

Responsiveness Summary for Updates to the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (VSWI): Basin 1 – Battenkill, Walloomsac, Hoosic, Basins 2 & 4 – Southern Lake Champlain, Basin 7 – Lamoille, Basin 17 – Lake Memphremagog, the Rock River Watershed, and over 400 permit sites across Vermont

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) placed the draft updates to the VSWI on public notice on June 1, 2026 and the public comment period remained open until July 3, 2026. In anticipation of public interest, DEC held a public meeting at the Arlington Common on Tuesday, June 16, 2026 at 5:30pm and at the Morristown Town Office Building on Wednesday, June 17, 2026 at 3:00pm. Both meetings had a virtual attendance option.

The following people were in attendance at the public meeting: Frank Nelson, Teresa Ameden, Josh Williams, Mark Gardner, Andrea Ameden, Nan Bambara, Curtis Merrow, Karrie Sweet of the Town of Fletcher, Kevin Anderson, Tim Britton, Janie Wilkerson of the Pownal Conservation Commission, Dale Azaria of the Conservation Law Foundation, Amanda Pitts of the Town of Milton, Brett Stanciu of the Town of Greensboro, Jason Gagne, Addison Kasmarek of Greenleaf Forestry, Peyton Debowsky of GEI Consultants Inc., Patricia Indoe, Kristen Leahy of the Town of Hardwick, Colleen Geddis, Nancy Barbour, Alice Peal of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, Bryan Miller, Elaine Rossi, Matthew Stebbins of the Town of Sheldon, Karen Barber, Sarah Damsell of the Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District, Amy Bruso, Eric Salat, Steven Nichols, Terry Findeisen of the Village of Manchester, Wendy Sargeant the Franklin Zoning Administrator, Rhonda Shippee, Natasha Horak, Justin Turco, Devon Neary of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, Marsha King, Masha Mokeyeva, Sargent William, Diane James, Jonathan Eye, Lou White, Edward Letourneau, Ashley Farrington, Chelsye Brooks, Alex Thibault, Alden Finney, Beth Harrington of Harrington Realty, Pam Tworig of the Stamford Planning Board, Nathan Fowle of the Pownal Conservation Commission.

DEC received written comments from the following people and entities: Renee Circosta, Brian Arant, Karl Strohmaier, Robert Jones, Benjamin Cota, and Susan Bowman.

The following is a summary of the public comments received on the Updates to the VSWI and DEC's responses to those comments. Where appropriate, comments have been paraphrased, consolidated, and categorized for clarity.

1. What are the different permit requirements for Class I vs. Class II wetlands?

Response: You can only receive a permit for impacts in a Class I wetland if the project includes a compelling need for public health or safety, and there is no practicable alternative to impacting the wetlands. You can receive a permit for

impacts to Class II wetland and buffer zones if the application materials demonstrate that there is no undue adverse impact to significant functions and values.

2. Were residents and landowners notified before any redesignation? Were potential changes brought to a town meeting vote?

Response: The edits to the VSWI were posted on the Environmental Notice Bulletin for 30 days and the Bulletin emailed towns a notification. Two public meetings were made available for residence and landowners to attend to learn more and comment. The DEC did not mail notice letters to individual residents and landowners. There was no town meeting vote. The DEC followed the notice procedure set in the Vermont Wetland Rules.

3. Does the new mapping show the projected 30/30 or 50/50 rule designations as an overlay to the wetlands?

Response: The new mapping is of wetlands only. One can download the VSWI and overlay it with any other mapping product using GIS.

4. Why does the State feel they have to have so much control over municipalities, whom work very hard on a new town plan?

Response: This comment is beyond the scope of review. State wetland regulations have been in place since 1990 and unmapped significant wetlands have ben protected since 2010. This mapping update merely identifies likely wetland locations so that the regulation is more transparent.

5. Are vernal pools considered to be protected wetland?

Response: Yes. Vernal pools are considered Class II wetlands.

6. Would the maps change to accommodate new wetlands that are created by wildlife, such as beavers?

Response: Yes, if the Program is evaluating an area for map updates and the current wetland area is larger than previously found, the map would be edited according to the current conditions.

7. How can we be sure that the wetland maps are accurate now? The maps are being reestablished and they've already been there?

Response: The VSWI was established in 1990 statewide and this is the first time the DEC has worked to complete a statewide improvement. The edits to the VSWI are an improvement in the detection of the general location and extent of wetlands from previous mapping. The maps are not intended for accurate boundaries of

wetlands. The maps are an approximation of wetland location and a boundary delineation is still needed to know the exact location of a wetland to design a project within proximity to a wetland.

- 8.** Why do you think the net increase in wetland percentages in southeastern Vermont were quite a bit less than the middle and upper part of the state?

Response: The DEC did not conduct a specific analysis to determine why mapping updates to different areas of the state resulted in varying net increases in identified wetlands. Southeastern Vermont mapping was updated more recently than other sections of the state, so the mapping was likely of better quality to begin with.

- 9.** I don't understand how you can look from the sky and see wetlands. Can you share more information on that methodology?

Response: Please see the attached fieldwork report which includes methodologies. Aerial interpretation includes detailed review of types of vegetation, topography and water signatures.

- 10.** Please explain the symbology in the wetland mapper.

Response: The black outlines show the existing VSWI polygons. The teal polygons are the revised VSWI proposed to replace the existing VSWI. There are many places where the new overlaps the old. Where there is overlap, the wetland area will remain. Wherever there is no teal in the black outline area, those areas are going to be removed. In the update.

- 11.** Do you inform landowners when you go on to their property to confirm the wetland mapping?

Response: Yes. DEC did not trespass on private property. Mapping was checked where there was landowner permission, public property, and where wetlands could be viewed from areas with permission, such as a road.

- 12.** Is there a mechanism that triggers the town to refer people to wetland regulations?

If the town doesn't have additional information about wetlands, they just issue building permits when you can see there is hydric soil.

Response: Towns are not required by the State to refer people to the Vermont Wetland Rules. The DEC does work to educate town officials about the regulations so they can better assist their residents.

- 13.** How will the newly mapped areas affect lands with current use or current permits such as existing septic systems with permitted replacements?

Response: Wetlands with significant functions and values are protected regardless of mapping. The mapping will make everyone more aware of the location of wetlands. Septic permits are separate regulations from the Vermont Wetland Rules, so a septic permit does not mean that wetland regulations will be followed with the approved site plans. A separate review of wetlands has always been needed to be able to understand if the project needs a wetland permit.

14. How will the new mapping affect farmers?

Response: The new mapping will clarify where there may be wetlands on their land which may need a permit depending on the proposed use of the land. Areas growing food and crop in connection with farming activities, such as hayfields, pastures, and soy fields, are exempt from the Vermont Wetland Rules as long as they continue to be used to grow food or crop. Whenever an exempt area is proposed for a different use, such as the construction of a road, barn, or shopping mall, the area needs to be reviewed for significant wetlands and permits may be needed to convert the land to another use. This applies whether the significant wetland is or isn't on the VSWI. The improved mapping will make it easier for farmers to know where there is likely wetland on their land.

15. There is a spot identified on my property that is not wetland. Can I make a comment on that?

Response: Yes. You may use the mapper tool during the public comment period to make location-specific comments. You may also contact us at a later date for review and removal.

16. Commenter raised questions about Act 181 and why the wetland mapping isn't included with the town tiering.

Response: This comment is beyond the scope of wetland permitting.

17. How is it within DEC's capacity to update the maps statewide but DEC cannot individually notify landowners of the changes?

Response: The DEC is required to update the mapping and follow the public noticing rules which does not require individual landowner notification. The mapping was primarily created by a third-party contractor with oversight by DEC. An individual landowner could have learned about the map changes through the notice process, including press releases and notifications to their town.

18. If someone has recently purchased a property and wants to build on it and now it has a wetland on the map, do they have to go through a permit process now where they didn't before?

Response: No. The mapping makes it easier for someone to know if there is likely wetland on their property. The absence of wetland mapping does not prove that there is no wetland on a site and a landowner must check for wetlands before building to ensure they are following the regulations.

- 19.** Parcel data is not up to date, and it would be impossible for DEC to contact every landowner.

Response: The DEC agrees that notifying individual landowners of state-wide mapping changes is administratively burdensome.

- 20.** How does the mapping change when people restore wetland? Is that restored wetland protected?

Response: Generally, wetland restoration projects include land protections to ensure efficacy of the project into the future. If the area becomes wetland and the wetland area is found significant in function and value, the area would be protected as Class II wetland. Wetland restoration is different from the creation of stormwater swales, forebays and ponds. Constructed features, when created in upland, are exempt from wetland protections.

- 21.** How is agroforestry regulated when there is wetland?

Response: There are many different agroforestry practices that may or may not trigger the need for a wetlands permit. The DEC recommends that the commenter follow up with specific project questions.

- 22.** Commenter raised questions about their land being on the edge of a beaver-influenced wetland and how that would impact expansion of their sugarhouse.

Response: The area that's jurisdictional is where it is actual wetlands. Beavers can increase the area of wetland, especially in a flat area. The Wetlands Program looks at the wetland area at the time of proposed work. Hayfields, or areas growing food and crop, are exempt from the Vermont Wetland Rules. If there's a change of use, for example from a hayfield to a road or a hayfield to a sugarhouse, a Vermont Wetland Permit may be needed.

- 23.** In areas where acreage is not being added in the wetland, but it's being removed, are those assessments typically done aerially, or are they done via boots on the ground? If it's acreage that's been removed, what's the likelihood that a subsequent delineation will identify wetland?

Response: It's possible there is wetland in an area where the mapping was removed or where there is no mapping. Not all wetlands are mapped. The landscape changes over time, which includes changes to wetland boundaries and

classifications. The work of revising the mapping was primarily created using aerial interpretation with some areas reviewed from the ground.

- 24.** Delineations are a financial burden on our residents and landowners. Are there funds to help support them with the delineation?

Response: The Wetlands Program does not have funds for delineations for individuals. There may be other programs who do, for example, the Agency of Natural Resources Healthy Homes Initiative, where folks can apply to have their wastewater system or well replaced and get funds for delineations. There may be funding available for a restoration or water quality project. The Wetlands Program can conduct field review for free to determine wetland presence or absence. You need a delineation for a permit, so if you can avoid the permit, then you can avoid the cost of a delineation. We can work with individuals to help with some financial constraints.

- 25.** What percent of the advisory wetlands were reclassified as Class II wetlands? Will the advisory wetland layer still exist in this project area?

Response: The advisory wetlands were not wholesale adopted into the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) that is now being moved to the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory. The advisory layer methodology did not use the US Fish and Wildlife standards. The advisory layer was used by our contractors to get a general sense of where there might be wetland, but the contractor still drew the maps to the NWI standards. The advisory layer still exists within this project area.

- 26.** Are the numbers provided (e.g., 111% increase) net increases, including any reductions in wetland areas? Were the increases mostly in/on forested lands, or also in active agricultural areas?

Response: Yes, this is a net increase. Some wetland area was removed. There were increases in both forested and agricultural areas.

- 27.** If you're running power underground that might be in the buffer of a Class II wetland, do people need a delineation? Can they get a permit without a delineation?

Response: The answer depends on the installation technique. The most common technique of trenching and filling would need a permit if the work takes place in a wetland buffer. Directional drilling, where there is no disturbance to the ground surface, would not need a permit. If your project can qualify for one of the General Permits by having less impacts, you might be able to estimate boundaries without getting a formal delineation. Often, if you have wetland and buffer impacts, you'll need a delineation to include within the permit application. The permitting process

first seeks avoidance of wetland and buffer impacts; for example, if you propose to impact a buffer, maybe you can move the project 25 feet over and avoid a wetland permit altogether.

- 28.** Can you repeat what you said about the mapping scale (1:8,000) and what that means for the draft maps? Does that mean the St. Mary's team did not zoom in closer than that scale when drawing the maps?

Response: The scale of wetland mapping required by the US Fish and Wildlife Service was 1:8,000. We encouraged our contractor to zoom in closer than the standard. The contractors were generally mapping wetland areas that were half an acre in size, but they also included some wetland areas as small as a quarter acre in size.

- 29.** Some of the new mapped areas are old ditches. Am I still able to maintain them?

Response: Yes, there is an allowed use for maintenance. If you have an existing structure or facility that you want to maintain, you can do so without a permit. With ditches, the work needs to occur within the existing footprint, no wider and no deeper than what it was before.

- 30.** Who do you reach out to about a less formal delineation?

Response: Reach out to your District Wetlands Ecologist at <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/wetlands/contact-wetlands-staff> . Submit an online Wetland Inquiry Form ([Existing Project Wetland Inquiry Form](#) or [New Project Wetland Inquiry Form](#)), which will put you in our queue for a review of your parcel.

- 31.** Commenters provided questions related to paying taxes on areas mapped as wetland.

Response: Some towns will reduce taxes for wetland on a parcel because wetlands are often considered undevelopable. Having the wetland on the map would help a landowner show the development potential of a lot to be taxed accordingly. The intention of the mapping is to provide information on the general location of wetlands where delineations are still needed to determine what is and isn't jurisdictional or developable.

- 32.** Can buffer zone be hayed, unless it's newly converted land?

Response: If you have a hayfield and it's a mapped Class II wetland or buffer, you can continue to hay it. Those wetlands are exempt from the Vermont Wetland Rules, as long as they're growing food or crop. You need a permit to change the use of the land, for example, from a hayfield to a house, silo, or manure pit. Converting a forested wetland buffer to a hayfield would require a wetlands permit.

33. Commenters discussed their experiences with past wetland violations.

Response: These comments are beyond the scope of review. The new maps will help landowners avoid impacts to protected wetlands and help them understand where they may need a permit.

34. Is this public meeting being recorded? If so, where can people watch it back?

Response: Yes, the public meetings for this notice were recorded. The video recordings of the two public meetings covered in this Responsiveness Summary are posted to the [VTDEC Watershed Management Division's YouTube Channel](#):

1. Arlington: [Wetland Map Update Public Meeting 2026-06-16 - YouTube](#)
2. Morristown: [Wetland Map Update Public Meeting 2026-06-17 - YouTube](#)

Location-Specific Comments

Each location-specific comment is followed by a response and then a screenshot of the web mapper depicting the area subject to the comment.

- 35.** Greensboro. Commenter states that they own the northeastern-most parts of the “U-shaped area.” We believe that the “Current Wetland” outlined in the map in black (the part south and east of the Class 4 Swamp Road) is a more accurate representation of the wetland. The new proposed area may not be a wetland, but we don’t have any way to figure out exactly where the new proposed boundaries are. (location coordinates: 72.2633291°W 44.5998502°N)

Response: The Wetlands Program conducted a detailed desktop review and adjusted the boundary of the polygons in question to increase mapping precision. However, the terrain and vegetation type here make desktop mapping difficult and field work would be needed to create a more detailed map of the area. Note there may be additional areas of wetland not captured on this map.



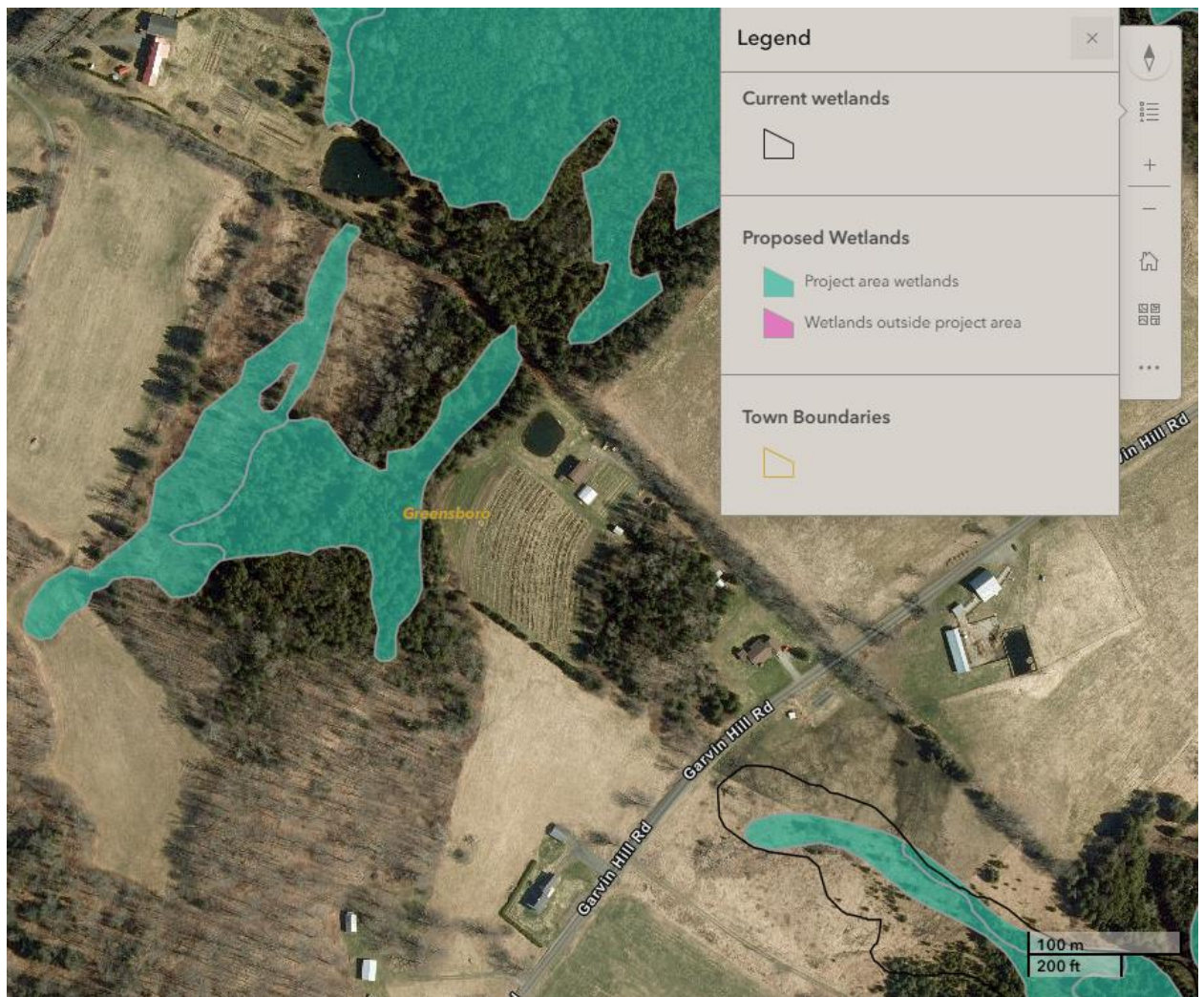
- 36. Greensboro.** Commenter states: “This area is not a wetland. This is almost all grass/lawn that we mow. Generally from west to east this area contains: a gravel driveway, some of our front and side yards, Norway Spruce trees, lingonberries, blueberries, apple trees, raised beds, other planted bushes, and the southern edge of one of our large gardens. There is an open ditch here because there is a town-owned culvert under Baker Hill Road that dumps out onto our land. We almost never get water flowing through that culvert, but we have seen it once when the snow melted fast and there were also heavy spring rains. Water also runs down the town-owned road (both from north to south, and from south to north) toward the open ditch. Once again, it usually only makes it into the ditch if the ground is frozen in late winter or early spring.” (location coordinates: 72.2709721°W 44.5953315°N)

Response: The Wetlands Program conducted a detailed desktop review and reduced the area mapped here in the landscaped yard. Note much of the area in the forest to the east of the yard is likely to be wetland.



37. Greensboro. Commenter believes this area is not wetland. (location coordinates: 72.2707734°W 44.5929306°N)

Response: The Wetlands Program conducted a detailed desktop review and reduced the area mapped. Desktop review indicates there is likely still wetland in some of the forested area on this parcel. The landowner or their representative can request a field visit if they would like more detailed mapping of the area.



- 38. Greensboro.** Commenter states: “I don’t see how this area could be a wetland. This is a cedar forest, with balsam fir, and we have a Forestry Management Plan for the Current Use Program for this section of forest. The bigger, wider section of this area (the northern part) is on our property. The “skinnier” section to the south is on two neighbors’ properties, and we know less about that section (but I don’t think this section would be a wetland, either).”

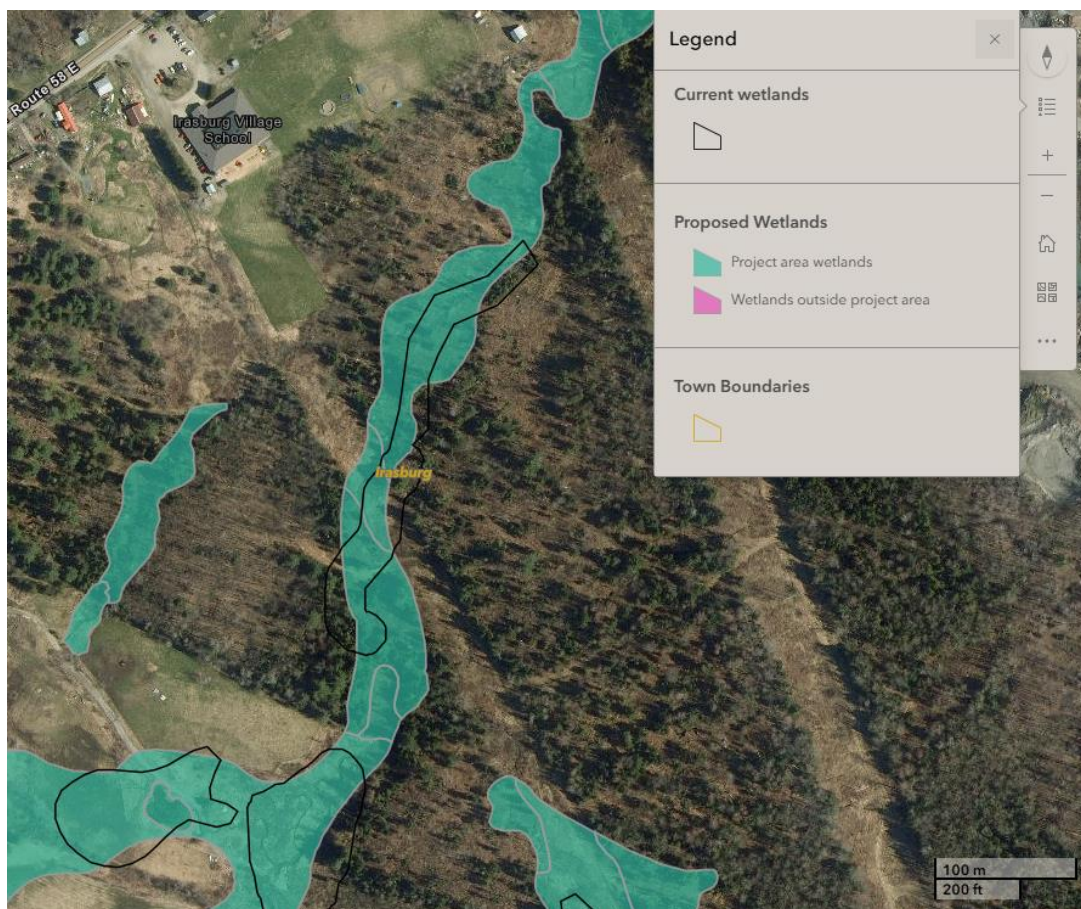
(location coordinates: 72.2683962°W 44.5952351°N)

Response: Northern White Cedar is a common component in several wetland types. There is likely to be a Northern White Cedar Sloping Seepage Forest in this forest block. This wetland type often also has Balsam-fir as a component. The Wetlands Program conducted a desktop review of the area and made edits. The southern area of the forest block appeared overmapped and the mapping was reduced in this area. Current use status and mapping uses different standards from wetland mapping.



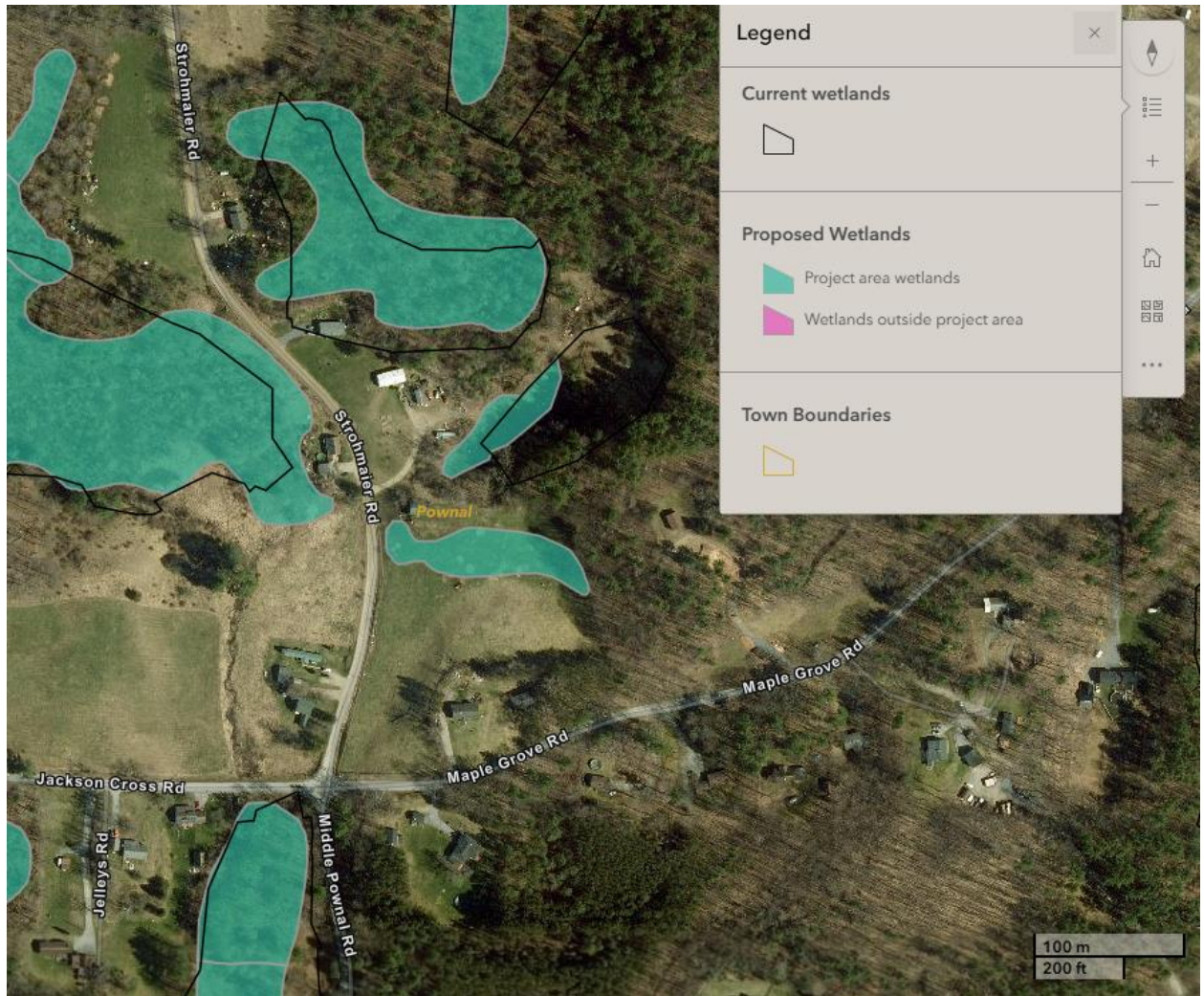
39. Irasburg. Commenter is asking why the area is identified as Class II and would like the wetland area removed from the map. The area is wet seasonally but not year round and a few VAST trails go through this area and VAST trails do not cross wetlands. (location coordinates: 72.2735833°W 44.8011738°N)

Response: The maps do not change the extent of Class II wetland. The maps are intended to be a tool for planning purposes. The Wetlands Program conducted a desktop review of the area and made edits that reduced the wetland area. There are many VAST trails that cross wetlands where wetlands are frozen during the snowmobile season. A field visit would be needed to further refine the mapping and to make a classification determination.



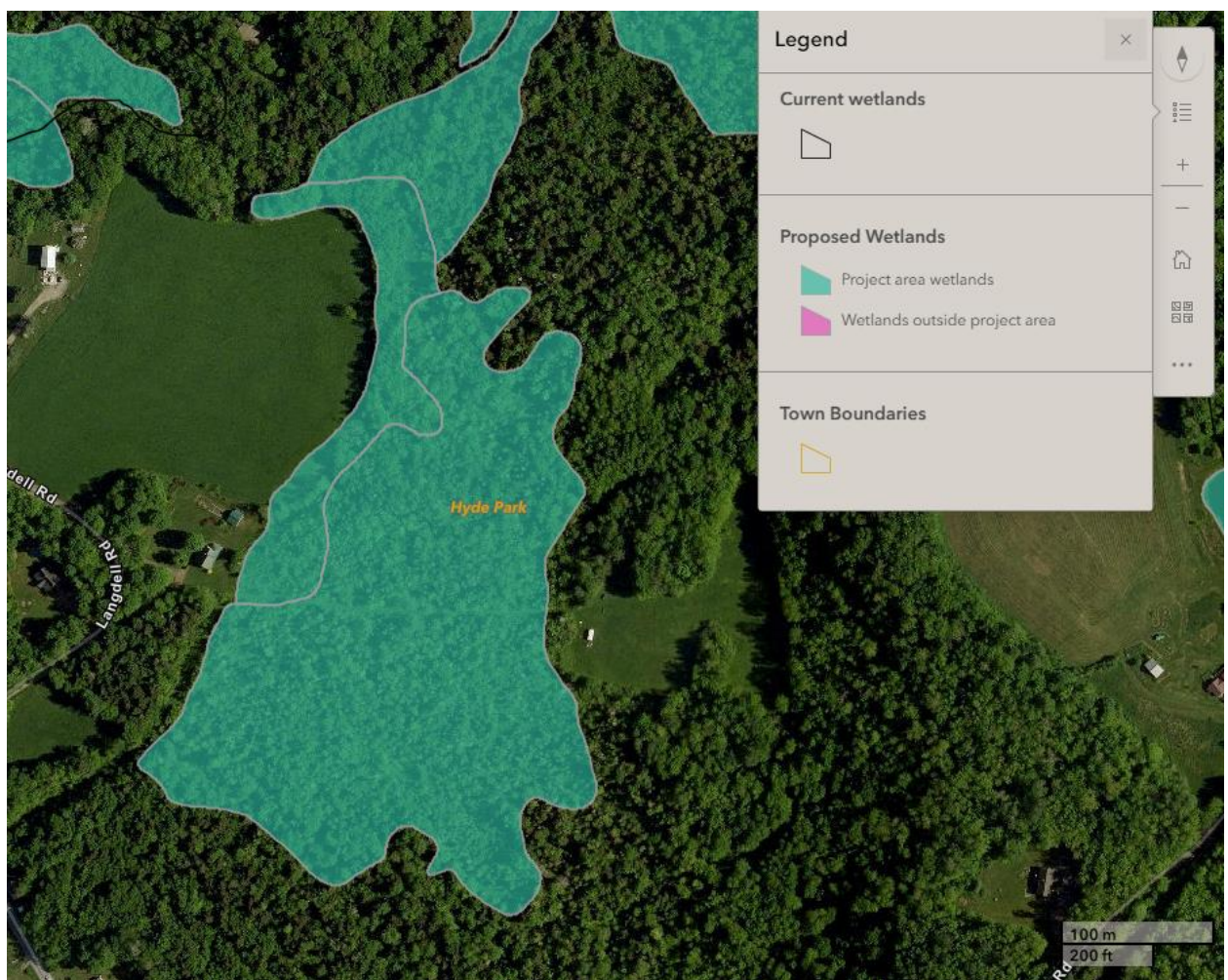
40. Pownal. A wetland polygon is through the middle of a pasture which does not have any water flowing through it. A water trough had to be installed in this area from the well to water the cows. (location coordinates: 73.1920952°W 42.8136851°N)

Response: The Wetlands Program conducted a desktop review of the area and removed the area mapped as wetland because it did not appear to be wetland.



41. Hyde Park: You have extended the wetland onto land that has not changed in 40 years. There is no beaver ponds or brooks in this area and all of a sudden it is a wetland. Now we will have to ask permission to cut any trees around the edge of the field. We have been good stewards of this land for years and have kept the forest from taking over the field. (location coordinates: 72.5725634°W 44.6600478°N)

Response: The updated mapping is meant to show more precision in wetland location but has not changed the extent or location of regulated wetlands. In this case, a desktop review was conducted of the site and staff found that the wetland was mapped too far west, so this area was removed mapping. Please also note that continued maintenance of an existing field including removal of tree species growing in the field area is an allowed use under the Wetland Rules and would not be affected if the site was in fact wetland.



42. Fletcher: This is seasonal overflow from the two springs (the adjacent homesteads on each side) that are located at the north end of the identified area.

(location coordinates: 72.9079537°W 44.7040870°N)

Response: Wetlands often occur downslope from springs. A detailed desktop review of the mapped polygon was conducted, but it is not possible to verify absence of wetland here without a field visit. Therefore, the mapped area was not changed in the final VSWI update.



- 43.** A landowner in Albany, Vermont requested a site visit to review mapping. The site was visited on 7/14/2026. (location coordinates: 72.2943829°W 44.7204551°N)
Response: Following the field visit, adjustments were made to the mapping including addition of a seepage wetland and removal of upland floodplain.

