

Rock River Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Rock River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 296-acre parcel located in Highgate in northwestern Vermont. Primary access is from a small parking lot and boat put-in on the east side of Route 7 by the Rock River Bridge. Canoes can also be launched where St. Armand Road crosses the River. One may walk into the WMA from St. Armand Road. The land is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

History

Like nearby Swanton and Alburg, Highgate was a center of Abenaki activity. European settlers came from both the south and north. The settlers from the north were of French origin, and modern place names (such as St Armand Road) reflect this French Canadian influence. Like their Native American predecessors, European settlers grew crops in the rich soils of the Champlain Valley; unlike the Abenakis, they almost completely deforested it. Farming is still the most common land use in the area.

The first land parcel for the WMA was acquired in 1997. It was donated by the Fernand-Gagne family. The rest of the land was acquired completely with funds from the Vermont Duck Stamp Program.

Habitat Features

This WMA is a mix of emergent wetland and floodplain forest bisected by the Rock River. The Rock River is a slow-moving stream which arises in Canada and flows south to Lake Champlain. Soils are mostly heavy, poorly drained Champlain Valley clays. The natural

community lining the riverbanks is a silver maple-sensitive fern riverine forest, which is adapted to wet conditions. There is also some cattail marsh, water willow shrub swamp, buttonbush shrub swamp and sedge meadows. Some rare plants that occur in the WMA are small bedstraw, cursed crowfoot, yellow water-crowfoot and Gray's sedge.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals In the swamp one may find white-tailed deer, red fox, raccoon and gray squirrel. The riverine wetlands support beaver, otter and mink.

Birds The floodplain forest along the river provides habitat for cavity-nesting ducks like wood ducks, common goldeneyes and hooded mergansers. Black ducks, mallards, and blue-winged teals also breed here. Belted kingfishers and eastern kingbirds forage along the river. Forest-dwelling songbirds, raptors and woodpeckers live in the silver maple swamp. There are woodcock in the swamps and uplands.

Reptiles and Amphibians One might find newts, spotted, blue-spotted and red-backed salamanders, and green, wood, gray tree, bull, pickerel and northern leopard frogs. Turtles include snapping, painted, wood and northern map turtles. Besides the more common garter and northern water snakes, one may possibly find a rare and beautiful ring-necked snake.

Fish Northern pike, yellow perch, bullhead and crappie may be caught in Rock River. The sedge meadows along the river provide spawning grounds for these and other warmwater fish.

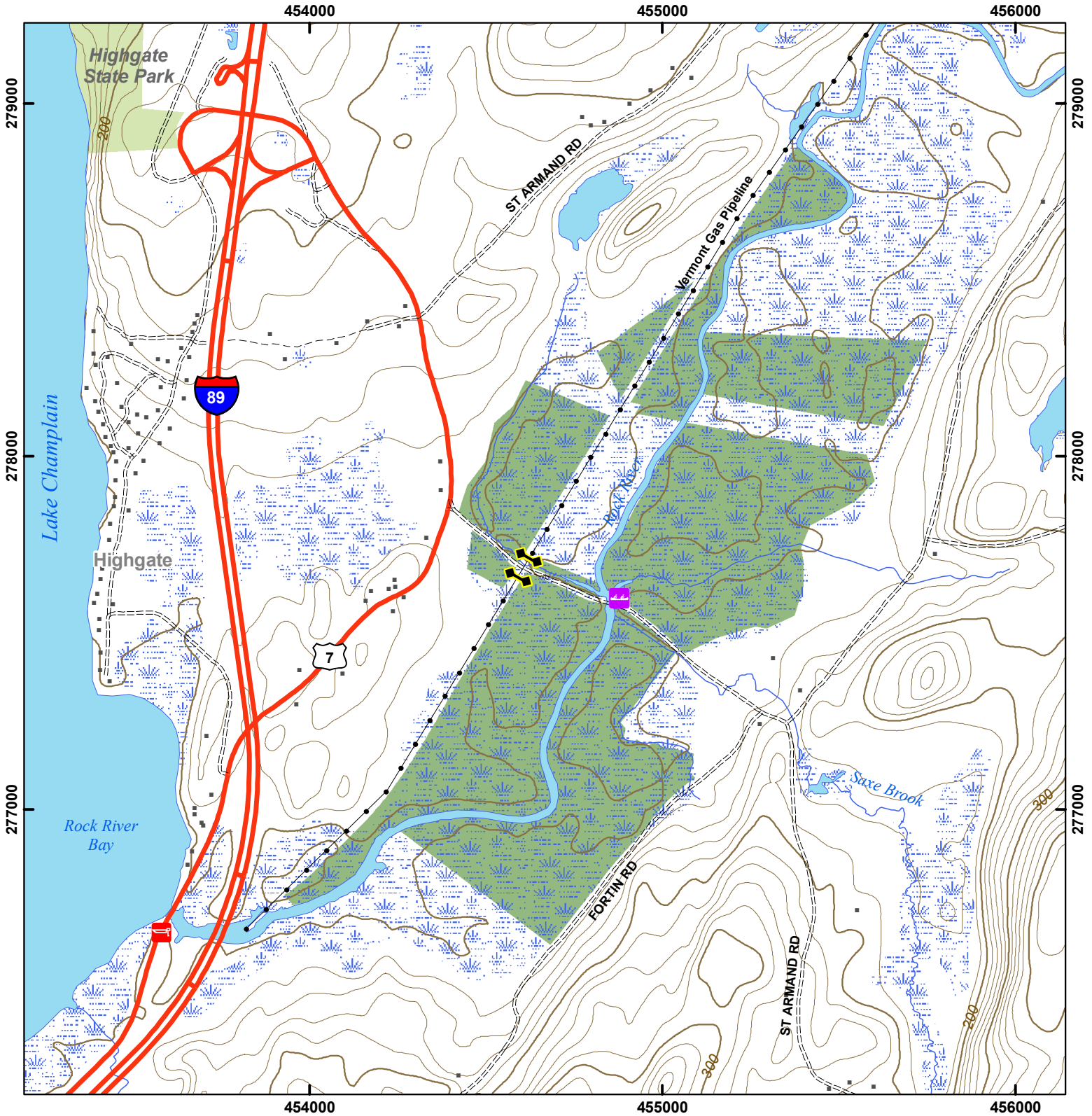


A quiet stretch of the Rock River. Bill Crenshaw, VFWD photo.

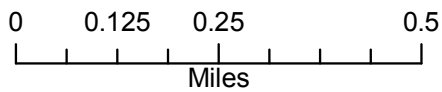
Rock River WMA is open to regulated hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing.



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Rock River Wildlife Management Area



Rock River WMA: 296 acres



- Wildlife Management Area
- Other Public Land
- Private w/ Public Access
- Wildlife Viewing Areas
- Car-top Access
- Parking
- Boat Ramp
- Gate
- Designated Camp Site During Big Game Seasons Only

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