Knapp Brook Wildlife Management Area

Last edited: 9/30/22

General Description

Knapp Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 1,249-acre parcel of land located in the towns of Reading and Cavendish. It is owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Included in this acreage is a 121-acre parcel on which the State only owns the hunting rights and an additional 231 acres on which the previous owners retained the timber rights. Knapp Brook WMA is part of the larger Cavendish Management Unit, which also includes Lord State Forest and Proctor-Piper State Forest. The WMA can be accessed by the parking lots provided at each of the dam sites (off Knapp Pond Road) or from the Moriglioni Road.

History

Early settlers of this area found the land to be of poor quality for agricultural use. However, there are areas of old pastureland that have now reverted to forest. Clues of former land use abound, such as stone foundations and the remnants of an old dam and mill located upstream of Knapp Pond #2. Even though the names of previous owners are unknown, the scattered stonewalls and old landscaping plants found throughout the parcel give evidence of these 19th century inhabitants.

One of the man-made Knapp Ponds in the fall.
Forrest Hammond photo

Beginning in 1955, Knapp Brook was purchased from a variety of landowners including George Pratt, the Town of Reading, Fred Hunt, the Town of Cavendish, and Clarence Barlow. The original WMA consisted of 510 acres purchased in fee simple. The previous owners reserved timber rights on 231 acres, and hunting rights only were acquired on 400 acres owned by the Evens family. In 1998, through a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, along with additional funding from the Freeman Foundation, the Vermont Land Trust purchased 500 acres from Lucille Evens. This acreage included a portion of that land on which the Department formerly only owned hunting rights. The Vermont Land Trust later conveyed those 500 acres to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, thereby bringing total State land ownership up to 1,249 acres.

Habitat Features

Elevations range from approximately 1300 feet around Knapp Ponds #1 and #2, to 1,746 feet on the peaks along the western boundary. Bowen Hill, with an elevation of 1,697 feet, is located in the northeast corner of the WMA.

Knapp Brook WMA contains a unique variety of wildlife habitats including vernal pools, seeps, beaver flowages, a large wetland area and two ponds created by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department in the late 1950's. (Knapp Pond #1 has a universally accessible fishing facility.) Areas of mixed softwoods – hemlock, white pine and spruce – provide cover for deer in the winter. The presence of oak, hickory, black cherry and beech (mast producing trees) benefits species such as bear, turkey and deer. Old apple trees have been released to further improve the habitat. Young softwood stands with small openings scattered throughout are optimal habitat for snowshoe hare. The western edge of the WMA borders a large contiguous area of seasonal bear habitat.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals White-tailed deer, black bear, moose, beaver, snowshoe hare, red and gray squirrels, beaver, mink and otter are some of the mammals that may be encountered in the WMA.

Birds Turkey, ruffed grouse and woodcock occur and may be hunted in season. Non-game species include black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, woodpecker species, and a variety of warblers.

Reptiles and Amphibians Chorus frogs may be heard in the spring. These include wood frogs, gray tree frogs and spring peepers. American toad, yellow-spotted salamander, red eft and garter snake may be found in the woodlands. Painted turtles live in the waters of the WMA.

Fish The ponds are stocked with rainbow and brook trout, and Knapp Brook contains wild brook trout.

Most of Knapp Brook WMA is open to regulated hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing. On 102 acres, only hunting is allowed. Please refer to the map and respect landowner rights.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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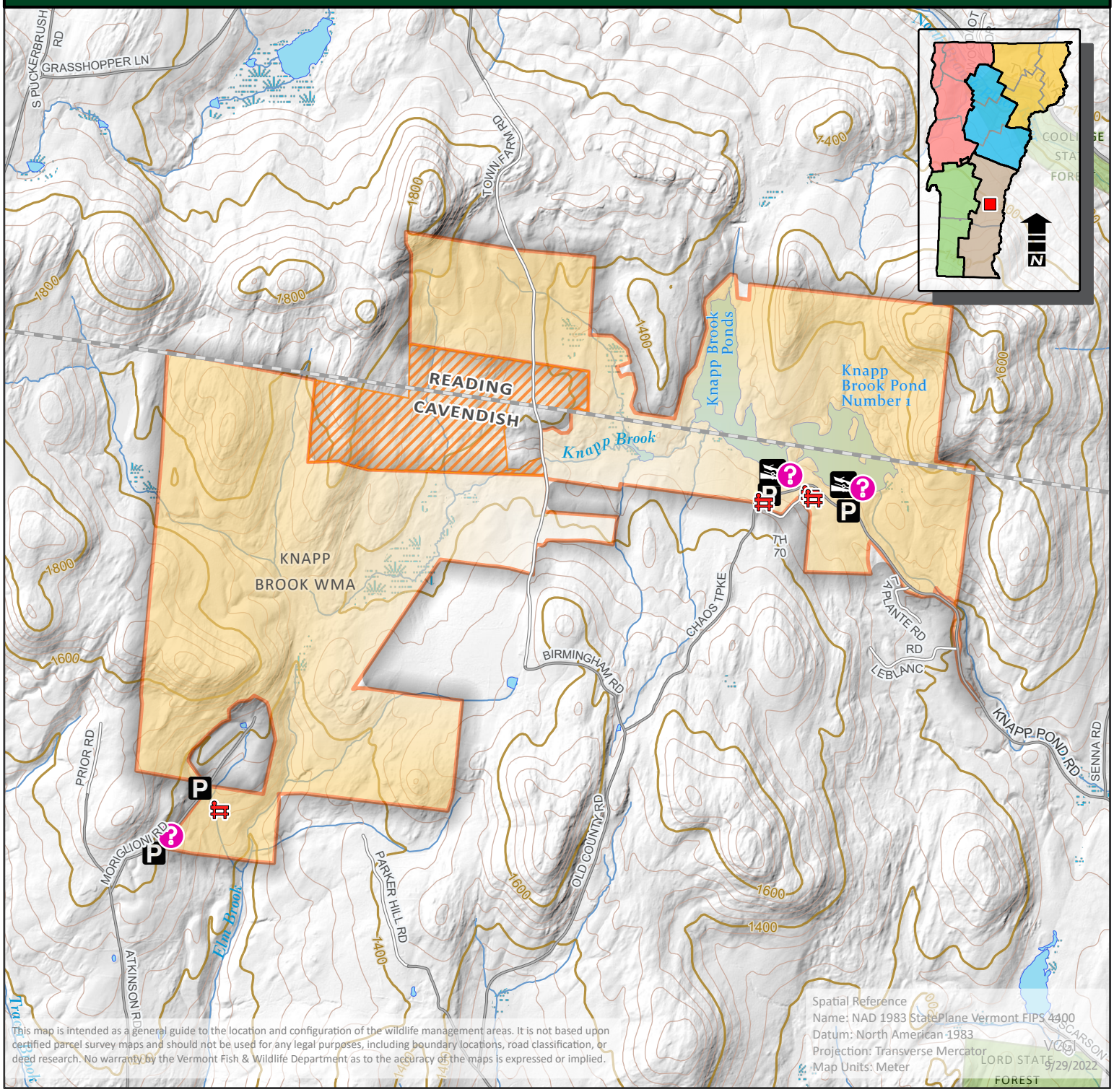

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Knapp Brook WMA

Map Number: 65

- 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