

Atherton Meadows Wildlife Management Area

General Description

Atherton Meadows Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located in the town of Whitingham approximately 8 miles west of the village of Jacksonville. The property consists of two separate parcels situated on either side of Route 100. The larger parcel, 646 acres, lies between Route 100 and the southern end of Harriman Reservoir. The northwest boundary of this parcel abuts power company (USGen) land, which is also open to the public via Vermont Land Trust conservation easements. This parcel can be accessed from a parking lot located along Route 100 on the south end of the property, or from a trailhead maintained by USGen at Harriman Dam on the north end of the parcel.

The smaller 153-acre parcel is located southeast of Route 100. To access this piece, it is best to park on the shoulder of the "Head O the Lake Road" which bisects it. Both parcels, totaling 799 acres, are owned in fee simple by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

History

The larger parcel was once a sheep farm owned by John Atherton in the 1870's. His home was located on the northeast side of the beaver flowage, where an old cellar hole is still evident today. Atherton sold the property to Wesley Kentfield in the early 1900's. Mr. Kentfield was not interested in farming and abandoned the fields, which then reforested. Later Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Farrington bought the property together from Mr. Kentfield. It was Mr. Farrington's son who eventually sold the 646 acres of the original farm, along with the separate 153-acre parcel, to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department in 1964. Money generated from the sale of hunting licenses financed the purchase.

Habitat Features

The topography of the Atherton Meadows WMA is quite variable. The elevation at Route 100 is 158 feet – the lowest on the parcel. An old beaver pond sits in the center of the parcel at an elevation of 1,840 feet.



River otters benefit from beaver-created wetlands.

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The hills surrounding it, which average 2,000 feet in elevation, create the impression of standing in the bottom of a bowl.

Approximately 120 acres of the 646-acre parcel is a mixed hardwood/softwood forest type; the remaining acreage is predominantly northern hardwoods. Virtually the entire parcel is forested. In some areas apple trees are scattered in the understory, remnants of previous agriculture. Beech and black cherry are the predominant mast-producing trees.

Wintering deer use 120 acres of softwood forest on the property. There is abundant evidence throughout the area - tracks, trails, beds, bark scars and browsing can all be observed. This wintering habitat is completely contained within the boundaries of the WMA and is utilized by deer throughout the winter months.

The large beaver flowage located in the middle of the 646-acre parcel, and the alder swamp associated with No. 9 Brook (which bisects the 153-acre parcel), provide rich habitats for a variety of furbearing mammals and waterfowl. In 1990, several food plots were cut adjacent to the beaver pond in order to encourage the beavers to continue to occupy the drainage. At the same time, several small patch cuts were undertaken in order to enhance grouse, woodcock and snowshoe hare habitat east of the beaver flowage.

Common Fish and Wildlife

Mammals Game animals present on the WMA include white-tailed deer, black bear, moose, snowshoe hare, beaver, mink, otter, bobcat, coyote and fisher.

Birds Turkey, ruffed grouse and woodcock are present and may be hunted in season. Hairy and downy woodpeckers are common. Songbirds typical to hardwood and mixed forest may also be found. These include black-capped chickadee, wood thrush, red-eyed vireo, and a variety of warbler species.

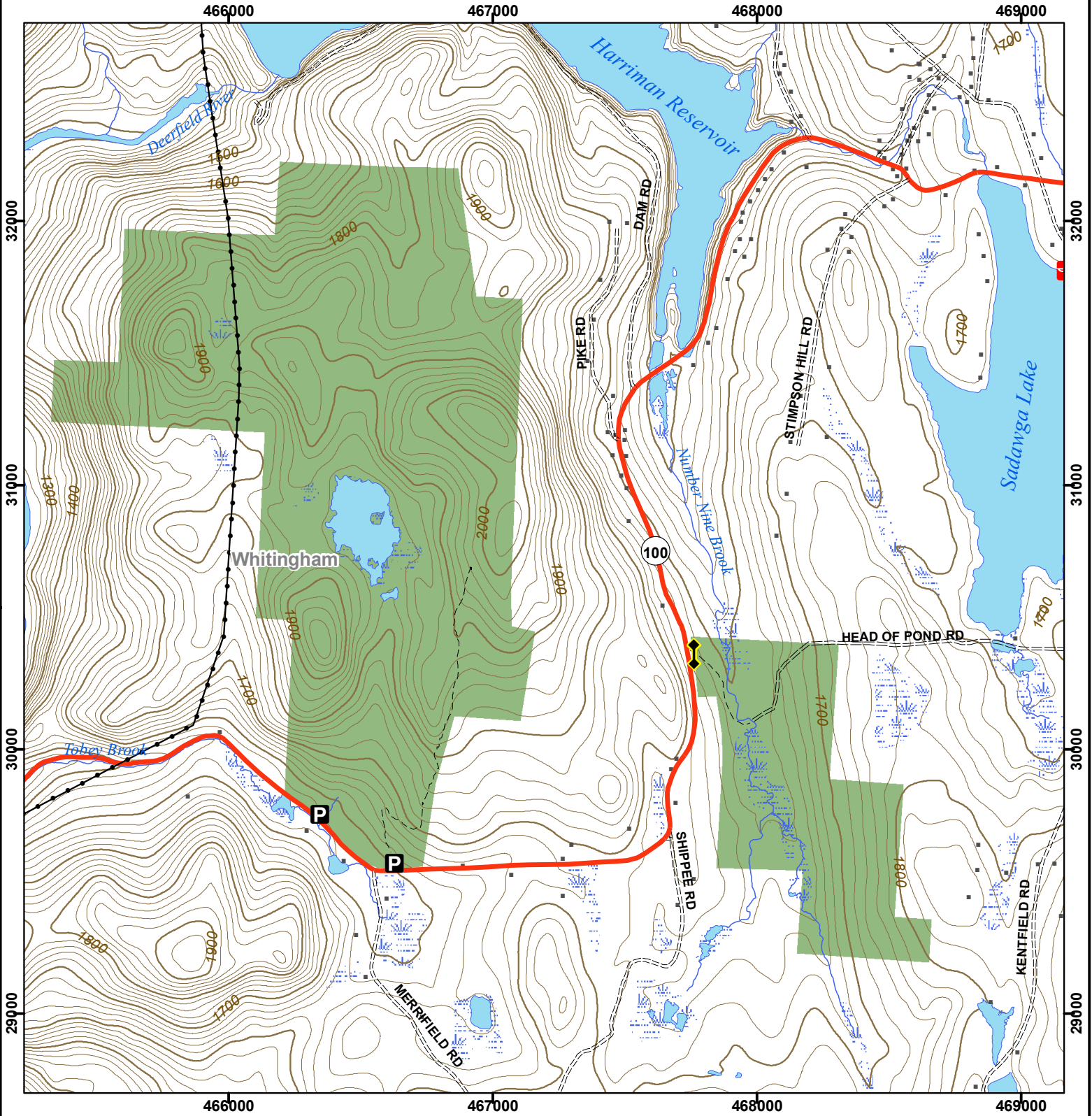
Reptiles and Amphibians Salamanders occurring on the WMA include red-spotted newt, and spotted, red-backed, northern two-lined and northern spring salamanders. Frog species that may be found are spring peeper, American toad, gray treefrog, and northern leopard, green, wood and pickerel frogs. Reptiles that may occur are common gartersnake, northern red-bellied snake and painted turtle.

Fish There are brook trout in the waters of the WMA, along with smaller fish such as blacknose dace, slimy sculpin and creek chub.

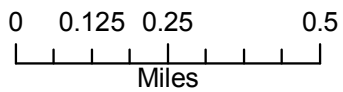


Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

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Atherton Meadows WMA: 799 acres



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-  Wildlife Management Area
-  Other Public Land
-  Private with Public Access
-  Wildlife Viewing Areas
-  Car-top Access
-  Parking
-  Boat Ramp
-  Gate
-  Designated Camp Site During Big Game Seasons Only