

Turner Hill Wildlife Management Area

Last edited: 9/30/22



General Description

Turner Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located in southeastern Vermont, in the towns of Athens and Grafton. The state of Vermont owns 1,091 acres on the Athens Dome, a geologic feature resulting in a high-elevation plateau. Although it has relatively flat topography, the WMA is located atop steep hills which make access difficult from all sides. There are two access points. One is at the end of Turner Hill Road on the northern end of the WMA. The road climbs steeply and is not plowed in the winter. The other year-round access is on the eastern side of the WMA at the end of Walker Road.



VT FWD Photo

History

The first parcel was acquired in 2011 from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) after the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VTFWD) and TNC collaborated on a competitive grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to protect wetland habitat for the federally-endangered Northeastern bulrush. The grant enabled VTFWD to acquire three parcels between 2011 and 2013 totaling 595 acres. The funding was leveraged by a donation of land from Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO). In 2015 VTFWD received an additional USFWS Endangered Species Recovery Land Acquisition Grant, and added 459 acres to protect additional Northeastern bulrush habitat and provide better access to the WMA. Additional funding was provided by Vermont State Duck Stamp funds for all of the acquisitions.

While working on the conservation of the properties, the VTFWD identified highly significant cultural resources related to the heritage of African Americans in Vermont. Alexander and Sally Turner were slaves who escaped captivity in Virginia, moved to Vermont and established the Turner Farmstead following the end of the Civil War. One of their daughters, Daisy Turner (1883-1988), was a well-known orator and folk teller whose stories and songs of African American heritage were extensively documented by the Vermont Folklife Center. Cultural resources related to the Turner homestead include one building known as Birchdale Camp; archeological remains of the original Turner house; and associated outbuildings; wells, and other cultural features and the surrounding landscape related to the Turner family's use of the property.

Habitat Features

Turner Hill WMA is comprised of numerous beaver-influenced wetlands, the habitat for Northeastern bulrush. Northeastern bulrush populations seldom persist in individual wetlands for more than a few years. Eventually the bulrush is outcompeted by other wetland plants and declines or disappears altogether. When beavers flood a wetland, it eventually draws down again after the beavers leave due to lack of food, and the bulrush reappears and thrives for several years before the cycle begins anew.

In extensive wetland complexes like the one on Turner Hill WMA, various sub-populations of Northeastern bulrush occur at different

stages of the cycle, ensuring their long-term persistence at the site. Numerous vernal pools contribute to the wetland diversity, nested in a diverse forest with mast producing trees such as American beech, black cherry, and red oak.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Common mammals on the WMA include black bear and moose. Furbearers include otter, beaver, muskrat, coyote, red and gray fox.

Birds Wood ducks, Canada geese, hooded mergansers and mallards find excellent habitat here, along with other wetland species such as great blue heron and bitterns. Game birds include ruffed grouse, wild turkey and American woodcock. A great diversity of songbirds such as winter wren and black throated green warbler are also found on the WMA.

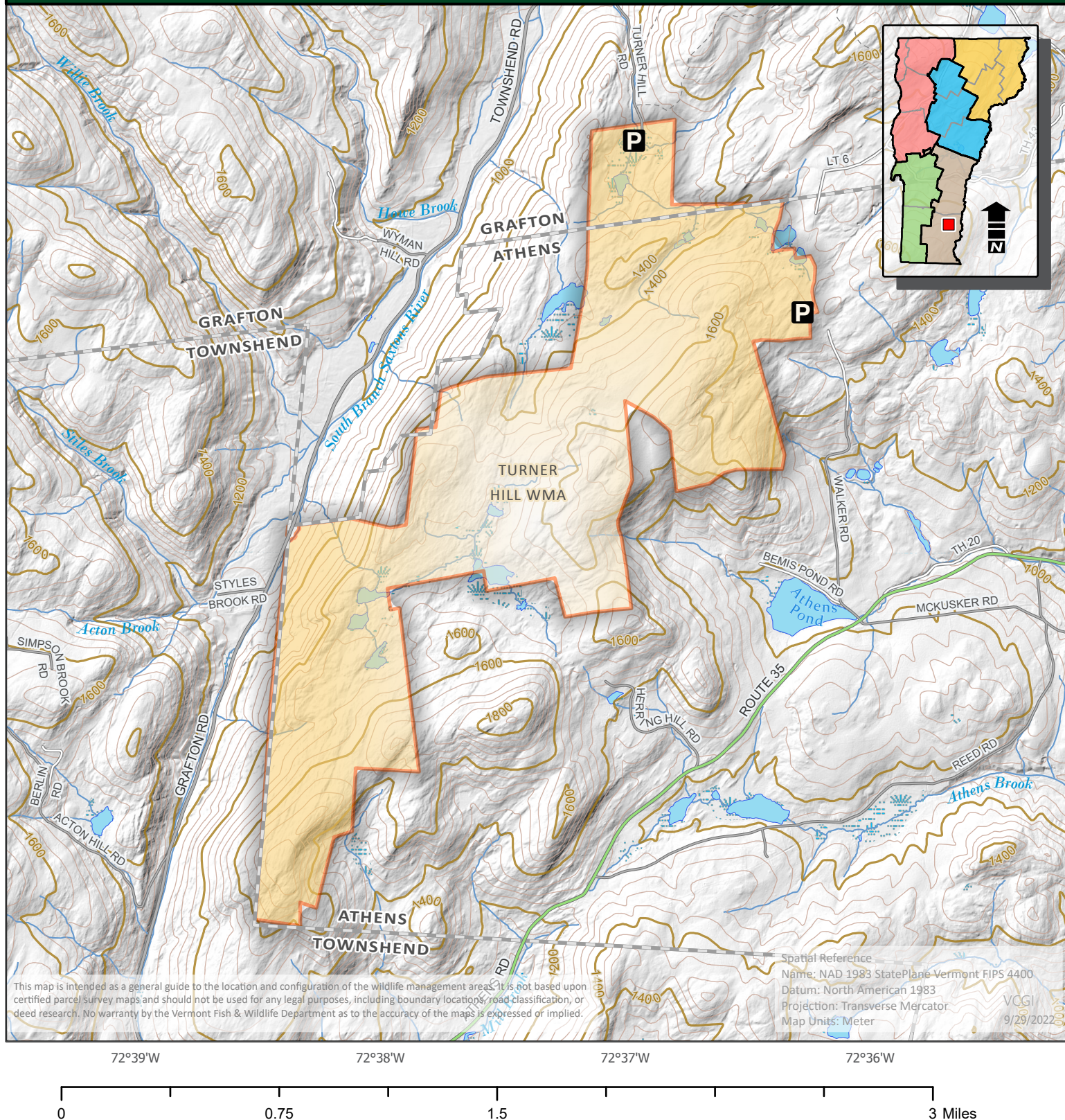
Reptiles and Amphibians Blue-spotted, spotted, red-backed, and northern two-lined salamanders and eastern (red-spotted) newt have been documented. Green, pickerel, northern leopard, wood frogs, gray tree and bullfrogs may be found along with spring peepers. Turtle species may include snapping and painted. Milk, northern water, and garter snakes may be present.

Fish If the water is cold enough, and the conditions are right, beaver ponds can be great habitat for trout, but the habitat is ephemeral. Over time the ponds can become too warm to support trout. The conditions may not be suitable again for many decades.



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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This map is intended as a general guide to the location and configuration of the wildlife management areas. It is not based upon certified parcel survey maps and should not be used for any legal purposes, including boundary locations, road classification, or deed research. No warranty by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department as to the accuracy of the maps is expressed or implied.

Spatial Reference
Name: NAD 1983 StatePlane Vermont FIPS 4400
Datum: North American 1983
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Map Units: Meter
VCGI
9/29/2022

Turner Hill WMA

Map Number: 72

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	