



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Land Conservation and Management Annual Report – 2022

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**.

Lazy Lady Island, St. Albans Bay on Lake Champlain

During the two years of the Covid-19 pandemic public lands everywhere, including Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), witnessed an unprecedented surge of new users and an increase in traditional users re-engaging in wildlife-based outdoor activities. As 2022 transitioned into the post-pandemic era, user activity on WMAs by these outdoor participants who had discovered or re-connected with WMAs remained high.

As in the previous two years, 2022 also saw a substantial influx of federal and state funding to increase public access to outdoor activities. The federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and a state capital appropriation (H.315) resulted in more than \$1,080,000 available for large-scale infrastructure projects on WMAs in 2022. The funding was earmarked to implement substantial road upgrades at Bill Sladyk WMA, construct a wildlife viewing tower at Dead Creek WMA, improve access to Lemon Fair WMA, and implement a new WMA public use mapping system.

Protect and Conserve...

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

- 117 acres of invasive plants were managed to control their impact on wildlife habitat.
- 8 miles of boundary lines were maintained.
- 4 beaver baffle water control devices were installed to protect wetland habitats.
- 5 gates were installed or maintained.

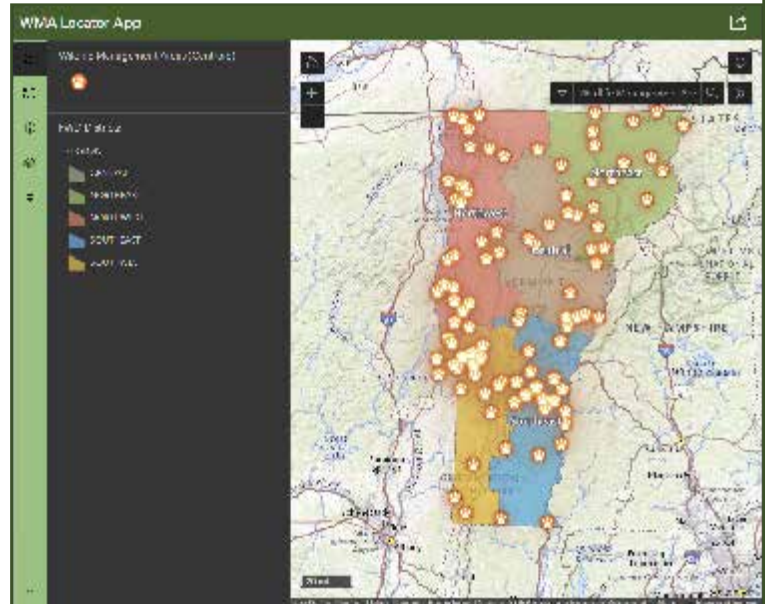
our Fish, Wildlife, Plants...

- 13 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:

- 31 dams were maintained to manage the associated wetland acres.
- 465 nesting boxes for ducks were maintained.
- 1,732 acres of wetlands were managed to enhance wildlife habitat.

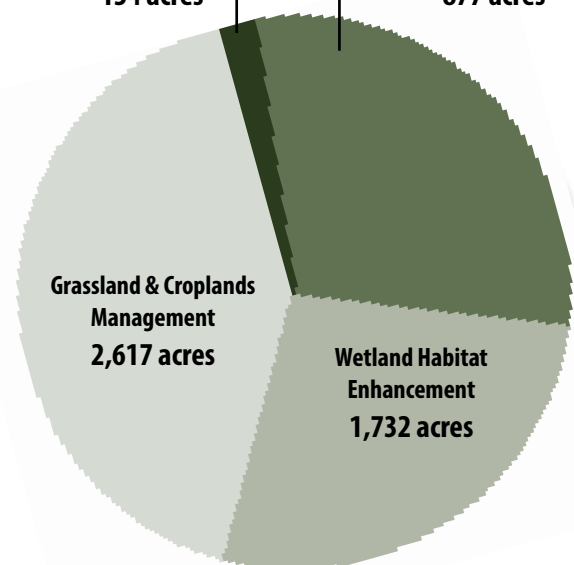


Wildlife Management Area maps have been updated.

This past year, VFWD hired a GIS expert to update all WMA maps and create web-based systems to make them more user friendly. WMA maps are accessible at: <https://tinyurl.com/WMA-Locator-App>

5,360 Acres of Habitat Managed

Old Field & Shrubs Mowing/Burning 134 acres
Timber Harvested on WMAs 877 acres





...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 the public's experience when visiting the properties:

SIGNAGE

- Improved **38** information kiosks.

FACILITIES

- Improved **4** buildings.
- Installed **3** new parking areas.
- Improved **42** existing parking areas.

PLANNING

- 6** articles published and/or public events hosted.
- 2** cultural resource assessments were conducted.

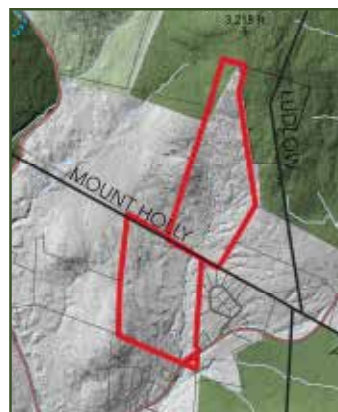
ACCESS

- 1** mile of trails were maintained.
- 25** miles of roads were maintained.
- 24** culverts and bridges were installed.
- 7** site inspections for land acquisition conducted.

LAND ACQUISITION

The department completed five land acquisition projects in 2022 resulting in the addition of 1,174 acres of unique fish and wildlife habitat to public ownership. The following projects were completed this past year:

- Adding 322 acres of diverse habitat along the Lemon Fair River in Addison, all of which will be restored to wetlands.
- Adding 243 acres from three properties that were acquired with the support of The Nature Conservancy using funds from the Vermont Duck Stamp program. These properties include restored wetlands along Otter Creek and provide habitat for otter, mink, muskrat, waterfowl and more.
- Acquiring Lazy Lady Island located in St. Albans Bay on Lake Champlain. The four-acre island supports habitat for nesting birds and public access for fishing, waterfowl hunting and enjoying Vermont's Great Lake.
- Establishing a new WMA in the towns of Mount Holly and Weston near Okemo State Forest with the acquisition of 440 acres with support from the Mount Holly Conservation Trust. This property supports important black bear habitat, moose habitat and many other wildlife that depend on large, unfragmented areas of forest habitat.
- Acquiring the 165-acre Farrow Farm in Morgan, Vermont that will be managed as a stream bank property to protect headwater streams feeding into Lake Seymour.



New WMA in Mount Holly and Weston

HABITAT STAMP

Your Vermont Habitat Stamp contributes directly to conserving and improving VFWD lands. In 2022, a successful fundraising campaign supported the expansion of Otter Creek WMA in Wallingford. The added land will greatly improve public access to Otter Creek and a diverse assemblage of wildlife habitats. Get your stamp today at www.vtfishandwildlife.com/vthabitatstamp.



Wildlife Habitat Timber Harvests on Department Lands State Fiscal Years 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	5 YEAR TOTALS
Fee acres harvested	155	204	189	412	877	1,837
Board Feet (MBF)	304	817	483	911	1,985	4,500
Cords	718	994	712	3,081	9,604	15,109
Non-fee acres harvested*	575	150	275	290	0	1,290
# Active Timber Harvests	8	7	6	2	6	N/A

*Non-fee acres refers to lands owned by the department where we do not own the timber rights.

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 2022.

