

## **General Conditions on Tonawanda and Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Areas - 10/7/2019**

In general, water levels are in pretty good shape. However, more rain over the next few weeks will help bring the water up a little in certain marshes and allow continued movement of water into marshes that were drawn down. Some marshes still have dense vegetation as a result of the droughts in 2016 and 2018, but others are starting to open up and provide a better interspersion of vegetation and open water. Fewer impoundment were drawn down because we didn't want to encourage vegetation in marshes that were already dense. Scouting ahead of time is always recommended because conditions in each marsh change from year to year!

### **2019 Drawdowns**

#### **Tonawanda WMA:**

**North Feeder Marsh** was drawn down to replace the pipe in the control box that connects South Feeder Marsh to North Feeder Marsh. Operations staff needed dry conditions to do this work. The draw down was also done to grow moist soil annuals as a source of carbohydrates for migrating waterfowl. We are currently reflooding this marsh with a goal of providing shallow water levels within moist soil annual areas so that ducks can access the seeds and slightly deeper water within the channel that leads to the open water area in the middle of the marsh to allow for canoe/kayak access.



8/24/2019



**Paddy 2** was drawn down and portions were mowed in order to continue to control the dense cattail that is throughout large sections of this marsh. The plan is to relood over top of the mowed cattail when water is available. We are currently trying to move water through the WMA from the east. The north end of Paddy 2, as well as other sections of the marsh, contain a diversity of moist soil annual plants. The abundant seeds from these plants will provide a great source of food for ducks when the Paddy is reflooded.



### **Oak Orchard WMA**

**North Marsh** was partially drawn down to provide diverse habitat over the summer and fall and to grow moist soil annuals. It has been used by a variety of wildlife over the last few months including waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. As the creek comes up it will allow us to shallowly reflood this marsh.



**Belson Paddy** was drawn down to allow for replacement of a pipe (not complete yet) and to mow sections to help control undesirable vegetation such as purple loosestrife. We are hoping to be able to put water back into this Paddy over the next few weeks.

**West Paddy** was drawn down and a dense section of cattail in the north end was mowed to help open up the marsh. We are working on reflooding this marsh with water from Oak Orchard Creek.

**Windmill Marsh** is currently partially drawn down to allow for construction of a ditch that will hopefully allow for better management control of the large portion of the marsh that is infested with water lily. Ducks Unlimited did bathymetry and designed the channel, and we are hiring a contractor to do the work. This work will hopefully be done sometime in the next 2 months once contracting details are finalized. The late drawdown to allow this work to be done will make much of the refuge area on Oak Orchard WMA unavailable for waterfowl during the hunting season. The fall timing of this work is necessary to avoid disturbing the nearby eagle nests during the nesting season.



### **Other Significant Work and Updates for 2019:**

- The new waterfowl hunting blind on Tonawanda WMA has better water conditions this year. Hunting from the blind is by permit only for people with disabilities and people 70+. Call our office if you are interested in getting a permit!



- Completion of new foot bridge (to replace the old one) across the main ditch on Tonawanda WMA



- Phragmites control by contractors planned and ongoing at Oak Orchard and Tonawanda WMAs
- Control of Mile-a-minute infestation at Oak Orchard WMA (please let us know if you see any in the area!)



- Awarded North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Grant through Ducks Unlimited and in partnership with Finger Lakes and Western NY Waterfowl Association to create channels and potholes in dense cattail areas within West Ruddy Marsh on Tonawanda WMA. Design will be done by Ducks Unlimited engineers in spring 2020 and construction is planned for winter 2020/2021.

**Other Drone photos from Tonawanda WMA!**

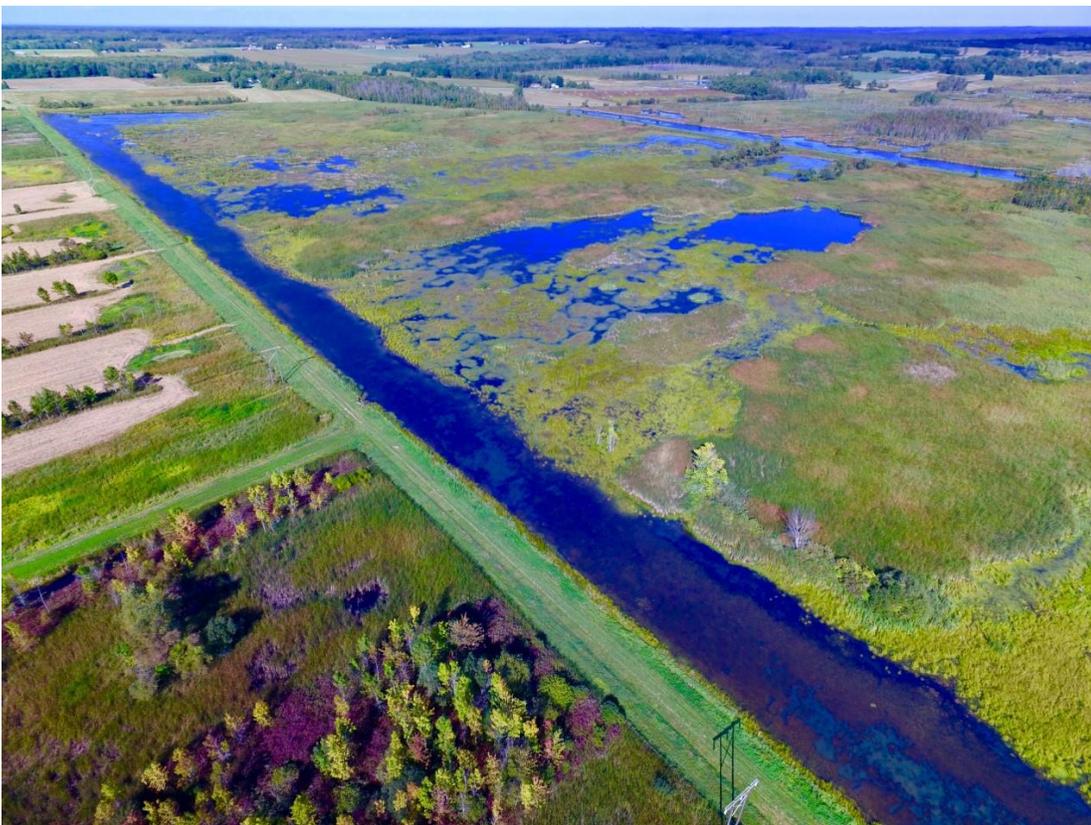
Cinnamon Marsh 8/24/2019



West Ruddy Marsh 8/24/2019



West Ruddy Marsh 9/17/2019



East Ruddy Marsh 8/24/2019



Paddy 1 Marsh 9/17/2019



West Wood Marsh 8/24/2019



East Wood Marsh 8/24/2019



Klossen Marsh 8/24/2019

