Gale Meadows Wildlife Management Area

Last edited: 9/30/22

General Description

Gale Meadows Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is an approximately 868-acre parcel located in the towns of Londonderry and Winhall. It is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. It includes a 195-acre man-made pond that averages 8 feet deep and has a maximum depth of about 20 feet. The principal tributary to the pond is Mill Brook. Sited on a peninsula along the western shoreline is an 1800's vintage farmhouse and barn. The property and pond can be accessed by the developed boat launch located at the easternmost point of the pond off Haven Hill Road in Londonderry. Another option is to park on the shoulder of the Winhall Hollow Road, which bisects the northwesterly portion of the property.

History

Several miles of stonewalls and the 200-year-old farmhouse and barn are evidence that the lands of Gale Meadows WMA were used for agricultural purposes for several generations. The land began to revert back to forest in the late 1800's when farming activities ceased.

Gale Meadows takes its name from Levi and Horace Gale, who acquired the property in 1827. They divided the land between themselves by means of an unwritten agreement. The farm remained in the Gale family through the late 1920's. Between the late 1920's and 1945, the farm had several owners. In 1945, Henry and Alice Green purchased the buildings and some acreage from a Boston physician, who was using the house as a hunting camp. The Greens affectionately named the property Tralee, and over a 20-year period acquired adjacent lands totaling nearly 485 acres. The Greens were instrumental in the creation of the pond in 1964.

In 1993, the Greens placed conservation easements on 194 acres of their land and deeded an additional 181 acres to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Land around the perimeter of the pond was secured as a natural and undisturbed riparian zone with the help of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Vermont Land Trust. The Department inherited the remainder of the Greens' landholdings in 1996. The Greens' legacy left 669 conserved acres, the third largest water body in southern Vermont, and 95% of the shoreline in public ownership.

In 2016, another 200-acre property was acquired, to the southeast. The Skinner Ridge (Dritz) property has significant natural resources significant natural resources on it including 119 acres of deer wintering habitat.

Habitat Features

Though located in the Southern Green Mountains region of Vermont, the terrain on Gale Meadows WMA is gently rolling. The highest elevation within the WMA is 1,465 feet and the lowest is 1,335 feet, the **high-water** mark of the pond. It contains forested wetlands, several small meadows, and forest cover of mostly softwoods such as white pine, red spruce, balsam fir and hemlock.

The pond and surrounding lands are used by a variety of wildlife. Rare species found within Gale Meadows WMA include Eastern pearlshell mussel, low water milfoil, and there has been one sighting of a black-backed woodpecker. Significant natural communities within Gale Meadows WMA include spruce-fir tamarack swamp, dwarf shrub bog, vernal pools and seeps.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Upland game mammals inhabiting the forestland include black bear, white-tailed deer, moose, coyote, snowshoe hare and fisher. Otter, beaver, mink and muskrat make use of the pond and associated wetlands. There are also many smaller non-game mammals dwelling in the varied habitats of the WMA.

Birds The pond is frequented by ducks and geese during migrations. Wood ducks, mallards, common and hooded mergansers nest and rear young there annually. Several pairs of great blue herons have nested in recent years, and common loons are sighted on a regular basis. Two shallow areas within the impoundment have standing dead trees important to cavity-nesting birds and great blue herons. The adjacent forested lands and riparian areas are habitat for over 100 year-round and migratory bird species. Forest hawk species that may be observed include Cooper's hawk and northern goshawk. Ruffed grouse and turkey occur and may be hunted in season.

Reptiles and Amphibians A great variety of amphibians exist on the WMA including red spotted newt, spotted, northern red-backed, spring and northern two-lined salamanders, spring peeper, American toad, gray treefrog, and wood, northern leopard, pickerel and green frogs. Reptiles that may be seen are painted and snapping turtles, and red-bellied and garter snakes.

Fish Gale Meadows Pond is a warmwater fishery which provides habitat for largemouth bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed, rock bass, chain pickerel, yellow perch, and brown bullhead. Upstream of the impoundment, Mill Brook supports a wild brook trout population. As a tributary of the Winhall River, the lower reaches of Mill Brook are annually stocked with Atlantic salmon fry as part of the Connecticut River Restoration Program. Smaller fish species include blacknose dace, slimy sculpin and creek chub.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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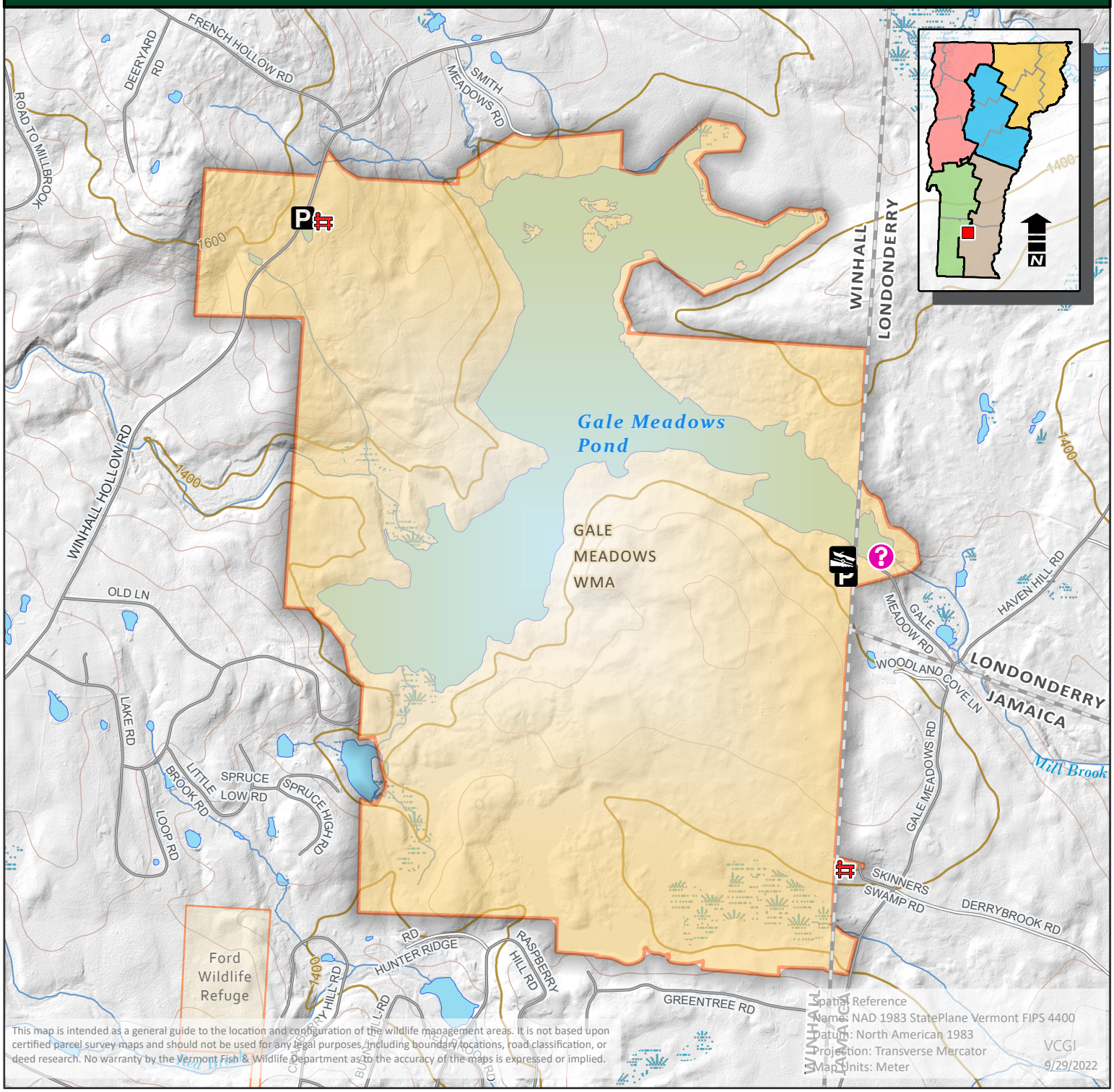

Gale Meadows WMA

Map Number: 63

- Parking
- Boat Ramp
- Cartop Access
- Park Office
- Shooting Range
- Wildlife Viewing Area
- Campground
- Vista
- Fishing Access
- Visitor Information
- Gate
- Rail Lines
- Trails
- Town Boundary
- Wildlife Management Area
- WMA Hunting Rights Only
- Refuge (no public access)
- Special hunting/trapping restrictions
- Streambank Management Area
- Controlled Hunting Area
- Federal Land
- State Land
- Town Land