

**VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE
DEPARTMENT**

**ACCESS AREA PROGRAM
2013 MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT**

Submitted to:
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House Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources Committee

Submitted by:
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Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
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2013 VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT ACCESS AREA
MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT

BACKGROUND

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (Department) maintained over 180 developed fishing access areas in 2013. These sites provided public access to waters in Vermont for shore fishing opportunities and launching of watercraft. The Department manages 139 access areas with concrete or gravel ramps for launching and retrieving of boats. Additionally, there are another 24 access areas where non-motorized vessels can easily be launched without a ramp.

The Department received approximately \$371,734 in motorboat registration fees this past year, which are dedicated to the Access Area Program. These state funds are used to match Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration funds which are generated from a federal excise tax on fishing tackle, boats, motors, and marine fuels. In fiscal year 2013, the Federal Aid appropriation for Vermont access areas was \$539,807. Additionally, the Department received capital funding in the amount of \$450,000 over the past three fiscal years, which has also been used as match to draw in federal funds where appropriate.

In the past few years there has been a reduction of both state and federal funding for the access area program. Motorboat registration revenues peaked in 2011 at \$482,500. Federal funding peaked in 2009 at \$606,675 and has gradually declined over the past 4 years. While there has been a downward trend in both funding sources, revenues are still above funding levels from 7-10 years ago. Fortunately, the capital appropriations to the Access Area Program have allowed for considerable gains in the backlog of ramp repairs during this recent decline in state and federal revenues.

MAINTENANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

In 2013, the Access Area Program spent over \$1,244,492 on basic maintenance, capital improvement projects, and major infrastructure improvements (Table 1). Expenditures ranged from \$440 for leasing land for access to over \$255,000 for upgrading and developing small access areas around the state.

Over the past few years the Department had made a conscious effort to improve the condition of all of its parking areas and access roads. This has resulted in nearly a 50% reduction in the amount of money required to maintain these sites in 2013. Grounds maintenance, primarily provided by Department of Corrections Probation and Parole crews, continues to be a large expense in the budget. That said, the weekly maintenance service still averages less than \$700/site for the entire year.

Four major ramp improvements and a number of dock projects were completed, and designs were initiated for number of other projects (Table 2). New ramps were constructed at the Seymour Lake and Chimney Point Access Areas. The Chimney Point access ramp was completed during the winter of 2012-13 and received a new 28 ft wide ramp and 70 ft dock as part of the site restoration following the reconstruction of the Champlain Bridge in Addison. Additionally, a new overflow parking area was created in an attempt to increase parking at this site. A new 16 ft ramp was built at the Seymour Lake access, along with new defined ADA parking area. This ramp was constructed to extend into deeper water, away from the Sucker Brook inlet, to protect against siltation from the brook and propeller wash scour. The Island

2013 VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT ACCESS AREA
MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT

Pond ramp was extended to fix a propeller wash hole and the Lapham's Bay access was dredged to make the ramp more usable during low water.

Three years ago, a list of sites was generated to upgrade a select portion of concrete plank ramps, many of which had never received any significant improvements over their 30+ year life. The capital appropriations the Department received over the past few years were spent on this list of small ramp and a few dock projects. Nearly \$167,320 was spent on 23 projects, upgrading ramps and retrofitting existing docks or purchasing new ones to make the access area fully accessible to all users (Tables 3). The capital funds used to complete these projects leveraged another \$333,000 in federal funds.

In 2012, the Department was awarded a Recreational Boating Safety grant from the US Coast Guard. The grant was used to fund the development of 18 Department properties for carry-on access at a 50/50 cost share. Many of these sites were chosen because they were the only means for the public to access that water body. Most sites required some level of surveying to identify property boundaries and all sites required improvements to provide parking and a means to launch a canoe, kayak, or small motorboat. Of the 18 proposed projects, only 9 sites could be improved due to resource considerations (i.e. wetlands or sensitive habitat). Of the projects completed, 7 of them were completed this past year (Table 4). The lone access on Lake Champlain and the three river access points provided the only public access within a many miles of those sites. The other three sites provided the only public access on that lake or pond.

2013 VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT ACCESS AREA
MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT

Table 1. Summary of all expenditures for Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Access Area Program, 2013.

Category	Amount
Major Ramp Improvements	\$ 199,176.46
Minor Infrastructure Improvements & New Access Construction	\$ 255,019.70
Site Work Maintenance (i.e. gravel, grading, excavation)	\$ 88,665.75
Dock Improvements & Purchases	\$ 247,924.75
Dock Maintenance	\$ 52,060.33
Department of Corrections Community Restitution Crews	\$ 114,322.84
Miscellaneous Lawn and Maintenance Services	\$ 5,809.94
Portable Toilet Rentals	\$ 67,614.96
Snow Removal	\$ 18,223.00
Purchase of building materials, supplies, equipment rentals, etc.	\$ 4,476.27
Payments for Public Access to Private Lands (i.e. leases)	\$ 440.00
PILOT (payments in lieu of taxes)	\$ 54,105.00
Engineering – permitting, design, and construction oversight	\$ 100,387.84
Utilities	\$ 8,794.14
Surveys and Appraisals	\$ 7,129.64
Trash Disposal	\$ 1,243.03
Signage	\$ 6,083.85
Professional Memberships & Meetings	\$ 2,396.26
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,244,492.00

Table 2. Summary of large infrastructure improvements at Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's Access Area, 2013.

Project Description	Amount
Seymour Lake ramp and ADA parking	\$ 106,467.96
Lapham's Bay dredging	\$ 49,945.00
Island Pond ramp extension	\$ 42,763.50
Dock upgrades and purchases at 6 Lake Champlain sites	\$ 247,924.75
Chimney Point ramp and dock reconstruction	\$ 0.00*
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 447,101.21

*The Department did not incur any operating costs, but significant staff time was invested in designing, permitting, and construction oversight of this project.

2013 VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT ACCESS AREA
MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT

Table 3. List of completed 2013 capital funded Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department ramp improvement projects.

Access Area Name	Town	Accomplishments	Cost
Burr Pond	Sudbury	Ramp replaced and extended	\$ 4,961.84
Colton Pond	Killington	Concrete ramp planks reset	\$ 11,994.74
Echo Lake	Plymouth	Materials acquired, construction to be completed summer 2013	\$ 14,330.75
Fosters Pond	Peacham	Ramp replaced, extended, & dredged accumulated silt	\$ 20,444.00
Horicans	Alburg	2011 ramp extension project completed	\$ 15,260.00
Holland Pond	Holland	Improved the parking lot and shoreline access	\$ 4,361.96
Kehoe (Green Dump)	Castleton	Old ramp removed and new 2 lane ramp constructed; dock to be put in place spring 2013	\$ 27,697.54
Keiser Pond	Peacham	Ramp replaced, extended, & dredged accumulated silt	\$ 18,044.00
Lake Eligo	Greensboro	Approach to ramp replaced	\$ 3,277.75
Lamoille River	Milton	Improved shoreline around fishing platform and added ADA parking	\$ 29,666.19
Miles Pond	Concord	Ramp replaced, extended, & dredged accumulated silt	\$ 1,090.00
Neal Pond	Lunenburg	Extended ramp and dredged accumulated silt	\$ 855.00
Weatherhead Hollow Pond	Guilford	Removed old concrete planks and replaced with a gravel ramp	\$ 10,738.64
Wolcott Pond	Wolcott	Materials acquired, construction to be completed summer 2013	\$ 11,883.02
Statewide	Statewide	Purchase of concrete ramp materials	\$ 32,346.00
Statewide	Statewide	Engineering, permitting, & construction oversight of all projects	\$ 28,416.80
St. Albans	St. Albans	Retrofitting or purchase of docks to make them universally accessible	\$ 59,155.00
Larry Greene	West Swanton		\$ 21,740.00
Converse Bay	Charlotte	Note: these projects were also referenced in Table 2.	\$ 35,855.00
Lamoille River	Milton		\$ 45,190.00
Shelburne Bay	Shelburne		\$ 43,445.00
Kehoe	Castleton		\$ 35,150.00
TOTAL			\$495,849.50

2013 VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT ACCESS AREA
MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT

Table 4. List of new Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department carry-on access areas in 2013.

Access Area Name	Town	Accomplishments	Cost
Hardwick Lake	Hardwick	Ramp and parking area formalized for improved access	\$ 5,460.13
Otter Creek	Clarendon	Parking area constructed for access	\$ 5,127.90
Black River	Newport	Parking area and launching site constructed for river access	\$ 1,498.94
Bean Pond	Sutton	Parking area formalized and expanded	\$ 4,937.52
Black Pond	Hubbardton	Parking area constructed and the existing informal ramp improved	\$ 0.00
Moose River	Concord	Parking area and ADA path to the river constructed	\$ 20,068.00
Mt. Independence	Orwell	Parking area constructed for access	\$ 5,515.65
TOTAL			\$ 42,608.14

LAND ACQUISITION

While the Department did not acquire any new access areas this year, staff are working on obtaining ownership to the privately owned access on Great Hosmer Pond in Craftsbury. This will be a donation from the landowner and protect public access on the pond in perpetuity. Additionally, the Department is considering acquiring a few parcels that were purchased by NGOs as part of the FEMA buyout program.

2011 STORM DAMAGE

The erratic weather of 2011 impacted numerous access areas around the state causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. The repairs resulting from spring storms and Irene damages to access areas and dams have been completed. To date, the two spring storms cost the Department just over \$255,600 and to date reimbursements from FEMA total \$81,496.73. One large project is still awaiting review and payment by FEMA, which should be approximately \$102,500. Tropical Storm Irene cost the Department \$428,652 and to date reimbursements from FEMA total \$108,755.43. Similar to the spring storms, one large project was recently completed and is awaiting review and reimbursement by FEMA in the amount of \$243,200. Assuming expected reimbursement estimates are accurate, these storms cost the Department \$684,270 and we were reimbursed \$535,900 (78% reimbursement) by FEMA.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Department was able to utilize the remaining funds made possible by House Bill H.832, passed in March 2000. The Vermont River Conservancy (VRC) was granted these funds to

2013 VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT ACCESS AREA
MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION REPORT

improve multiple existing, but seriously degraded, access areas throughout the state. To date, VRC completed access projects below the Enosburg Falls (Enosburg), Martins Bridge (Marshfield), Bellows Falls (Connecticut River), and Peavine Park (Bethel). Two additional projects will be completed this spring on the North Branch of the Winooski River (Middlesex) and Connecticut River (Guildhall).

CONTACTS

Any questions or comments regarding the access maintenance and construction program should be directed to:

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