

Whitney/Hospital Creek Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Whitney/Hospital Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located in west central Vermont in the town of Addison, adjacent to Lake Champlain. The Area's 157 acres are owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The State owns conservation easements on an additional 439 acres. Access by foot is via a gated road on the north side of the causeway crossing Whitney Creek on Route 125 in Addison. There is a small parking area on the west side of Route 125, just north of the causeway. One can access the Hospital Creek portion from privately-owned campgrounds along Route 125, with permission.

This WMA also includes the McCuen Slang Fishing Access Area, which is located just south of the causeway on Route 125. It is a 53-acre parcel, with a dam, a small wetland and a boat ramp.

History

The area around Whitney and Hospital Creeks was occupied by European settlers very early on. The French had a fort at nearby Chimney Point. There was a "sick bay" at the mouth of Hospital Creek that the British maintained for the Crown Point Fort during the French and Indian Wars, hence its name. Later the surrounding area was cleared for agriculture, which is still important today. There are also many summer camps and holiday resorts along the lake.

The McCuen Slang property was bought in 1955 from Mildred Hartke. Pittman-Robertson funds were used, which are generated from the sale of firearms and ammunition. Development of the relatively new Whitney/Hospital Creek WMA was initiated in 1992. The Nature Conservancy assisted with the first purchase. A variety of funding sources have been used. Monies have come from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Aid for Fisheries, Vermont Duck Stamp funds, The Nature Conservancy, and personal contributions. The Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board were involved in the conservation of much of the surrounding farmland.

Habitat Features

Both Whitney and Hospital Creeks are short lowland streams which empty into Lake Champlain and have extensive lake level wetlands. The WMA is a mix of emergent and scrub/shrub wetlands, old fields, an apple orchard and forest. Farms and scattered woodlots surround it. The woods are composed mostly of white ash, red maple, shagbark hickory, red oak and hophornbeam. Buttonbush scrub-shrub swamp creates dense thickets that provide excellent cover for wildlife. The marshes are rich in aquatic plants. Cattail and wild rice are the dominant graminoids. River bulrush, three-way sedge and umbrella-sedges are present, as well as pickerelweed, flowering rush, yellow pond lilies, water-plantain, water-smartweed, water-dock, bulrushes, burr-reeds and duckweed.

There are several different natural communities in the WMA, including cattail marsh, deep emergent marsh, buttonbush swamp, deep bulrush marsh and oak-hickory clayplain forest.

The McCuen Slang Fishing Access is located in a shallow bay that is protected to the south by a small point of land. Behind this upland area is a small wetland consisting mostly of cattail marsh, which was created by an impoundment. The upland is an old field that is growing up in dogwood, elm, white ash, hickory and red oak.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Upland mammals include white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, red fox, coyote, raccoon and gray squirrel. Beaver, muskrat, otter and mink live in the wetlands.

Birds The two creeks provide excellent cover for waterfowl reproduction. Breeding ducks include mallard, black and wood ducks, hooded and common mergansers, and blue-winged teal. Other water birds frequent the wetlands such as great blue herons, American bitterns, soras, American coots and kingfishers. Tree swallows and eastern kingbirds may skim the water's surface for insects. Various songbirds inhabit the nearby woods. One may hear or see Baltimore orioles, northern cardinals, pileated woodpeckers and screech owls. Upland game birds are ruffed grouse, American woodcock and wild turkey.

Reptiles and Amphibians Besides newts, there may be northern two-lined and red-backed salamanders. There are several frog species, including wood, gray tree, pickerel, bull, northern leopard and green frogs. One might see snapping, painted or northern map turtles, as well as stinkpots. Snake species that may be encountered are northern water, milk, brown and garter snakes.

Fish Brown bullhead, yellow and white perch, black crappie, largemouth bass, longnose gar, northern pike, channel catfish and carp are all likely to be found in the waters of Whitney and Hospital Creeks and in Lake Champlain.

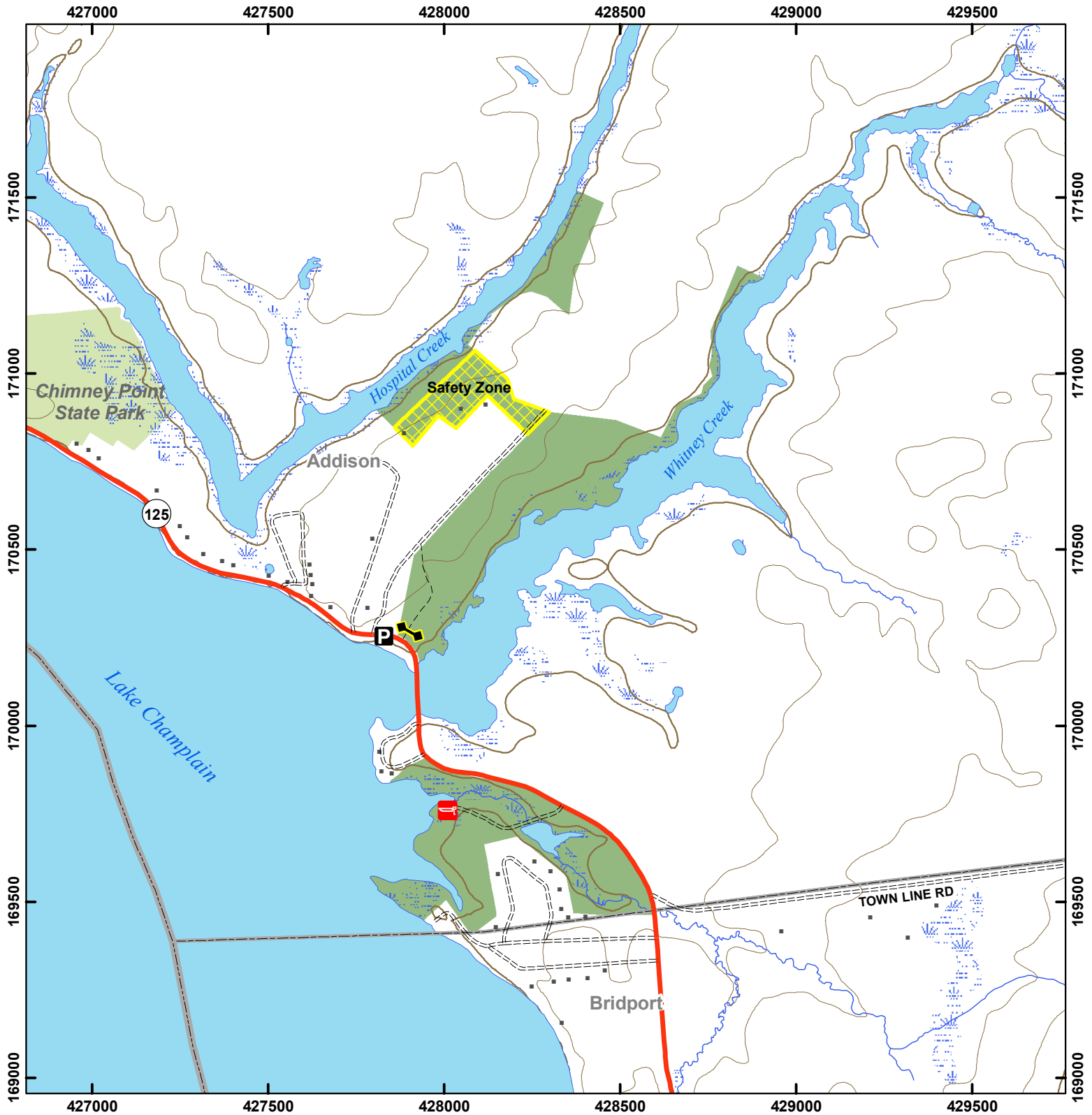


The shallow waters of Whitney and Hospital Creeks are attractive to migrating green-winged teal. USFWS photo.

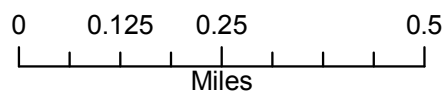


Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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Whitney/Hospital Creek WMA: 157 acres



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