to the south of Pine Mountain along Quarry Road who posts as a wildlife sanctuary. |
| Podunk WMA | Significant ownership in a high priority forest interior block. Large ownerships still exist around WMA. Not a lot of other conserved lands in area. | Churchill parcel to the north; possibly talk with Dave Paganali about UVA parcels around the WMA. Connect with Heminway property to the NW. |

| Wildlife Management Areas with Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Roy Mountain WMA | High priority forest block, significant wetlands not fully conserved around Lower Symes Pond. | Think about connections to the northeast and build off WMA to include adjacent wetlands |
| Wild Branch WMA | High priority forest interior block, significant wetlands adjacent to WMA. Could be a focus area or just look to acquire wetlands adjacent to WMA. | Low threat/Porter property to the north and east/ priority for NGO to conserve. Adjacent parcels that connect to Lowell easements. Low threat for now but something that we want to own if opportunity presented us. |
| East Hill WMA | High priority forest interior block, significant wetlands adjacent to WMA. | Girl Scout property to the east (may have sold). Properties to the north on Wolcott pond. Focus on connection to the Kingdom. Not a priority to purchase underlying lands where we hold hunting rights due to development and agricultural use. |
| Worcester Woods WMA | High priority forest interior block and significant wetlands to east which include rare species. Seems like with Worcester Range Forest Legacy that this wouldn't be a focus area but may want to extend ownership to include wetlands? | A lot of conservation happening so low priority for now but wetlands and Hardwood ponds to the east would be nice to own. Improve access to the west for the public. |
| Middlesex Notch WMA | Work to connect to CC Putnam. High Priority forest interior block. | Important parcels to the west to connect to state forest. Better access to the east possibly. |
| Levi Pond WMA | Better access needed. Connect to Groton State Forest? | Possibly consider purchasing parcels to the east to provide better access from main road. |
| West Fairlee WMA | Part of high priority interior forest block. Better access needed? Question becomes is it too small to build off of or worth it? | Low priority but possibility with large parcels to the west and south headed towards Strafford. |
| Clover Hill WMA | Physical diversity block. Multiple owners of timber rights making it difficult to secure management across the entire ownership but worth considering due to its significance in conservation design. | Buy inholdings and timber rights. Think about additions to expand out to physical diversity block. |

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| Washington WMA | Connection to state forest to the north. High priority block for connectivity. | Webster family who owns the timber rights. Robert Hicken to the south of WMA. Maintain connection to state forest if possible. |
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| Wildlife Management Areas with No Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Buck Lake WMA | High priority forest interior block. Low priority for increased ownership because of private conservation in the area through VLT. | none |
| Fairlee Marsh WMA | Could focus on conserving lands to north and south largely to the east of the railroad bed. Could consider using this as an anchor to build conservation and access along the Connecticut River. | none identified |
| Kibling Hill WMA | What do we own there? Just the hunting rights? It is in a high priority forest interior block and includes numerous r,t,e species around it. Could it be a building block for ownership? | explore further with District at a later date |
| Middlesex WMA | Act 250 settlement where we don't own the land. | |

| Areas to Develop New Wildlife Management Areas | | |
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| Area | Rationale | Specific Area if known |
| Orange County | Large scale forest conservation still possible. Let's review where specifically would be a priority for ownership. | What about area where Vershire, West Fairlee, Corinth and Bradford meet? |
| Connecticut River | Unique resources along the river but hard to envision areas for significant ownership along this stretch. None identified. | Town of Fairlee where high priority connectivity block comes down to river? |

| Essex District - Land Acquisition | | |
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| Wildlife Management Areas as Focus Areas: <i>Areas where we want to be proactive with conservation efforts leading to large-scale conservation through Department ownership.</i> | | |
| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Lemon Fair | Focus on conservation of key parcels between route 74 and 125 in the Lemon Fair lakeplain. Important area for waterfowl, connectivity and public access. | Lemay/Bolduc Farm, Ethier, Gorton and Gleason are all obvious to acquire in the future. |
| Mallets Creek | Conserve significant wetland parcels from route 7 west towards Lake Champlain. Munsun Flats is last remaining significant lake-influenced wetland complex. Restoration potential throughout the complex which will also enhance water quality and wildlife habitat benefits. | We have a map from NRCS and USFWS of all the landowners in this area and which ones are potential candidates for WRE and which aren't. |
| Brandon Swamp | Work on connecting Brandon Swamp to Cornwall Swamp through riparian habitat, wetlands and restoration. Largest wetland complex in the state with multiple benefits. | Numerous WRE Sites, town-owned parcels and new landowners identified through TNC's work. Proposal is on the table to consider sharing a position with TNC to facilitate this work. |
| Cornwall Swamp | see above. | |
| Little Otter Creek | Acquire any available forest patches and wetland and riparian habitats in the vicinity of the existing WMA lands. Numerous r,t & e species, state-significant natural communities, public access benefits and the area is increasingly threatened. | Carse property is highest priority. Others include DeVois and Bahrenburg. We may want to contact Raymond Brands of Deer Valley Farm to acquire connecting forestlands between lower otter and little otter. Former Cobb property and Clark Slaughterhouse parcel also needed to sure up conservation around the falls on south slang. |
| Lower Otter Creek | see above. | |
| Lewis Creek | Connect Lewis Creek WMA with Lewis Creek streambank in the lowlands. Still able to link these lands providing critical connection between lowland, riparian habitats and upland forest. | We could potentially work with the Hinesburg Land Trust to facilitate acquisition. |

| Wildlife Management Areas with Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Maquam | Connect existing ownership through lands along Lake Champlain near Lanier Street. | |
| Mud Creek | Purchase inholdings in WMA as they come available from Canada southward towards route 78. | |
| Avery's Gore | Access to the WMA is needed. | Chris Collins is the landowner who would get us access. Talk with Kate Willard about previous title work completed and issues. We could also get VTRANS to give us their roadside picnic area along RT 118, another 20+ acres, if we could get the Collins parcel. |
| Dead Creek | Purchase clayplain forest patches in and around Dead Creek WMA as they become available. | Mike Reed, Dubois |
| Snake Mountain | Consider acquisition to secure a new access point. Purchase timber rights on WMA. | Consider approaching A Johnson property for access. |

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| Fairfield Swamp | Acquire remaining parcels in and around the swamp as they become available and work to get some more buffer. | Branon donation |
| Black Creek | Consider expansion in the wetland and riparian areas to protect and enhance water quality in St. Albans Bay. | |
| Roy Marsh | Acquire parcels throughout the marsh as they become available. | |
| Lower Lamoille River | Inholdings if ever available to remove farm fields from rivers edge. | |
| Rock River | General acquisition of parcels as they become available to target river headwaters located in the States. | |

| Wildlife Management Areas with No Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Additional Comments |
| Carmans Marsh WMA | Nothing to acquire except possibly if camp owners were interested in selling. | |
| Robbins Mountain | No acquisition needed. | |
| Intervale | Small and isolated, as well as conflict of management with the Winooski Valley Park District. | |
| Halfmoon Cove | Small and isolated, as well as conflict of management with the Winooski Valley Park District. | |
| Fred Johnson | No acquisition needed. | |
| Whitney/Hospital Creek | Possibility to connect to Dead Creek through riparian habitat if opportunity ever arose. | |
| East Creek | No acquisition needed. If TNC is no longer focusing on this region it would be worth reviewing the area for acquisition in the future to expand holdings and protection of the waters above and below the falls. | |
| Huntington Gap | No acquisition needed. | |
| Richville WMA | No acquisition needed. | |
| McCuen Slang | No acquisition needed. | |
| Elm Brook | No acquisition needed. No focus at this time, expanded ownership in the future if offers are made, should be looked at. | |
| Sandbar | No acquisition needed. | |

| Areas to Develop New Wildlife Management Areas | | |
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| Pond Brook Wetlands in Bristol and Monkton | Consider consolidation of town ownership and TNC lands into a new WMA to provide access to these wetlands for wildlife-based recreation as the area is of high value for waterfowl hunting. The area also supports numerous state-significant natural communities and globally rare plants. The Department already holds an easement that includes public access on the Willowell Foundation properties on the northern end of the wetland complex. We also own lands around Bristol Pond the head waters to th stream system. | |

| Springfield District - Land Acquisition | | |
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| Wildlife Management Areas as Focus Areas: | | |
| Areas where we want to be proactive with conservation efforts leading to large-scale conservation through Department ownership. | | |
| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Arthur Davis | Expand WMA to connect to Coolidge State Forest. Priority is acquisition of timber and mineral rights. | Would we want to own the former yankee lands there or is it enough just to advocate for their conservation? High priority for interior forest in conservation targets. Easier to manage for the district office. Inholdings are key. Check recreation plan. Don Clifford owns the timber rights. |
| Turner Hill | Continue to expand the WMA to increase habitat diversity with use of Recovery Land Acquisition Grants. | Plummer, Toepfer and Goodridge properties. Opportunity to continue to get Recovery land acquisition grants. |
| Roaring Brook | Purchase timber and mineral rights. Consolidate ownership by purchasing inholdings too. Significance for northern long-eared bat. | Pursue list of inholdings developed for the long range management plan. This area is high priority for interior forest in conservation targets; plus unique species and natural communities exist throughout. Weinstein property to the north. Parcel to the north that is isolated which abuts Cersosimo easement. Right of first refusal on the Cersosimo tract in the center of WMA. |

| Wildlife Management Areas with Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Atherton Meadows | Expand protection of black bear and large forest habitat. Development of better access for both the public and management. | Bear study will inform key parcels. Likely want to expand the WMA to the east and south. |
| Little Ascutney | Link WMA to other conserved lands. Protect floodplain parcels along the North Branch of the Black River. Buffer and enhance the WMA where possible. High priority interior forest block in conservation targets. Recreational conflicts. | This area is significant for connectivity and while it could be a logical place for us to consider owning more land, they are major recreational conflicts with mountain biking. It seems appropriate to allow other organizations to take the lead here. |
| Les Newell | Purchase timber and mineral rights. | A Johnson. Would we want any of the Yankee parcels now owned by the fund that link our lands or are those in easement good enough? |
| Hawks Mountain | High priority in conservation targets for interior forest. Purchase timber and mineral rights. Improve public access and/or parking. Good habitat on the WMA, key one for timber rights. | Lands to the east? Don Clifford has some of the timber rights. Thomas? |
| Knapp Brook | High Priority in conservation targets for connectivity block. Purchase timber and mineral rights. Lower priority. | |
| Gale Meadows | Purchase last remaining large parcel on the lake which includes significant deer wintering habitat and wetlands. | Dritz acquisition underway. What about lands to the northeast? The forest block is a high priority for interior forest in conservation targets. Review the land acquisition section in the long range management plan. Consider parcels to the northeast. |

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| Missing Link | Improve access to the Connecticut River or Upper Meadows wetland complex. | What about wetland complex to the north? Transcanada owns land to the north. Aaron has a map of the landowners around it. |
| Ottauguichee | Purchase timber and mineral rights. Improve public access and/or parking. | Is this WMA - shows as Streambank in some places. Don Clifford holds timber rights. |
| Skitchewaug | Improve public access and/or parking. | Buy the parcel to the north or south. Old gravel pit to the north. High ecological value. |
| Densmore Hill | Improve public access and/or parking. | |

| Wildlife Management Areas with No Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Additional Comments |
| White River | Purchase timber and mineral rights. Lower priority. | |
| Weathersfield | Purchase timber and mineral rights. Lower priority. | Is this so small that perhaps not a priority to even acquire timber rights? Neighborhood woodlot. |

| Areas to Develop new Wildlife Management Areas | | |
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| Connecticut River Valley | Lands that: are contiguous with ANR parcels, include significant wetlands or riparian forests, provide access to the river | |
| Halifax/along Green River drainage | Lands that include significant wetlands or riparian forests, provide access to the river, are contiguous with blocks of conserved land(VLT) | |

| Rutland District - Land Acquisition | | |
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| Wildlife Management Areas as Focus Areas: | | |
| <i>Areas where we want to be proactive with conservation efforts leading to large-scale conservation through</i> | | |
| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Bird Mountain WMA | Significant area for connectivity from Taconics to Green Mountains. Vision is to connect Bird Mountain to Blueberry Hill WMA. Area very accessible to large population center. Lots of opportunities due to wind projects falling apart and landowners interested in selling. | Davis property to the north and Lathrop to the northeast. |
| Blueberry Hill WMA | See above. | Landowners who were interested in wind development. |
| The Narrows WMA | Significant area for connectivity from Adirondacks to Green Mountains. Rare natural communities and endangered species throughout. Not a lot of public access in the area. Landowners not cooperative right now but it should be an area we investigate for conservation work when timing is right. | |
| Brandon Swamp WMA | Vision to connect Brandon Swamp to Cornwall Swamp. Benefits for natural community conservation, connectivity and public access. | This is descibed more in the Essex District spreadsheet. |

| Wildlife Management Areas with Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
| Kesick Swamp WMA | Conservation of signficant wetlands around existng lands is still necessary. Better access is needed. Possibility to connect WMA to national forest. | Hayden and Batchelder. |
| Otter Creek WMA | Potential to connect north to south ownerships | |
| South Stream WMA | Significant natural communities adjacent to WMA that are not conserved right now - kettle holes, eskers and other geologic features which yield significant natural communities. | |
| Tinmouth Channel WMA | Access is needed on the east but low priority. | |
| Loves Marsh WMA | Parking access needs to be legitimized. | |
| Whipple Hollow WMA | Look at significance of north to south ridge with conservation targets. | |
| Plymsbury WMA | Camp inholding is a priority to buy and remove. | Taylor |
| Pond Woods WMA | Significant natural communities adjacent to WMA that are not conserved right now and access to Sunset Lake. Purchase timber rights. | Ray Denniss property for ROW and connection between fee lands and timber right lands. A Johnson and Boy Scouts. |
| Ward Marsh WMA | Makes more sense for TNC but would help facilitate if needed | |
| Tiny Pond WMA | Connect to the okemo lands. | Forest echo property |

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| Old Marsh Pond WMA | Expansion around pond and to upland to protect significant wetland habitat and habitat for rattlesnakes. | Reed, other? |
| Pomainville WMA | Consider expansion along the river and to the north for connectivity across route 7. Consider importance for recreational opportunities with birding. | |

| Wildlife Management Areas with No Acquisition Needs | | |
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| WMA | Rationale | Additional Comments |
| Whipstock Hill WMA | | |
| Star Lake WMA | Small, isolated | |
| Hubbardton Battlefield WMA | Think about connectivity along the Pittsford Ridge. Start at Blueberry Hill and move north towards Hubbardton WMA. Also look at conservation targets data to see what connectivity to the west looks like - getting you to Bomoseen state park. | |
| Buczek Marsh WMA | small and bad access. | |
| Rochester WMA | no additional work needed | |
| Riley Bostwick WMA | no additional work needed | |
| Clarendon Gorge WMA | give to the feds | |
| Oscar Hall WMA | no additional work needed | |
| Bullhead Pond WMA | no additional work needed | |

St. Johnsbury District - Land Acquisition

Wildlife Management Areas as Focus Areas:

Areas where we want to be proactive with conservation efforts leading to large-scale conservation through Department ownership.

| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
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| Steam Mill Brook | The WMA ranks as the highest priority for interior forest block and for connectivity block in conservation targets. The feeling of the District is to act now before it gets further parcelized as this area is really the linchpin for connectivity from the Greens to the Northeast Kingdom. Development is occurring at a faster pace here than in the past. | Brett Messier property; Felix Callan property. Piperville. Adjacent parcels to the WMA and significant expansion possibilities. |
| Clyde River | State-significant wetland complex that has little conserved land along it. Provides significant access for wildlife-based recreation including wildlife viewing and waterfowl hunting. There are unique funding sources available to us here, willing landowners, partners with DU and TNC and state recognition of significance of the wetland system. | Ashley and Becky Thompson (Ben and Jess Applegate own a share of the property). Taft Farm (DU tried to conserve the property but pulled out at last second; talk with VLT). The Gideon Mills Stretch of the Clyde River; below the five mile square road. Consider area from Island Pond to Pensioner pond. Working with Bill Manning and Pat Moyer now, as well as the Northwoods Stewardship Center. |

Wildlife Management Areas with Acquisition Needs

| WMA | Rationale | Specific Parcels if Known |
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| Bald Hill | This area ranks high in conservation targets for both interior forest and connectivity. Consider expanding our ownership there to compliment other privately conserved lands and state forest. | This area has not been a focus for us in recent memory but has certainly been important to organizations such as VLT and TNC. Is it an area where we would want to build off our ownership or just advocate for conservation? Consider conservation of Red Dam Conservancy (private landowner in NH/logging planned/includes beech mast stand). Talk with Jared about specific plans. |
| Calendar Brook | Expand the WMA to include all of the deer wintering area. High priority for conservation targets: interior forest block and connecting block. | 1) Jeff Norris; 2) Solinsky; 3) Guzman |
| Victory Basin | Extend to the Northeast up towards Plum Creek Lands through Granby. Specifically lands between Plum Creek and Victory State Forest. | Talk with Matt Langlais about UVA parcels. Larry Brown's lands high priority for conservation easement (working lands); our role would just be to advocate for this. Revisit Hayward and advocate for Vinton. |
| Averill Mountain | Purchase adjacent parcels for access and connectivity to the east. High priority in conservation targets for connectivity to the east of our ownership. | Gagnon for access and early successional habitat. |
| West Mountain | Work to secure key inholdings to consolidate management. | TNC inholdings, Ouimette (~100 acres) Town of Brunswick, (1 or 2) Camps on Wheeler Pond |

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| Johnson Farm | Continue to work on key acquisitions that provide better access and conservation of riparian functions and connectivity with associated wetlands and uplands. | Rob Baum wetlands, Willard Stream property; Johnson woodlot on the west side of 102 at Capon Brook |
| South Bay | Work to secure key inholdings. | If any of the following parcels become available, we will want to act quickly. John Morley; Fred Webster; Terry Perkins |
| Bill Sladyk | Facilitate conservation of parcels to connect existing conserved lands. | Poulin (now owned by Ben Benoit, Tall Timbers, 2600 acres and LandVest manages it) and enforce easement on Mt. John property (VHCB easement). Could we negotiate a parking area as the property changes hands? |
| Keiser Pond | Need access. | Possibility of talking with PVL and Incerpi about access through their land to the west of the WMA. Gosiant Trailer lot to the southern side of the pond. |
| Wenlock | Secure key inholdings and adjacent lands. | Marquis parcel (likely feds will acquire but need to be backup). Internal parcel on south side of 105 with railroad to the north (Includes the Nulhegan River). Parcels in the NW corner of the WMA with the Nulhegan River and frontage on Miles Pond. |

Wildlife Management Areas with No Acquisition Needs

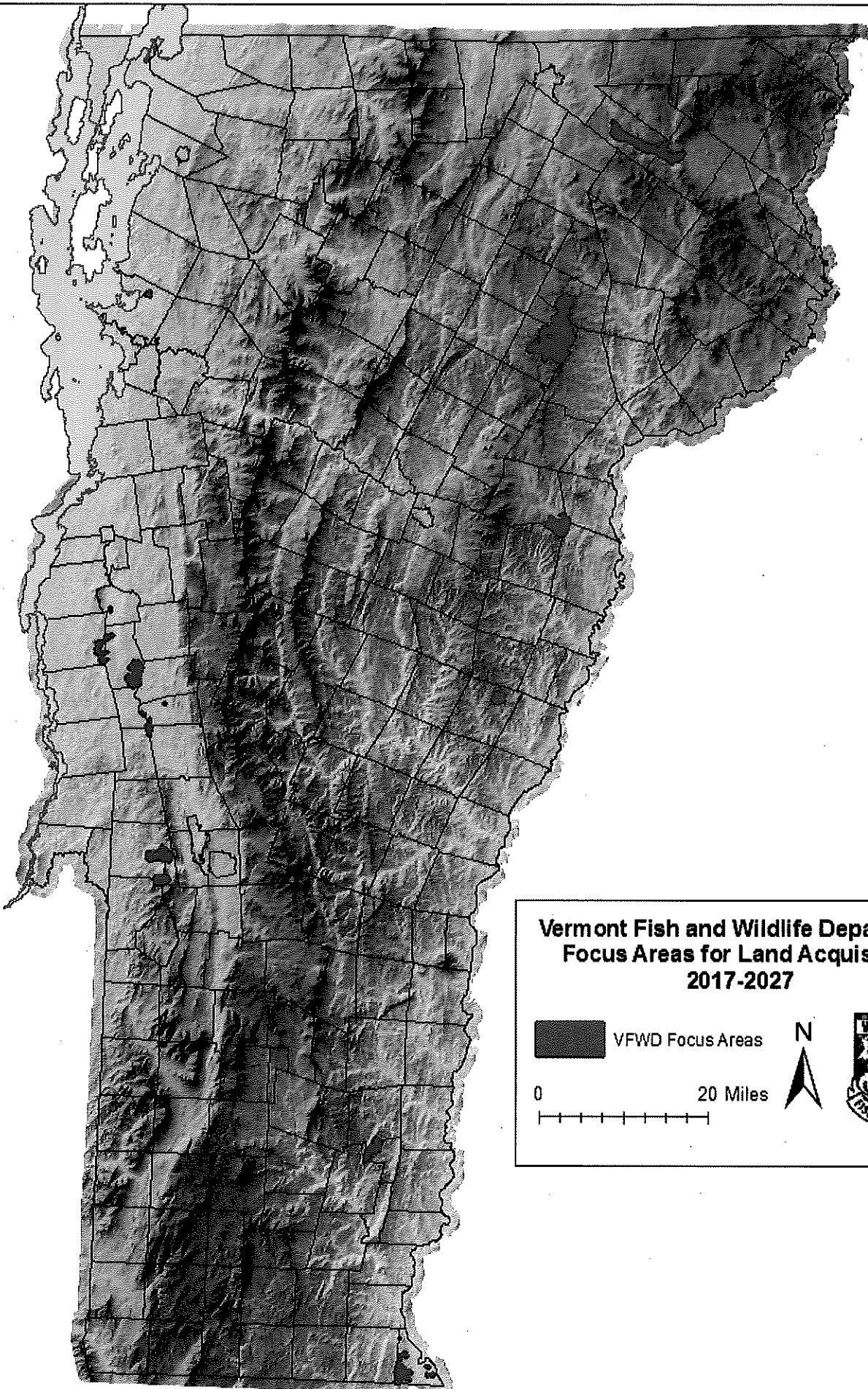
| WMA | Rationale |
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| Willoughby Falls | No acquisition needs. |

Areas to Develop new Wildlife Management Areas

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| Connecticut River | Explore opportunities where possible to conserve and enhance lands along the Connecticut. | Consider taking over ownership of Maidstone Bends parcels managed by TNC currently. |
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| Statewide Priorities for Next 10 Years | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------|
| Location or WMA | Rationale | Type of Project - Reason for prioritization | Specific Parcels, if known | Additional Comments | District Office |
| Steam Mill Brook WMA | The forest block which the WMA is part of ranks as one of the highest priority for interior forest block and for connectivity in conservation targets. The feeling of the District is to act now before it gets further parcelized as this area is really the linchpin for connectivity from the Greens to the Northeast Kingdom. | Forest conservation with an emphasis on connectivity | Brett Messier property, Felix Callan property, Pipersville, and adjacent parcels to the WMA and significant expansion possibilities. | Development is occurring at a faster pace here than in the past. Staff feel like now is the time to act here. | St. Johnsbury |
| Clyde River | State-significant wetland complex that has little conserved land along it and needs little to no restoration. Proposed for Class I status. Provides significant access for wildlife-based recreation including wildlife viewing and waterfowl hunting. There is growing fear amongst staff that the area could be "loved to death" and that ownership would give a seat at the table to consider future use. | Wetland Focus Area | Considering area from Island Pond to Pensioner pond for ownership, with an emphasis on the Buck Flats region. Ashley and Becky Thompson (Ben and Jess Applegate own a share of the property). Taft Farm (DU tried to conserve the property but pulled out at last second; talk with VLT). The Gideon Mills Stretch of the Clyde River, below the five mile square road. Working with Bill Manning and Pat Moyer now, as well as the Northwoods Stewardship Center. | Unique funding source, willing landowners, significant partnership opportunities including DU and TNC. Proposed as a Class I wetland. | St. Johnsbury |
| Podunk WMA | Significant ownership in a high priority forest interior block. Large ownerships still exist around WMA. Not a lot of other conserved lands in area. High-priority for physical diversity. | Forest conservation with an emphasis on conservation of unique natural communities | Churchill parcel to the north. Talk with Dave Paganelli about UVA parcels around the WMA. Connect with Heminway property to the NW. | Consider areas where there is calcareous-rich bedrock. Refine mapping of these areas with others. | Barre |
| Pine Mountain WMA | Significant ownership in a high priority forest interior block. Large ownerships still exist around WMA. Important linkage to other conserved lands like Groton and downward towards the Connecticut River Valley. | Forest conservation with an emphasis on conservation of unique natural communities | Other Green Acre ownerships in and around the WMA. Wildlife conservation area owned by private landowner to the south. | Consider wetland areas around the WMA. | Barre |
| Lemon Fair WMA | Focus on conservation of key parcels between route 74 and 125 in the Lemon Fair lakeplain. Important area for waterfowl, connectivity and public access. | Wetland Focus Area/Connectivity | Lemay/Bolduc Farm, Ethier, Gorton | Unique opportunities coming to us because VLT is doing so much work in this area. | Essex |
| Mallets Creek | Conserve significant wetland parcels from route 7 west towards Lake Champlain. Munsun Flats is last remaining significant lake-influenced wetland complex not largely conserved by states or feds. Restoration potential throughout the complex which will also enhance water quality and wildlife habitat benefits. | Wetland Focus Area | We have a map from NRCs and USFWS of all the landowners in this area and which ones are potential candidates for WRE and which aren't. | Important opportunity because of proximity to urban area and therefore the access it provides. Also the development of a NAWCA grant in 2017 could help advance work here. | Essex |
| Brandon Swamp to Cornwall Swamp WMA | Work on connecting Brandon Swamp to Cornwall Swamp through riparian habitat, wetlands and restoration. Largest wetland complex in the state with multiple benefits. | Wetland Focus Area/Connectivity | Numerous WRE Sites; town-owned parcels and new landowners identified through TNC's work. | Proposal is on the table to consider sharing a position with TNC to facilitate this work. Important to work with VLT at time of conserving farm to ensure higher ecological protections. | Essex |

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| Bird Mountain WMA | Significant area for connectivity from Taconites to Green Mountains. Vision is to connect Bird Mountain to Blueberry Hill WMA. Area very accessible to large population center. Lots of opportunities due to wind projects falling apart and landowners interested in selling. | Forest conservation with an emphasis on connectivity. | Davis property to the north and Lathrop to the northeast. Landowners who were interested in wind development. | Significant partners to work with in the area. | Rutland |
| Blueberry Hill WMA | See above. | Forest conservation with an emphasis on connectivity. | Pursue list of inholdings developed for the long range management plan. This area is high priority for interior forest in conservation targets, plus unique species and natural communities exist throughout. Weinstein property to the north is critical connector property. Parcel to the north that is isolated which abuts Carosimo assessment. Right of first refusal on the Carosimo tract in the center of WMA. | see above | Rutland |
| Roaring Brook WMA | Purchase timber and mineral rights. Consolidate ownership by purchasing inholdings and large parcels that link the WMA together. Significance for northern long-eared bat and black racer. Important block in conservation targets. | Forest conservation with an emphasis on conservation of unique natural communities. | Plummer, Trophier and Goodridge properties. | Updated long range management plan began outreach in the area. Opportunity to use Recovery Land Acquisition Grants for Northern long-eared bats. | Springfield |
| Turner Hill WMA | Continue to expand the WMA to increase habitat diversity and provide public access in area with limited access. | Forest conservation with an emphasis on conservation of unique natural communities. | Opportunity to continue to get Recovery land acquisition grants. | Springfield | |

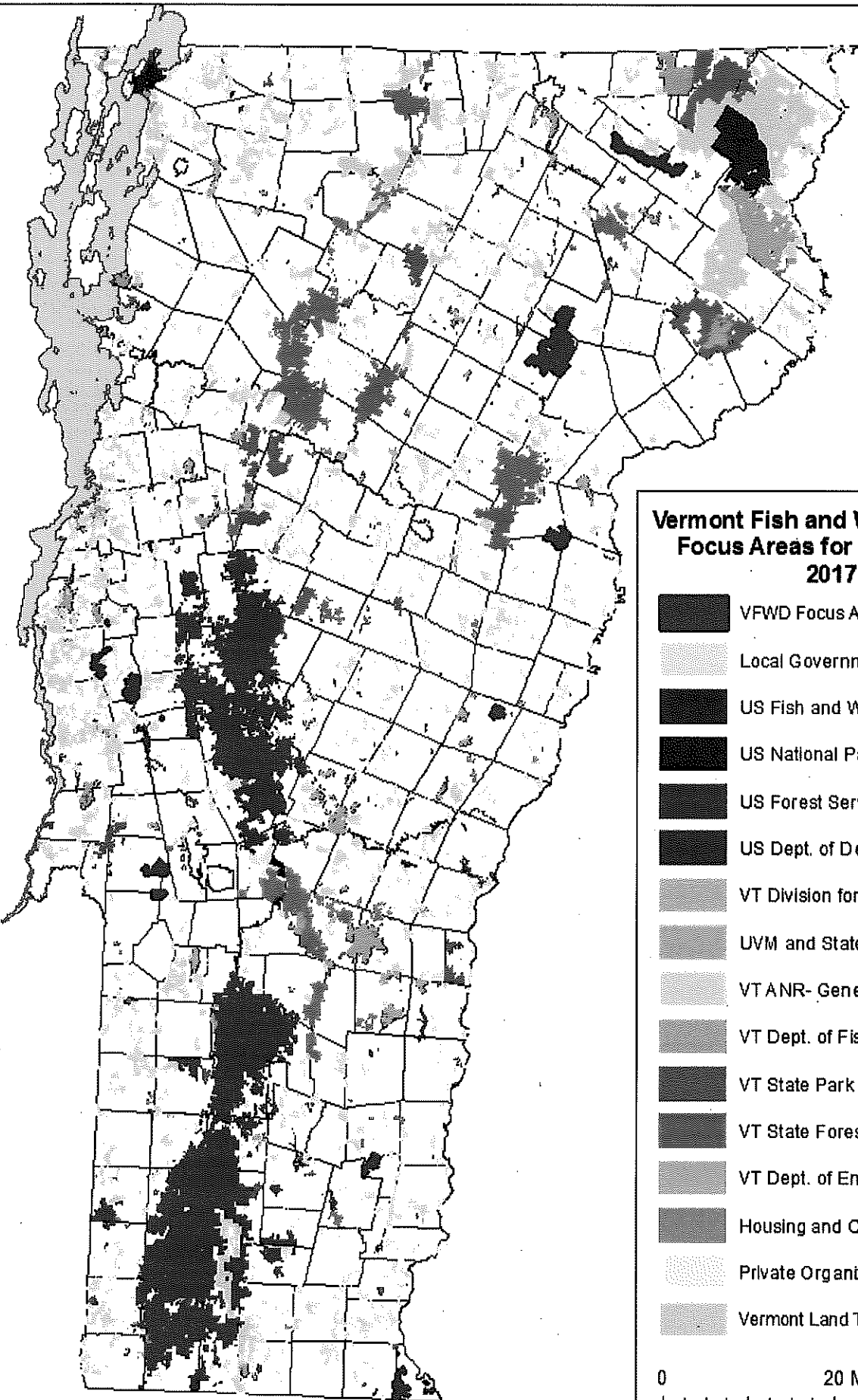


**Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
Focus Areas for Land Acquisition
2017-2027**

















 VFWD Focus Areas

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-  VFWD Focus Areas
-  Local Government
-  US Fish and Wildlife Service
-  US National Park Service
-  US Forest Service
-  US Dept. of Defense
-  VT Division for Historical Preservation
-  UVM and State Colleges
-  VT ANR- General
-  VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
-  VT State Park
-  VT State Forest
-  VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation
-  Housing and Conservation Board
-  Private Organization
-  Vermont Land Trust & Other Easements

0 20 Miles

