



# Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Land Conservation and Management Annual Report – 2019

The Mission of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is to **Protect and Conserve** our **Fish, Wildlife, Plants** and their **Habitats** for the **People of Vermont**.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFWD) manages 99 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and numerous riverfront parcels totaling approximately 130,000<sup>1</sup> acres. VFWD also holds conservation easements on several thousand acres to protect critical wildlife habitats, state-significant natural communities, rare plants and animals and in many cases, public access for wildlife-based recreation. Management of our WMAs emphasizes the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats, as well as public access for hunting, fishing, trapping, birdwatching, hiking, and other wildlife-dependent activities. These areas offer an alternative to more intensely managed public lands, providing Vermonters with a remote and unique experience to enjoy Vermont's abundant wildlife and natural resources.

## Protect and Conserve...

The following activities were conducted to protect and conserve these valuable properties:

- **30** acres received invasive plant control measures
- **11** miles of boundary lines were maintained
- **17** beaver wetland devices were installed/maintained influencing **96** acres of wetland habitat
- **354** acres were treated to improve timber quality
- **801** acres of wetlands were managed to enhance wildlife habitat

## our Fish, Wildlife, Plants...

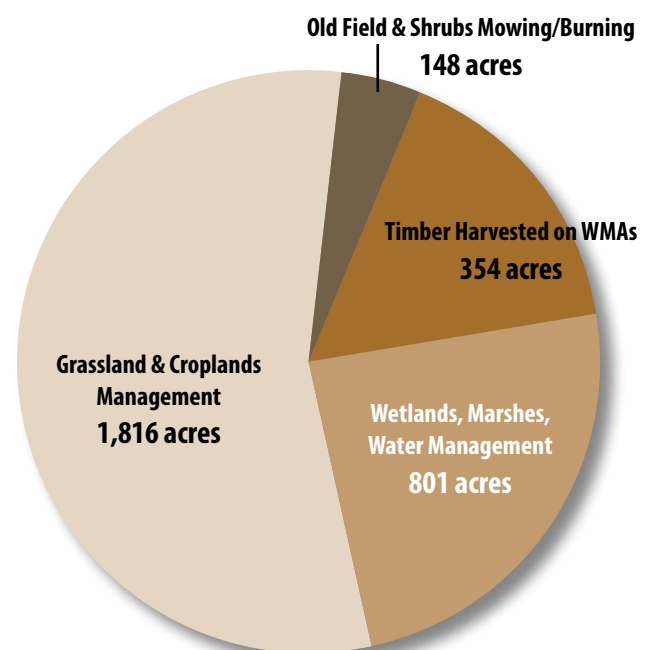
- **36** inventories of wildlife, fish, plants and natural communities were conducted on WMAs by VFWD staff.
- **1** mile of trout stream habitat was improved with installation of in-stream trees and logs (strategic wood addition)

## and their Habitats...

The following activities were conducted to enhance wildlife habitat on VFWD lands statewide:

- **46** dams were maintained to manage 801 wetland acres
- **30** acres of winter deer cover were thinned to accelerate growth
- **600** nesting boxes for ducks were maintained
- **2,675** trees were planted to restore river bank habitat
- **365** wild fruit and nut trees were planted
- **33** acres of wild orchard fruit and nut trees were maintained
- **1** osprey nest platform was installed

## 3,119 Acres of Habitat Managed



<sup>1</sup> More accurate mapping in recent years has caused this acreage to decrease from past estimates of 145,000 to 130,000.



## ...for the People of Vermont.

Maintaining facilities and infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and signs is essential to achieve the habitat management and public use goals of VFWD lands. The following activities were conducted to improve Vermonter's experience when visiting the properties:

### SIGNAGE

- **35** information kiosks were maintained
- **1** kiosk were installed

### FACILITIES

- **3** building were maintained
- **17** parking areas were maintained

### PLANNING

- **21** articles published and/or public events hosted
- **6** cultural resource assessments were conducted
- **1** Long Range Management Plan was completed

### ACCESS

- **3** miles of trails were maintained
- **7** gates were installed and maintained
- **33** miles of roads were maintained
- **2** WMAs hosted field study courses for educators, college and high school students
- **5** wildlife viewing tours were led by VFWD staff

## Other program activities benefiting all Vermonters include:

### LAND ACQUISITION

Public opinion surveys continue to highlight the importance of public land, and land specifically owned by VFWD to their outdoor recreation interests. VFWD closed on five transactions this past year ranging from a critical 0.1-acre inholding at Little Otter Creek WMA in Ferrisburgh to a 155.3-acre conservation easement at our Turner Hill WMA located in Athens and Grafton protecting critical bear mast stands. VFWD has more than twenty acquisitions in various stages of development with an emphasis on wetland acquisition and restoration in the Champlain Basin. This targeted focus is due to our new Environmental Protection Agency wetland acquisition and restoration grant, which will enable us to focus our work at targeted WMAs that can both enhance water quality and wildlife habitat.

### HABITAT STAMP

Your Vermont Habitat Stamp contributes directly to conserving and improving Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department lands. Everyone can donate! It's easy at our website:

[www.vtfishandwildlife.com/vthabitatstamp](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/vthabitatstamp)



### Wildlife Habitat Timber Harvests on Department Lands State Fiscal Years 2015-2019

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	5 YEAR TOTALS
Fee acres harvested	149	171	164	155	204	843
Board Feet (MBF)	274	571	225	304	817	2,191
Cords	1,109	2,304	1,589	718	994	6,714
Non-fee acres harvested	250	500	0	575	150	1,475
# Active Timber Harvests	3	4	4	8	7	N/A

### PROGRAM PARTNERS

Most of the projects described in this report are funded through the Federal Aid in Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Excise taxes paid by hunters and anglers on firearms, ammunition, archery and fishing equipment, coupled with state hunting and fishing license fees, have helped the department acquire land, and restore and manage fish and wildlife.

The Ruffed Grouse Society; Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy; National Wild Turkey Federation; VT Forests, Parks, and Recreation Department; Friends of the Winooski River; and the White River Partnership provided financial or volunteer assistance for habitat management on VFWD lands in 2019.

