



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Land Conservation and Management Annual Report – 2020

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**.

Vermont has led the way in many important conservation achievements and this year, 2020, marks the 100th anniversary of an important conservation milestone. In 1920, the State of Vermont's Department of Fish and Game (now known as the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department) acquired 1,000 acres of wetland habitat at the confluence of the Lamoille River and Lake Champlain in the Town of Milton. This area, known as Sandbar Wildlife Management Area and Refuge, was the first state-acquired property along the east coast of the United States that was established for fish and wildlife conservation. Today, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department (VFWD) has established 100 Wildlife Management Areas comprised of approximately 130,000 acres of some of Vermont's best fish and wildlife habitat.

In fact, by remarkable coincidence, the 100th Wildlife Management Area was established in 2020 in the Town of Shrewsbury

on the 100th Anniversary of these unique and wonderful places. Town Farm Wildlife Management Area is a 526-acre property, recognized as an integral part of a strategic and significant wildlife corridor for large-ranging species such as bear, moose, deer, and bobcat. The conservation of this parcel ensures abundant habitat and forest connectivity to adjacent state and federally conserved properties.

Management of WMAs emphasizes the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats, as well as public access for hunting, fishing, trapping, birdwatching, wildlife photography, and other wildlife-based activities. These areas offer unique opportunities to enjoy and appreciate fish, wildlife, and nature because they lack extensive networks of trails and other infrastructure and instead give people an opportunity to connect to the land through dispersed access.

Protect and Conserve...

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

- 79 acres received invasive plant control measures
- 8 miles of boundary lines were maintained
- 5 beaver wetland devices were installed/maintained influencing 800 acres of wetland habitat
- 189 acres were treated to improve timber quality
- 1,668 acres of wetlands were managed to enhance wildlife habitat
- 31 acres of wetland habitat were restored

our Fish, Wildlife, Plants...

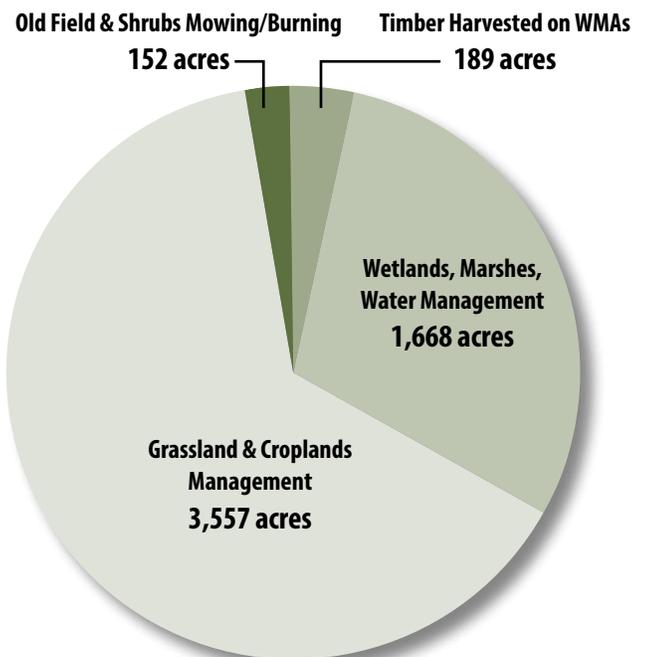
- 37 inventories of wildlife, fish, plants and natural communities were conducted on WMAs by VFWD staff.

and their Habitats...

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

- 22 dams were maintained to manage the associated wetland acres
- 536 nesting boxes for ducks were maintained
- 3 acres of riparian habitat were restored
- 125 trees were planted to restore riverbank habitat
- 105 acres of wild fruit and nut trees were maintained
- 1 osprey nest platform was installed

5,566 Acres of Habitat Managed





...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

- **62** information kiosks were maintained
- **1** new kiosk was installed

FACILITIES

- **3** buildings were maintained
- **36** parking areas were maintained

PLANNING

- **21** articles published and/or public events hosted
- **4** cultural resource assessments were conducted
- **3** Long-Range Management Plan were approved

ACCESS

- **1.1** miles of trails were maintained
- **13** gates were installed and maintained
- **39** miles of roads were maintained
- **5** wildlife viewing tours were led by VFWD staff
- **3** public celebrations were held that included wildlife viewing tours 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. The VFWD closed on nine transactions in 2020 ranging from a critical 40-acre addition at Lemon Fair WMA in Bridport to a 527-acre acquisition in Shrewsbury developed into a new WMA officially named Town Farm WMA. Many of the acquisitions were funded through the department's new program focused on wetland acquisition and restoration in the Champlain Basin. Funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, the goal is to enhance water quality in Lake Champlain. Strategic additions were made to Dead Creek WMA in Addison and Panton, Rock River WMA in Highgate, Intervale WMA in Colchester, Lemon Fair WMA in Bridport and East Creek WMA in Orwell. A total of 1,642.6 acres was conserved across all projects.

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



Wildlife Habitat Timber Harvests on Department Lands State Fiscal Years 2016-2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	5 YEAR TOTALS
Fee acres harvested	171	164	155	204	189	883
Board Feet (MBF)	571	225	304	817	483	2,400
Cords	2,304	1,589	718	994	712	6,317
Non-fee acres harvested	500	0	575	150	275	1,500
# Active Timber Harvests	4	4	8	7	6	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 since 1937.

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Wildlife Management Institute, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, The Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Audubon Vermont further supported habitat improvements on VFWD lands in 2020.

