

**VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE
DEPARTMENT**

**FISHING ACCESS AREA PROGRAM
2015 MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT**

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

Submitted by:
Louis Porter, Commissioner
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
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BACKGROUND

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (Department) maintained 186 developed fishing access areas in 2015. The Department manages these sites to provide access to public waters for recreational boating, fishing, hunting, and trapping. The majority of these sites have gravel or concrete ramps that allow for motorboat access (140). The remainder provide for carry-on access and/or shore fishing.

The Department received approximately \$343,000 in Vermont motorboat registration fees this past year, which are dedicated to the Fishing 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 2015, the Federal Aid apportionment for Vermont access areas was \$520,000. Additionally, the Department received capital funding in the amount of \$400,000 in FY15, which can also be used as match to draw in federal funds, where appropriate.

In the past few years there has been a general decline in both state and federal funding for the access area program. Motorboat registration revenues peaked in 2011 at \$482,500, declined in 2012 and 2013 before rebounding slightly in 2014. Unfortunately, this past year was the lowest total received in motorboat registration fees in the past decade. Federal funding peaked in 2009 at \$606,675 and has gradually declined over the past 5 years, but rebounded by \$30,000 this year over FY14. The capital appropriations to the Fishing Access Area Program have helped to offset these losses in the dedicated funding sources over the past years, which has allowed for considerable gains in addressing the backlog of ramp repairs and dock replacements.

MAINTENANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

In 2015, the Fishing Access Area Program spent over \$1,546,000 on basic maintenance, capital improvement projects, and major infrastructure improvements (Table 1). Expenditures ranged from \$2,778 for trash disposal to over \$475,950 on large access area construction projects, including the completion of the John Guilmette Access Area and initial work at the Converse Bay Access Area, both on Lake Champlain (Table 2). The John Guilmette fishing access project was started in December 2014 and completed in late spring 2015 (Figure 1). The completion of this project gave the Department a state of the art access area that features 100% ADA accessibility, a deep water boat ramp that is extremely protected from inclement weather, and storm water and green infrastructure components that will improve water quality to Lake Champlain. The total cost for this project from acquisition to opening of the site was \$1,484,135. The second project was the Converse Bay fishing access ramp extension and ADA parking (Figure 2). This project was nearly completed at the time of this report, but the financial details have not yet been finalized. This project will now allow boats of all sizes to launch during extreme low water levels and all users to park and gain safe access to boats. Additionally, the Department worked with the bike group Local Motion on completing a shore fishing platform at the end of the Allen Point causeway in South Hero (Figure 3). This was part of a larger Vtrans grant funded bike transportation project which cost a total of approximately \$1,100,000. The fishing platform portion of the project cost \$58,500 and but the Department contributed \$8,500..

Since 2011, the Department has utilized capital funds to replace aging docks and upgrade rundown boat ramps. Over this time the Department received \$950,000 and spent

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approximately \$767,000 to improve 37 ramps and replace or upgrade 13 dock facilities. Some of these projects were fully funded with capital money, others were cost-shared with Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration funds. These projects were a significant financial investment into the access area program, and sorely needed to improve accessibility to many small lakes and ponds around the state and to create a safer recreational experience to the boating and angling public. This past year, 10 such projects were completed around the state; 4 ramp and 6 dock improvements (Table 3).

LAND ACQUISITION

In 2015, the Department acquired one small piece of land (0.034 ac) in Craftsbury on Great Hosmer Pond (Figure 3). This property was previously in private ownership, but had been used as the only public access to the pond for nearly half a century. The owners, Steve and Jane Glass, donated the property to the Department and it now recognizes Mr. Glass's uncle with the official name of Great Hosmer Pond, Gordon "PeeWee" Wing Access Area. Mr. Wing was the original owner of the property who first allow the public to use his land for boating and fishing access.

OTHER

This year the Department had the honor of hosting the National Boating Access Conference at Basin Harbor Club. Staff from the Department worked with their counterparts from around New England to host the national conference which is sponsored annually by the States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA). The three-day conference was preceded by a one-day federal aid workshop hosted by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The day-long federal workshop included a variety of topics related to federal boating programs and how they work with their state partners. The following three days focused on the conference theme of "Green Access, Clean Boating, Blue Waters." Sessions included topics on marinas, non-motorized (paddling) access, ADA accessibility, and access design/engineering. The conference was well attended by states, federal partners, private businesses, and NGOs from around the country, including as far away as American Samoa and Alaska.

CONTACTS

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

Mike Wichrowski
Fish and Wildlife Lands and Facilities Administrator
Fish and Wildlife Department
1 National Life Drive
Davis 2
Montpelier, VT 05620
(802) 917-1347
mike.wichrowski@vermont.gov

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Table 1. Summary of all expenditures for Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Fishing Access Area Program, 2015.

| PROJECT DESCRIPTION | AMOUNT |
|---|-----------------------|
| Major Access Improvements | \$ 475,954.49 |
| Capital Funded Infrastructure Improvements & Construction | |
| - Ramp Improvements | \$ 170,221.01 |
| - Dock Improvements & Purchases | \$ 97,290.00 |
| Site Work Maintenance (i.e. gravel, grading, excavation) | \$ 119,258.29 |
| Dock Maintenance | \$ 22,396.16 |
| Department of Corrections Community Restitution Crews | \$ 78,417.50 |
| Miscellaneous Lawn and Maintenance Services | \$ 5,173.74 |
| Portable Toilet Rentals | \$ 70,539.35 |
| Snow Removal | \$ 52,105.75 |
| Purchase of building materials, supplies, equipment rentals, etc. | \$ 5,861.61 |
| Payments for Public Access to Private Lands (i.e. leases) | \$ 1,440.00 |
| PILOT (payments in lieu of taxes) | \$ 48,083.49 |
| Engineering & staff time—admin, permitting, design,& construction | |
| - Engineering & construction oversight for Capital Projects | \$ 133,662.75 |
| - Engineering & construction oversight for large projects | \$ 119,589.13 |
| - General engineering consultation & access program staff time | \$ 107,607.10 |
| Utilities | \$ 4,311.90 |
| Land Acquisition | \$ 7,925.00 |
| Surveys - non-acquisition | \$ 5,190.91 |
| Colchester Police Department (traffic control) | \$ 2,931.47 |
| Trash Disposal | \$ 2,778.59 |
| Professional Memberships & Meetings | \$ 11,975.61 |
| Signage | \$ 3,430.16 |
| TOTAL ACCESS AREA EXPENDITURES | \$1,546,144.01 |

Table 2. Cost summary of large infrastructure improvements at Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Fishing Access Areas, 2015.

| Project Description | Amount |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| John Guilmette Access Construction | \$399,076.72 |
| Allen Point Fishing Platform* | \$ 8,500.00 |
| Converse Bay ramp and ADA parking | \$ 68,377.77 |
| TOTAL | \$475,954.49 |

*This project was cost shared with Local Motion, who paid \$50,000 of the total \$58,500 to complete the project.

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Table 3. List of completed 2015 capital funded Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department ramp improvement projects.

| Access Area Name | Town | Accomplishments | Cost |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------------|
| Colchester Point | Colchester | Addition of a ADA accessible path and ramp to a new courtesy dock | \$49,175.00 |
| Evanoika (Float Bridge) | Castleton | Addition of a ADA accessible path and ramp to a new courtesy dock | \$27,660.00 |
| Holcomb Bay | Isle La Motte | Addition of a ADA accessible path and ramp to courtesy dock | \$18,590.00 |
| Kings Bay | North Hero | Purchase of a new dock | \$23,500.00 |
| Lake Iroquois | Williston | Gravel ramp extended and replaced with concrete ramp and improved storm water infrastructure by restoring the shoreline with native vegetation | \$24,558.72 |
| Lake Hortonia | Sudbury | Gravel ramp extended and replaced with concrete ramp, reconfigured parking to increase capacity, and improved storm water infrastructure | \$21,324.06 |
| Marshfield Reservoir | Cabot | Purchase of a new dock | \$31,700.00 |
| McIntosh Pond | Royalton | Ramp replaced and extended; improved storm water infrastructure | \$21,881.49 |
| Peacham Pond | Peacham | Gravel ramp extended and replaced with concrete ramp, reconfigured parking to increase capacity, and improved storm water infrastructure | \$25,621.74 |
| Stephenson's Point | North Hero | Purchase of a new dock | \$23,500.00 |
| TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURES | | | \$267,511.01 |

Note: In an effort to complete this report in a timely manner for the legislature, all projects and financial information reported in this document are from December 15, 2014 to December 15, 2015. This report covers 12 months of work.

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Figure 1. Panoramic view of the active construction of the John Guilmette Fishing Access Area parking lot. December 2014 looking north from US Rt 2 in Milton.



Facing east, looking at a port-a-dam used to dewater Lake Champlain in order to dredge the lake bottom and install the double land boat ramp.



Similar view as the above photo after the port-a-dam had been removed and the ramp installed along with the 70 ft ADA accessible dock and walkway.



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Figure 2. Newly created ADA parking and path at the Converse Bay Fishing Access Area, Charlotte. The parking was created where none previously existed and the path allows users to get down to the ramp and dock from designated parking. The ramp was also extended to allow for boats of all sizes to launch, even in low water. Note: the dock was installed in 2014 using capital funds.



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Figure 3. Before and after photos looking south, towards the Colchester causeway, at the of the Allen Point Fishing Access Area fishing platform, South Hero.

