



## Notable Species

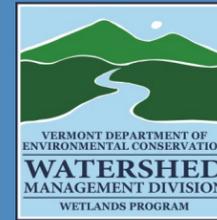
- ◆ Osprey
- ◆ Great Blue Heron
- ◆ Beaver
- ◆ Muskrat
- ◆ Wood Duck

## Ownership/Visit

This wetland complex is owned by the State of Vermont and protected under the Sand Bar Wildlife Management Area, established in 1920 and managed by the VT Fish and Wildlife. The Sand Bar State Park is located northwest of the refuge.

The Sand Bar State Park is open for day use where recreationists can enjoy a 2,000 ft sand beach, swimming, a food concession, and picnic grounds. Canoe and kayak rentals are available to get out on Lake Champlain or paddle up the Lamoille River.

Want to get involved in helping to protect this wetland? Here's how: Visit the Vermont Wetlands Program website at <http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/wetlands> or contact us at [ANR.WSMDWetlands@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.WSMDWetlands@vermont.gov).



Class I  
Wetlands  
Candidate

# Sandbar Wetland Complex

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## The Functions & Values of a Wetland

- Water Storage for Flood Water & Storm Runoff
- Surface & Ground Water Protection
- Fish Habitat
- Wildlife Habitat
- Exemplary Wetland Natural Community
- Rare, Threatened, & Endangered Species Habitat
- Education and Research in Natural Sciences
- Recreational Value & Economic Benefits
- Open Space & Aesthetics
- Erosion Control

## Preserving wetland function for future generations.

This 1,359 acre wetland oasis is a large delta complex composed of special natural communities that span along the shores of Lake Champlain in Milton and Colchester, and is home to many rare wildlife species.

The Sandbar Wetland Complex is a large and highly significant wetland based on the 10 Functions and Values the State of Vermont uses to determine how beneficial wetlands are to the general public and the environment (see sidebar). This wetland complex has significant floodwater storage capacity, due to its large size and vast vegetation. It provides surface and ground water protection as a delta wetland between the Lamoille River and Lake Champlain, and provides an obvious filter between surface water and land. These wetlands also protect the shores of the Lamoille River and Lake Champlain from erosive wave forces.

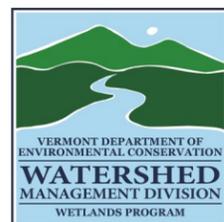
The Sandbar Delta is home to many fish and wildlife species. It hosts important spawning, feeding and cover habitat for fish species found within the wetland, the Lamoille River, and Lake Champlain. Waterfowl, wading birds and migratory bird species find haven in the wetland complex for breeding, roosting, and feeding. A variety of mammals, amphibians, and reptiles flourish here.

This wetland is composed of a large system of unique natural communities, with some of these plant communities considered exemplary and special to Vermont's natural heritage. These communities are home to a number of plant and wildlife species that are either rare, threatened, or endangered at a state or federal level.

The vast wetland naturally captures the eye as one drives along the shores of Lake Champlain on Route 2, and there's opportunity to stop and visit the Sand Bar State Park just northwest of the wetland complex. The delta wetlands are under the management of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and known as the Sandbar Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The 1,560 acre refuge is the oldest WMA in the state.



## Sandbar Wetland Complex: Vermont CLASS I WETLAND CANDIDATE



Vermont Wetlands Program

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<http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/wetlands>

802-490-6100 or [ANR.WSMDWetlands@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.WSMDWetlands@vermont.gov)



Planning for the **FUTURE**

## What is a Class I Wetland?

These wetlands have a high rating in one or more of the listed 10 functions and values. They are healthy, in great condition, and intact. A Class I wetland is considered exceptional or irreplaceable, and deserves the highest level of protection under the Vermont Wetland rules. Criteria and sub-criteria have been developed to evaluate these special wetlands.

### Criteria

- ◆ **Representative Example of Wetland Type**
- ◆ **Rare Community Type**
- ◆ **Community Assemblage / Wetland Complex**
- ◆ **Landscape Association**

### Sub-Criteria

- ◆ **Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species present**
- ◆ **Undisturbed Condition**
- ◆ **Intact Landscape**
- ◆ **Research/ Education**
- ◆ **Connectivity**



## Sandbar Wetland Complex

### Ecology & Wildlife

The Sandbar Wetlands are host to a number of significant natural communities, an abundance of fish and wildlife, including rare, threatened or endangered species.

Some of Vermont's most unique natural communities are found along the shores of Lake Champlain, and in the Sandbar Wetland Complex one can explore a multitude of exemplary wetland communities.

Along the sides of the slowly meandering Lamoille River is where you'll find long stretches of Silver Maple-Ostrich Fern Riverine Floodplain Forests. These forests are magical places with tall,

towering silver maples, green, lush ferns blanketing the ground and big open space due to the lack of shrubs in the understory. Mixed in with these forests are also Silver Maple-Sensitive Fern Floodplain Forests that create a similar feel, but the soils are wetter and these communities are found right next to the river's edge.

As the Lamoille River flows closer to Lake Champlain, the communities transition to Lakeside Floodplain Forest, where green ash, cottonwood, and American elm trees join the silver maples. The soils turn to

clay and you may have a hard time finding the line between where the forest shores meet the lake.

The spaces between the river and lake are filled with other exciting communities, like Red/Silver Maple – Green Ash Swamps, Alder Swamps, and open wetlands like Deep Bulrush Marshes, Wild Rice Marshes, and Vernal Pools.

The Sandbar Wetlands support high wildlife diversity because of its location. The interface between the Lamoille River and Lake Champlain provide conditions to support many different types of

wetlands. Because of this, many species call this place home, including some special ones.

The wetlands support many waterfowl species for breeding and feeding. Great blue herons and Black-crowned night herons nest here and raise young. Migratory birds like the Common Snipe, Marsh wren, American bittern, Northern Harrier, and Osprey all find these wetlands perfect for settling during the summer season. A variety of mammal species like the

muskrat, otter, and mink can be found in the deep bulrush and cattail marshes, and along the river and lake. Many different amphibian and reptile species breed and live within these wetlands, and plenty of fish can be found in their waters.

The Sandbar Wetlands can be considered a special place just in the fact that 29 rare, threatened, or endangered species call this area home. This includes the Pied-billed grebe, and the Cerulean warbler. Rare plant species have also been documented.



### Why It Matters

The Sandbar Wetland Complex provides water quality protection to Lake Champlain, and is rich in function and wildlife diversity.

The Sandbar Wetlands serve as a connection between the Lamoille River and Lake Champlain. It has a unique function serving as a delta wetland, helping to store and filter water before entering Lake Champlain, and slowing down the erosive forces of lake waves.

The surface waters of these wetlands provides spawning habitat for many fish species, including the lake

sturgeon. Migrating birds use the Sandbar as a place to rest and fill up before travelling again. The Complex showcases exceptional floodplain forest natural communities, which provide pristine habitat for many wildlife to breed and flourish, including rare and threatened species.

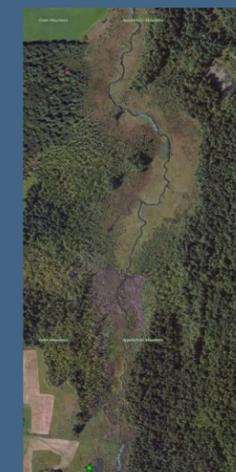
At present, there are some impairments that impact the integrity of this large and significant wetland. U.S. Route 2 bisects the delta which has altered the hydrology of the complex, invites invasive plant species into the wetland, and creates challenging situations for wildlife movement. In addition, the Lamoille River has been transferring phosphorus and

pathogens over the years from the surrounding agricultural and developed landscape, resulting in decreased water quality within the wetland complex and Lake Champlain.

Reclassifying the Sandbar Wetland Complex to Class I will protect the critical functions it provides to both the environment and the public, and creating awareness is the first step.

### Current Class I Wetland- Tinmouth Channel

The Tinmouth Channel Wetland is a 1,473 acre complex found within the Town of Tinmouth in Rutland County. The wetland is centered on the Tinmouth Stream that flows into the Clarendon River. It ranks high in 9 out of the 10 Listed Functions and Values, including flood storage, water protection, fish and wildlife habitat, RTE species, and exemplary natural communities. It is considered a special type, being a headwater wetland and the largest example of an intermediate fen, with extremely high water quality. The wetland complex is considered exceptional and irreplaceable, and was given the highest degree of protection in 2001.



## Sandbar Wetland Complex Class I Candidate

- **Representative Example** of Floodplain & Riverine Forests
- Large 1,359 acre **Wetland Complex** composed of many different Natural Communities
- Important **Landscape Association** as a delta wetland that represents the transition between river and lake
- 29 different **RTE Species**
- Floodplain Forests are **Undisturbed**
- Used for **Research and Education**
- Important **Connectivity** as wildlife and waterfowl corridors