

# Pomainville Wildlife Management Area

Last edited: 9/30/22



## General Description

The Pomainville Wildlife Management Area (WMA) includes 572 acres of land along the banks of Otter Creek in Pittsford. The parcel is owned by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department and managed cooperatively with US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS). The WMA can be accessed by two parking lots located just north of the village of Pittsford, along Route 7, or off West Creek Rd. From the parking lot, access to the WMA is limited to foot travel via old farm roads.

## History

Prior to European settlement, Vermont's landscape was comprised primarily of extensive forests interspersed with virgin wetlands. As Europeans colonized the Champlain Valley of what is now Vermont, they found very fertile soils and relatively flat lands, ideal for agriculture. The forests were cleared, wetlands were drained, and farming became a way of life.

The Pomainville Farm located in the southern end of the Champlain Valley along the floodplain of Otter Creek has a rich but challenging history of farming. Historically, every spring and occasionally during the fall, Otter Creek overflows its banks, submerging much of the productive agriculture fields under several feet of water. As the water retreats in early summer, hay fields are left muddy and inaccessible for heavy farm equipment. The standing hay is covered with a thick layer of silt, which impacts hay quality. Despite these challenges, the Pomainville family battled the floodwaters and successfully farmed this parcel for three generations.

In 2003, the USDA/NRCS and Mr. Pomainville signed a Wetland Reserve Agreement, which placed 356 acres of his farm under a perpetual easement. Under this agreement, a jointly prepared management plan will create a forested buffer along Otter Creek, expand existing woodlands, maintain grasslands for nesting birds, and restore 46 acres of formerly drained wetlands through a series of ditch plugs. This agreement represents the largest wetland reserve project ever completed in Vermont. Ducks Unlimited Inc. (DU) acquired this land plus an additional four acres along Route 7 for parking in 2004. Vermont Fish & Wildlife acquired the total 360 acres from DU in 2005, funded by the VT Duck Stamp Fund and Ducks Unlimited. More recently, in 2014, an additional 212 acres were added to the WMA, expanding the existing WMA on both the east and west sides.

## Habitat Features

The most prominent habitat feature is Otter Creek, whose shoreline winds its way along 8,000 feet of the western border of the WMA. Numerous wetlands, ranging from alder swamps to standing emergent vegetation to open water, can be found near the Creek and in low-lying areas.

The northern portion of the WMA has extensive grasslands, optimal for a variety of grassland nesting birds. Forested habitat prevails at the southern end of the WMA. Here, a small white pine and white cedar stand provides critical habitat for wintering deer. A small but vibrant wild apple orchard grows along the southern property line. There are brushy old fields scattered throughout the parcel, creating a diverse transition zone between the forests and the open grasslands.

Years of active farming on this land resulted in the loss of many of the pre-settlement habitat features such as riparian forests and wetlands, which had been cut and drained. Restoring the wetland habitat of this WMA will involve filling in drainage ditches, installing water control structures, and planting native vegetation along the banks of Otter Creek. The fields will be mowed to prevent them from reverting to weeds and woody vegetation.

## Common Fish and Wildlife

**Mammals** Open meadows, old fields, apple orchards and mature forest provide excellent deer habitat. Raccoons, muskrats, beavers and mink are likely to be found foraging along Otter Creek and its associated wetlands. Little brown and big brown bats will find good foraging over the wetlands, and the federally endangered Indiana bat may be present as well.

**Birds** The array of wetlands, grasslands, scrub-shrub and forest habitats provide ideal habitat for a diversity of bird species. The wetlands provide nesting and stopover habitat for many waterfowl species. In early summer, you can expect to find nesting Canada geese, mallards, black ducks and wood ducks. During the spring and fall migrations large numbers of geese and ducks can be spotted using the wetlands. Look to the marshes for wading birds, such as the American bittern and great blue heron. Extensive grasslands provide crucial nesting habitat for bobolinks, eastern meadowlarks and savannah sparrows. The diverse habitat on provides good nesting and foraging habitat for wild turkeys.

**Reptiles and Amphibians** The extensive complex of wetlands, combined with the upland habitats provides both the aquatic and terrestrial habitats that many amphibians and reptiles require. You are likely to find eastern newts, American toads, gray tree frogs, spring peepers, green frogs and northern leopard frogs on this WMA. Wetland restoration and upland vegetation management efforts will improve the habitat for blue-spotted salamanders, wood frogs, spotted salamanders and eastern red-backed salamanders. Several different reptile species are likely to be found here, including painted turtles, snapping turtles, garter snakes, milk snakes, northern water snakes and ribbon snakes.

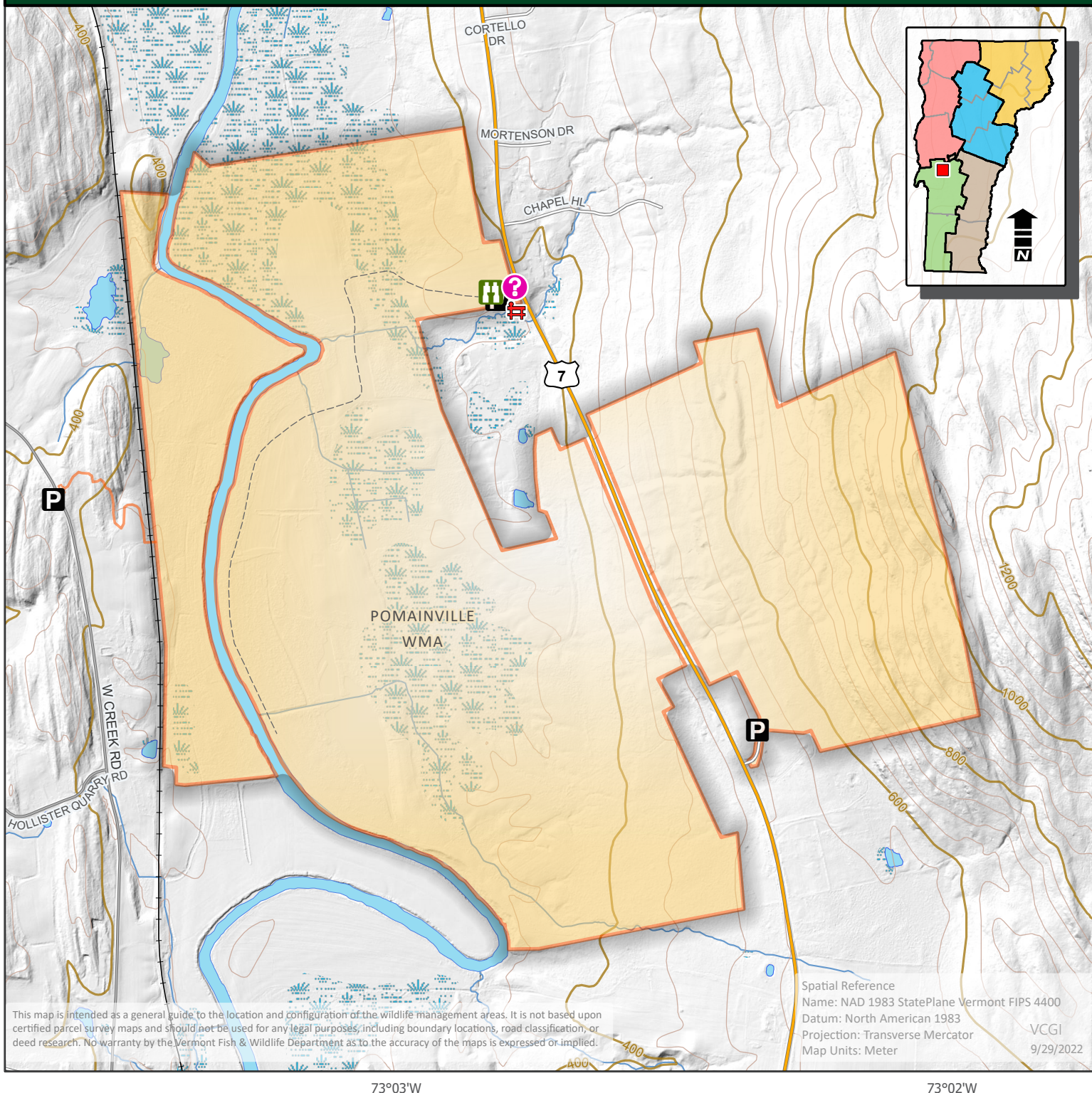
**Fish** Pomainville WMA offers fishing for warm water species such as smallmouth bass, yellow perch, northern pike and brown bullhead and seasonal fishing opportunities for brown trout.

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



# Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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### Pomainville WMA

Map Number: 88

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