Runaway Pond Wildlife Management Area

Last edited: 9/30/22

General Description

The 75-acre Runaway Pond Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is owned and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The land lies in Orleans County in the town of Glover. Part of the WMA borders Vermont Highway 16, across from the "Runaway Pond Park" where parking is allowed by the Vermont Transportation Agency.

History

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department purchased the property in 1966 as part of a program to conserve streambank habitat and angler access. The land is located at the extreme headwaters of the Barton River. Mostly upland and wetland with no fishable stream, it was later reclassified as a WMA. The name "Runaway Pond" comes from a notable historic event in 1810.

A work party of 60 men and boys from Glover and surrounding towns convened at the northern end of Long Pond for a "community project". Drought had left the only grist mill in Glover without enough power to grind grain, and plans were made to dig a channel to allow water from Long Pond to flow north, thereby augmenting the flow of the Barton River. Unknown to the work party, the entire northern shore of Long Pond was composed of very fine, silty sand, covered by a dense layer of soil nearly impervious to water called "hardpan". When the preparatory trench was dug, and the last few feet of sand and hardpan were removed, the trickle of water that began to flow northward disappeared into the sand, turning it to quicksand. Large plates of hardpan collapsed, and the water pressure of the 1-mile long lake blew out the entire sandy plug of the north shore. Within 5 hours, over a trillion gallons of water had rushed 20 miles to Lake Memphremagog, gouging out a 60-foot-deep channel and destroying every mill, house, barn, and cropland in its path.

Habitat Features

The WMA is comprised of 2 parcels, separated by 100 feet of private land at their closest point. The 13-acre "Ambler" parcel lies in the bottom of the former Long Pond. Its saturated soils support extensive stands of cattails with a few scattered trees growing among the wet sedge meadows. The Barton River here is only a 1 to 2-foot wide shallow channel through the wetlands, periodically dammed by beaver. The western edge of this parcel slopes moderately upward under a dense canopy of cedar, hemlock, spruce, and fir trees. Many large fern-covered granite boulders are found here, left by the glaciers and/or the tumultuous collapse of the pond shore in 1810.

The 62-acre "Souliere eastern parcel" begins 100 feet further to the west. Its eastern boundary follows a 6-foot wide flat shelf marking the highwater line of the former Long Pond. The forest changes abruptly to a rich northern hardwood forest on moderate to steep slopes with occasional granite outcrops, extending up to a gently rounded hilltop at an elevation of 1,787 feet. Approximately 70% of the trees are sugar maples, with 15% white ash and 5% beech, basswood and yellow birch. Unharvested for nearly a century, many trees are 24" or greater in diameter. In 1986 a severe "downdraft" wind during a thunderstorm toppled many big trees on the ridgetop and tore large branches off many others.

The American bittern stalks prey in wetlands.
Pete Emerson, VTFWD photo.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Beavers periodically build their dams and lodges along the main brook just downstream of the WMA, and sometime maintain smaller dams on the state land. The beaver's handiwork creates productive wetland habitats for many other wildlife species. White-tailed deer feed on the lush jewelweed and nettles during the summer months. Snowshoe hare inhabit the band of softwood trees that border the old pond bottom, where tracks of hare predators such as bobcat, fisher, and coyote can often be seen. Moose may be seen at dusk and dawn in a roadside 'salt-lick" across the road from the parking area. Moose crave salt, especially in the springtime, and will drink from the shallow pool of salty water created by road salt run-off.

Birds Several species of sparrows and warblers that prefer wetland habitats can be found in the old pond bottom. Larger birds such as bitterns and herons can be found hunting frogs and minnows in the small stream. Thrushes, vireos and many species of warblers can be found in the northern hardwood forest during the summer breeding season. Woodpeckers and nuthatches are present year-round.

Reptiles and Amphibians The combination of upland forest and wetland likely provides habitats for wood frog, gray treefrog, spring peeper, American toad, eastern newt, spotted salamander, and garter snake.

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

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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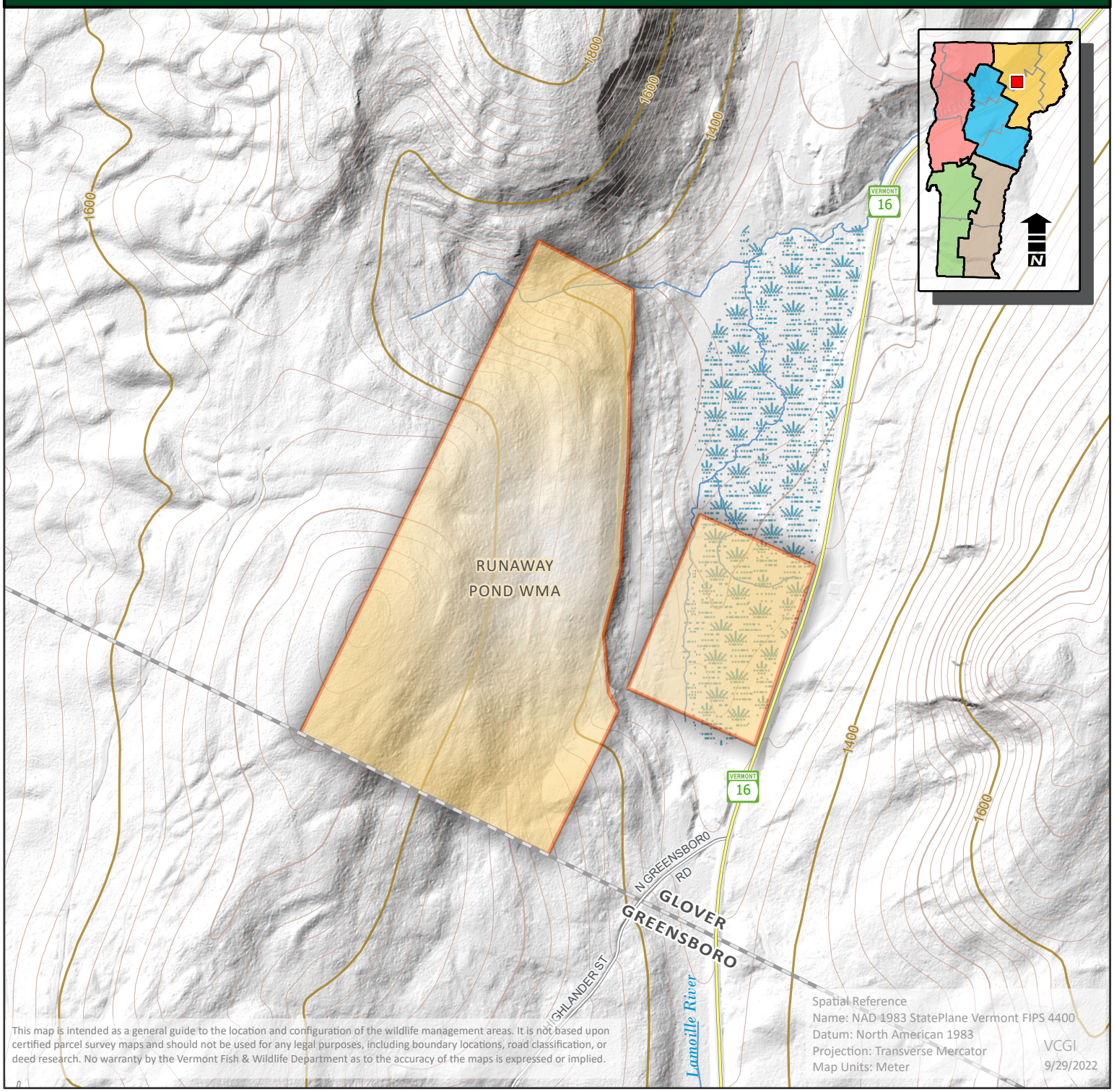

72°13'W

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 Miles

Runaway Pond WMA **Map Number: 24**

- 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