



Vermont Wetlands Program

Options – Swamp Lot

What can I do with a Swamp Lot?

Enjoy it: While they may not be appropriate for residential or commercial development, there are a variety of creative ways to manage a Swamp Lot. They are often great locations for outdoor recreation including hunting, fishing, hiking, birdwatching, and camping. Digital apps like [iNaturalist](#) and [Merlin](#) can aid you in discovering the plants, birds and other wildlife that make your property their home. Vermont Fish and Wildlife offers [hunter education courses](#) and seminars that can introduce you to a variety of options for game harvest. Wetlands are productive areas and produce many wild edible plants, from highbush blueberries in bog and fens, to wild rice along Lakes Champlain or Memphramagog, to the iconic cattail in beaver marshes. A Peterson Field Guide to Edible Plants is a popular starting point for wild food foraging. Wild foods foraging groups are active in Vermont, often online but also in-person. Foraging Groups are generally happy to share plant and mushroom ID and other foraging tips and tricks (though not their favorite spots).

Swamp Lots can also act as buffers to encroaching development, preserving the natural conditions and character of an area. Purchasing a Swamp Lot near your home can provide both distance and a physical barrier between your property and urban/suburban/rural sprawl. These lots can also be excellent places to hike in and explore or even restore to a more ecologically functional state.

Use it: [Allowed Uses](#) of wetlands that do not require a permit include installing [boardwalks](#) to wander the wetlands without squishing through the muck, restoration practices like planting native plant species and plugging ditches, [invasives species management](#), scientific research, erecting duck blinds for waterfowl hunting, and wildlife habitat management (contingent on a plan approved by the program). Depending on the conditions on the ground at your site, the lot may be able to support a primitive camp with a composting or incinerating toilet. Refer to the [Wastewater System and Potable Water Rules](#) for more information on how a “primitive camp” is defined and what systems are permissible.

Conserve it: Another option would be conserving the land for future generations with a conservation organization. Depending on the location, condition, and existing usage of the parcel these organizations may opt to protect the land under a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that limits the type or amount of development on a parcel of land and could potentially provide some tax relief to the landowner. In some cases, organizations may even choose to purchase the land. Parcels that are especially attractive to conservation entities are ones that connect habitat blocks, are in wildlife corridors, host exemplary or rare wetland communities (bogs, fens, or certain floodplain forests could be examples), are in floodplains, are in current or historical agricultural rotation, or can provide public access. The following organizations may be interested in obtaining, conserving, or restoring wetlands.

[The Nature Conservancy](#) (Nationwide)

[Natural Resource Conservation Service](#) (Nationwide – focused on farmland)

[Vermont Land Trust](#) (Statewide)

[Upper Valley Land Trust](#) (Upper Connecticut River Valley)

[Lake Champlain Land Trust](#) (Near Lake Champlain)

[Stowe Land Trust](#) (Stowe)

[Middlebury Land Trust](#) (Middlebury)

[Ducks Unlimited](#) (Nationwide)

[Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) (Statewide)

[Vermont Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation](#) (Statewide)

Sell it: If none of the above options are of interest, you may want to sell the property so you can purchase a lot that more suits your needs. The above organizations may be interested in purchasing. Depending on the wetland type and your town's interests and financial position, the town may be interested in buying your property as Town Forest or open spaces or land for a municipal trail system. If you have a swamp lot located in a River Corridor hazard area, contacting the [Flood Resilient Communities Fund](#) to see if your land would qualify for a buyout is a good idea.