Towns: Belchertown, Ware  
Acreage: 1,879  
Wildlife Management Zones: 6,7

Description of property: Sloping hills, rock cliffs, and flatlands lie alongside the cold, clear waters of the Swift River just south of its origin at the Quabbin Reservoir’s Winsor Dam. Sandy soils and gravel deposits give rise to areas of pine barrens, which are globally rare and support a diverse array of plants and animals. Restoration projects conducted by MassWildlife increase the vigor of this unique habitat type. Since these habitats need some form of disturbance to thrive, visitors should expect to see operations like mowing and prescribed fires conducted periodically. Explore the forests, meadows, and beaver ponds on foot or float the river in a canoe or kayak. Stop by the McLaughlin Trout Hatchery or visit MassWildlife’s Connecticut Valley Wildlife District office; both are open to the public.

Location/Access/Parking: The property can be accessed from Ware Road (Route 9), East Street, Cold Spring Road, River Road, and Bondsville Road. Multiple parking areas off East Street provide approximately 10 parking spaces. Boating access for the Swift River off Cold Spring Road has parking spaces for 20 trailers. Parking areas are not maintained in the winter.

Hunting Opportunities: White-tailed deer, black bears, wild turkeys, gray squirrels, eastern cottontail rabbits, and raccoons offer the best hunting opportunities. Ring-necked pheasants are stocked in the northern section of the WMA during the season.

Fishing Opportunities: The consistent water flow and temperature of the Swift River provides great trout fishing opportunities throughout the year. The Swift is stocked with trout in the spring, summer, and fall. Wild brook trout thrive here as well. Note that a section of the river is catch-and-release only during certain times of year. Anglers may also catch largemouth bass, yellow perch, and chain pickerel.

Wildlife Viewing and Other Features: The unique barrens habitat found here is characterized by pitch pine and oaks along with lowbush blueberry, scrub oak, and native grasses. Barrens are home to eastern whip-poor-wills, a wide variety of native bees, and an impressive suite of state-listed moths and butterflies. Birds like American woodcock, ruffed grouse, prairie warblers, eastern towhees, and field sparrows can be found in the grassland and regenerating young forests. Waterfowl, wading birds, and grassland birds—including wood ducks, great blue herons, and bobolinks—and beavers can be seen in the open fields and wetlands. White-tailed deer feed in the meadows in spring and travel to stands of red oak in the fall in search of acorns.

Special WMA Regulations: The Swift River from Winsor Dam to Route 9 is catch & release FLY FISHING ONLY, year-round. From Route 9 to Cady Lane it is catch & release with artificial lures only from July 1-December 31; from January 1-June 30 fish harvest and bait is allowed. During the pheasant season, a blaze orange hat must be worn by all hunters except while night-hunting raccoons or opossums or while hunting waterfowl from within a blind or boat. No personal shall hunt before sunrise or after sunset during the open season on pheasant, except for the hunting of raccoons or opossums between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m.