

**VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE
DEPARTMENT**

**ACCESS AREA PROGRAM
2014 MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT**

Submitted to:
Vermont Legislature
House Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources Committee

Submitted by:
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Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
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BACKGROUND

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (Department) maintained 184 developed fishing access areas in 2014. The Department manages these sites to provide access to public waters for recreational boating, fishing, hunting, and trapping. The majority of these sites have ramps that allow for motorboat access (139). The remainder provide for carry-on access and/or shore fishing.

The Department received approximately \$442,337 in motorboat registration fees this past year, which are dedicated to the Access Area Program. These state funds are used to match Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration funds which are generated from a federal excise tax on fishing tackle, boats, motors, and marine fuels. In fiscal year 2014, the Federal Aid appropriation for Vermont access areas was \$488,610. Additionally, the Department received capital funding in the amount of \$400,000 in FY14, which can also be used as match to draw in federal funds, where appropriate.

In the past few years there has been a reduction in both state and federal funding for the access area program. Motorboat registration revenues peaked in 2011 at \$482,500 and had declined in 2012 and 2013 before rebounding in 2014. Federal funding peaked in 2009 at \$606,675 and has gradually declined over the past 5 years. Fortunately, the capital appropriations to the Access Area Program have offset the losses in the dedicated funding sources and has allowed for considerable gains in addressing the backlog of ramp repairs.

MAINTENANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

In 2014, the Access Area Program spent over \$1,160,000 on basic maintenance, capital improvement projects, and major infrastructure improvements (Table 1). Expenditures ranged from \$721.92 for signage at access areas to over \$421,000 for design, permitting, and partial construction of the John Guilmette Access Area on Lake Champlain in South Hero (Table 2).

Starting in 2008, the Department had made a conscious effort to improve the condition of all of its parking areas and access roads. This was a significant investment, but has resulted in reduced maintenance costs for the past two years. Grounds maintenance, primarily provided by the Department of Corrections Probation and Parole crews, continues to be a large expense in the budget, but it keeps the access areas clean and inviting to the public. The weekly maintenance service cost decreased significantly to an average of \$512/site for the entire year, which resulted in a \$25,000 reduction in maintenance costs.

Two major ramp improvements were finished and another started this year. The Lamoille River ADA complaint parking area and dock were completed, along with the ADA complaint parking and paved approach to a newly constructed boat ramp at the Seymour Lake Access Area.

Perhaps our largest access project ever undertaken by the Department was started this past November when the Department broke ground on the new John Guilmette Access Area. This site had historically been a private ramp and parking area, which was quickly deteriorating. The Department acquired the property, removed the old ramp and installed a new two lane concrete ramp with a 70 ft. dock (to be installed spring 2015). Additionally, we improved the launch staging area and have begun work on the parking area. The access area will not be fully

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completed until next summer, but may be open sometime in the spring with a limited amount of parking spaces. It should also be noted that, as part of the design, the Department obtained a number of state permits from the Watershed Management Division of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). While a Shoreland permit was not one of the required permits, as the project was designed well in advance of the passing of the Shoreland Law, the Department worked closely with DEC staff to ensure the project could be permitted under the law by incorporating numerous storm water components and green infrastructure design throughout.

Four years ago a list of sites was generated to upgrade a portion of the Department's concrete plank ramps, many of which had never received any significant improvements over their 30+ year life. Beginning in 2012, the Department began working on this list along with upgrading existing courtesy docks to make them accessible for all users. To date, the Department has completed 42 separate ramp or dock projects and spent \$431,400 of capital funds to complete these projects. The capital funds used to complete these projects also leveraged approximately \$333,000 in federal funds.

In 2014, the Department completed five ramp and one dock project utilizing nearly \$165,000 of capital funds (Table 3). Eight dock projects are already under contract for winter fabrication at a cost of \$160,000 which will be paid for with capital funding. There are also designs underway for another six ramp upgrades for the 2015 construction season.

LAND ACQUISITION

During 2013-14 the Wildlife Division worked on a project to purchase the 66-acre Mainer property, which is located along the Lewis Creek from Lewis Creek Road to Tyler Bridge Road in the town of Monkton. The creek bisected the Mainer property, which provided critical habitat for the federally endangered Indiana Bat. As part of this acquisition project there was a 5-acre parcel located adjacent to the bridge on Tyler Bridge Road, which has historically been used by many locals to access the Creek. The acquisition of these five acres allows the Department to formalize this as an access area as well as better manage the property for the diverse natural resource values it also contains, including significant wetland habitat along Lewis Creek. The total acquisition cost was \$32,343.51. A parking area and non-motorized launch are planned for next year.

CONTACTS

Any questions or comments regarding the access maintenance and construction program should be directed to:

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Table 1. Summary of all expenditures for Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Access Area Program, 2014.

Category	Amount
Major Ramp Improvements	\$ 441,914.95
Capital Funded Infrastructure Improvements & Construction	\$ 162,367.67
Site Work Maintenance (i.e. gravel, grading, excavation)	\$ 81,298.56
Dock Improvements & Purchases	\$ 2,307.50
Dock Maintenance	\$ 19,620.02
Department of Corrections Community Restitution Crews	\$ 89,367.75
Miscellaneous Lawn and Maintenance Services	\$ 4,950.93
Portable Toilet Rentals	\$ 54,869.69
Snow Removal	\$ 18,332.00
Purchase of building materials, supplies, equipment rentals, etc.	\$ 2,738.41
Payments for Public Access to Private Lands (i.e. leases)	\$ 1,440.00
PILOT (payments in lieu of taxes)	\$ 51,121.96
Engineering & staff time—admin, permitting, design,& construction	\$ 185,976.35
Utilities	\$ 11,447.56
Land Acquisition	\$ 34,253.97
Surveys and Appraisals	\$ 1,678.00
Trash Disposal	\$ 2,224.55
Professional Memberships & Meetings	\$ 2,030.20
Signage	\$ 721.92
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,168,661.99

Table 2. Summary of large infrastructure improvements at Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Access Area, 2014.

Project Description	Amount
John Guilmette Access Construction	\$421,623.42
Seymour Lake ramp and ADA parking – final paving work only	\$ 14,226.14
Lamoille River – final paving work only	\$ 6,065.39
GRAND TOTAL	\$441,914.95

*The Department did not incur any operating costs, but significant staff time was invested in designing, permitting, and construction oversight of this project.

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Table 3. List of completed 2014 capital funded Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department ramp improvement projects.

Access Area Name	Town	Accomplishments	Cost
Derby Pond	Derby	Ramp replaced and extended	\$ 12,760.59
Dog Pond	Woodbury	Ramp upgrade – improved depth & length	\$ 33,822.50
Lake Hortonia	Hubbardton	Ramp replaced and extended Improved storm water infrastructure	\$ 27,296.63
Lake Rescue	Plymouth	Ramp replaced and extended Improved storm water infrastructure Realigned parking to increase capacity	\$ 37,821.32
South Slang	Ferrisburg	Ramp replaced and extended	\$ 20,900.05
Statewide	Statewide	Purchase of concrete ramp materials	\$ 3,423.20
Statewide	Statewide	Engineering, permitting, & construction oversight of all projects	\$ 26,343.38
Great Averill Pond	Averill	Extended the dock to provide greater access during low water	\$ 3,372.65
Lake Carmi	Franklin	Installed a dock at the Lake Carmi Access Area	\$ 2,307.50
TOTAL			\$168,047.82