

# West Mountain Wildlife Management Area

## General Description

West Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 22.93-acre parcel of land owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Located in the towns of Maidstone, Ferdinand and Brunswick, the WMA ranges north from Maidstone Lake to Route 105, and east from South America Pond to the Connecticut River.

Access is available along miles of dirt roads. Main entry points are South America Pond Road off Route 105, and Maidstone Lake and Paul Stream Roads off Route 102.

## History

Long ago, the St. Francis Indians traveled from Canada to the upper Connecticut River to grow corn on the river's intervals and to hunt moose, deer, beaver and bear in the surrounding uplands. In 1785, European colonists entering the region relied on the forest for food and shelter.

Timber harvesting on the WMA land began in 1800 when the town of Brunswick issued a 400-acre "pitch" on Paul Stream to Ethiel Cargill. A large mill and small village were located further up Paul Stream at Brown's Mill. In 1900, the Connecticut Valley Lumber Company (CVL) moved its headquarters from Pittsburg, NH to Bloomfield, VT. This was the result of the discovery that the old-growth spruce south of the Nulhegan was dying due to an infestation of spruce bark beetle. Logging camps and "driving" dams were built throughout the Paul Stream Valley. CVL woodsmen at Bull's Throat camp and dam (located ¾ mile up Paul Stream from the outlet of Maidstone Brook) spent the winter of 1914–15 cutting spruce and hauling it by horse and sled to the banks of Paul Stream to await the spring drive. In the spring of 1915, 500 CVL loggers brought 65 million board feet of timber, harvested throughout the Connecticut River Valley, down the Connecticut River to Mt. Tom, MA.

Private timber companies owned the land throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1985 the land was purchased by Champion International, who continued to allow public access for traditional uses. During the past century, camps originally built for logging have been used as bases for hunting, fishing and trapping. Many are still located in this section of Vermont and "camp culture" still thrives across northern New England and New York.

In August 1999, the land was purchased from Champion International with funds from the Richard King Mellon Foundation as part of a large scale land conservation partnership of state, federal and private organizations. The Vermont General Assembly appropriated \$4.5 million for the purchase of a public-access easement on 86,000-acres of land surrounding the West Mountain WMA.

## Habitat Features

Elevations on the WMA range from 2,733 feet on West Mountain to 1,100 feet along the lower stretches of Paul Stream. The terrain varies from high-elevation spruce-fir to lowland bogs. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

has identified 14 species of plants listed as rare or endangered and eight sites of ecological significance on the WMA. The property encompasses nine major ponds, over 75 miles of streams, and many diverse wetland complexes.

## Common Fish and Wildlife

**Mammals** Black bears are present throughout the year.

The WMA lands have been core habitat for moose production in Vermont, and contain some of the State's highest densities of moose due to intensive timber management over the past 20 years. Timber harvests have created ideal habitat for snowshoe hare and white-tailed deer as well.

Signs of fisher, coyote, fox, bobcat and porcupine are commonly seen on the WMA. Beavers inhabit many of the streams and maintain habitat for many other species including mink, weasel, raccoon and river otter.

**Birds** The variety of forests and wetlands provides habitat for neotropical migratory birds. Extensive tracts of both hardwood and softwood forest offer nesting habitat for many species that are experiencing population declines due to habitat fragmentation and loss throughout their range.

The many ponds, streams and beaver impoundments provide habitat for nesting and migrating waterfowl, including goldeneyes, ring-necked, black, wood and mallard ducks, and common and hooded mergansers.

Common loons nest on Maidstone Lake and West Mountain Pond and two pairs of ospreys also nest in the vicinity of these two water bodies.

Extensive forested stands of spruce-fir provide critical habitat for boreal species such as the gray jay, black-backed woodpecker, boreal chickadee and bay-breasted warbler.

**Reptiles and Amphibians** Chorus frogs, such as the spring peeper, can be heard singing from vernal pools in early spring. Woodland salamanders, such as the red-backed salamander, can be found hiding under damp logs and rocks. Mink frogs, and painted and snapping turtles may be found in the larger ponds across the WMA.

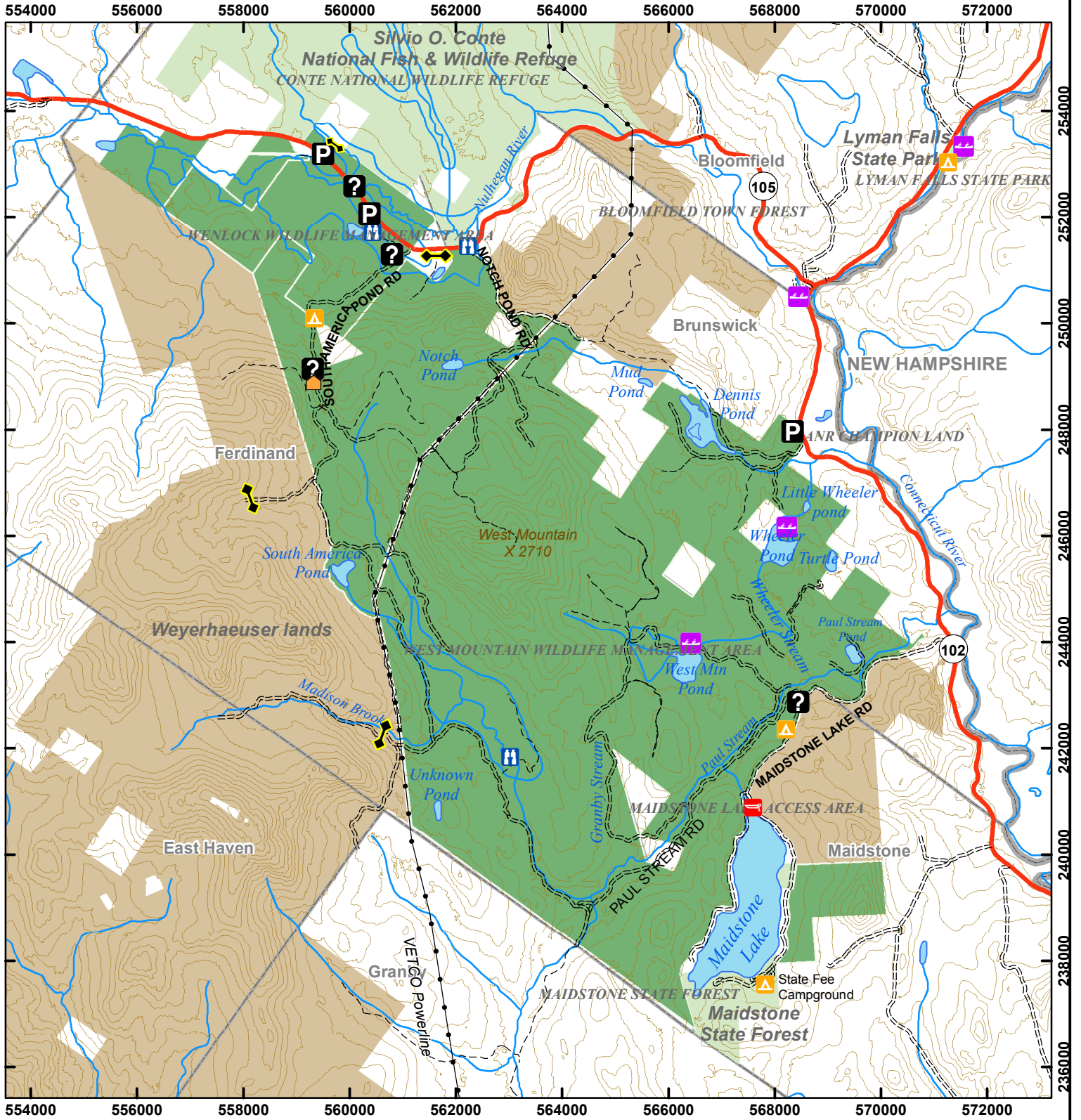
**Fish** West Mountain WMA contains nine major ponds and over 75 miles of streams. Dennis, Paul Stream, Little Wheeler and Turtle Ponds are shallow ponds containing warmwater species such as brown bullhead, chain pickerel and yellow perch; while South America, Notch, West Mountain, Unknown and Wheeler Ponds are deeper ponds containing brook trout. Paul, Granby and Wheeler Streams all support populations of wild brook trout, slimy sculpin, burbot, longnose and blacknose dace, and creek chubs.

Paul Stream was historically a spawning and nursery stream for Atlantic salmon, which were extirpated from the Connecticut River two centuries ago by dam building, pollution and habitat destruction. It now plays a role in the Connecticut Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program. Eventually, adults returning from the North Atlantic will re-enter Paul Stream to spawn.

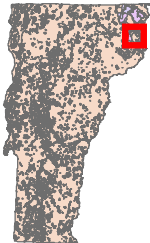
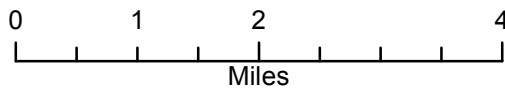


# Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

## West Mountain Wildlife Management Area



**West Mountain WMA: 22,971 acres**



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|--|--------------------------|--|----------------------|
|  | Wildlife Management Area |  | Kiosk                |
|  | Other Public Land        |  | Boat Ramp            |
|  | Private w/ Public Access |  | Gate                 |
|  | Wildlife Viewing Area    |  | Designated Camp Site |
|  | Car-top Access           |  | ANR Building         |
|  | Parking                  |  |                      |

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