

WETLAND LAWS

State and local wetland laws require property owners to secure wetlands permits from the Conservation Commission before they can perform work near a wetland or wetland resource area. Violations can result in fines.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

In general, you are not allowed to alter, clear, cut, fill, grade, landscape, build or dump (not even leaves, grass clippings, dirt or your swimming pool's water) in the following areas (unless you have a valid wetlands permit from the Conservation Commission):

- * **Wetland Resource Areas** (which include wetlands, swamps, streams, ponds, floodplains and vernal pools);
- * **100-Foot Buffer Zones** (the upland areas next to Wetland Resource Areas);
- * **200-Foot Riverfront Areas** (the upland areas next to year-round streams);
- * **Bylaw 25-Foot No Activity Zone** (the upland area next to a wetland); or
- * **Bylaw 100-Foot No Activity Zone** (the upland area next to a vernal pool).

In other words, if you are planning ANY work within 100 feet of a wetland or 200 feet of a river or stream, you must first determine whether you need a wetland permit.

WHAT ABOUT MOWING MY LAWN?

Don't worry; mowing your lawn, re-planting gardens and maintaining *existing* structures or landscapes that were built or created prior to the wetlands protection laws are fine.

WHERE SHOULD I START?

Conservation Department staff or a wetlands specialist can help you determine whether you live near a wetland or a wetland resource area.

If you *do* live near wetlands, you will need to:

1. Fill out and submit a wetland permit application (*we have the forms for you*),
2. Attend a public meeting (*very easy*), and
3. Address any of the Commission's concerns regarding the protection of wetlands and resource areas (*we can help*).

Then you may receive a permit for the work.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about any activity that you would like to undertake, please check with the Commission or their Conservation Department staff, who will be happy to help you get the job done, while ensuring that you comply with state and local wetland laws.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like to volunteer, please call us or visit the Commission's website.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION:

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FOXBOROUGH CONSERVATION COMMISSION



A Guide to Living with Wetlands



Wetlands are the Kidneys of Nature

LIVING WITH WETLANDS



The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. Ch. 131, §40) and the Foxborough Wetlands Protection Bylaw (Ch. 267), both administered by the Conservation Commission, protect wetlands from the cumulative adverse effects of alteration from various activities including, but not limited to filling, construction, removal of vegetation, and landscaping. Conserving valuable wetlands helps to protect our water supply, aids in flood and pollution control, provides wildlife habitat, and preserves scenic vistas.

WHAT ARE WETLANDS?

Wetlands are defined both by soils and by the plants that grow in them. An area that is wet or soggy during the spring, but dry for the rest of the year, could be a wetland.



Legally protected wetlands include ponds, streams, rivers, marshes, vernal pools, wet meadows, swamps, and floodplains.

A small depression in the ground that floods during the springtime may be a vernal pool. Free from predatory fish, more than 550 animal species of animals have evolved to breed *only* in vernal pools. Foxborough's Wetlands Protection Bylaw and Regulations protect vernal pools and upland areas within 100 feet of their highest level of flooding.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS

State and local laws protect wetlands because of their importance to our quality of life; their free, yet priceless, services include:

- **Water Supply:** Wetlands help to protect our drinking water supplies' quality and quantity by filtering stormwater runoff. Wetland plants and soils absorb nutrients and trap a wide variety of pollutants, thus acting as nature's stormwater filters.
- **Flood Control:** Wetlands prevent storm damage by storing floodwaters and then slowly releasing it to down-stream areas, thus reducing flood levels.
- **Wildlife:** A wide variety of wildlife lives in Foxborough's wetlands, including herons, songbirds, owls, hawks, otters, raccoons, foxes, deer, turtles, fish, frogs, salamanders and insects.



Wetlands and their naturally vegetated buffer zones provide essential habitats for our native wildlife to breed, feed and live.

- **Scenic Vistas:** These wild wet places also contribute to our town's scenic beauty.
- **Current Threats:** There are many threats to the health of our wetlands including, but not limited to: nutrient input from various sources (stormwater runoff, old septic systems, fertilizers, etc.); herbicides and harmful chemicals; wildlife habitat destruction; non-native (invasive) plants and animals; and the filling, dumping or littering of wetlands or buffer zones.

PLEASE PROTECT OUR WETLANDS!

In addition to abiding by the wetlands laws, here are some ways that you can help:

- **Do Not Use Fertilizers Near Wetlands.** Fertilizer overuse causes algal "blooms" and nuisance plant growth to cover the water, which then rots, causing bad odors and fish-kills. Use the many natural lawn care alternatives that are readily available.
- **Do Not Use Chemicals Near Wetlands.**



Do you *really* know what comes out of your weed killer's bottle or your lawn care company's equipment? Herbicides, pesticides, deicers (including salt), and many other chemicals kill plants and animals indiscriminately.

- **Encourage Native Plants and Wildlife.** Native species are critical to healthy wetland ecosystems. You could restore part of your yard by adding native plants. They are naturally adapted to this area, so are practically maintenance free. Foxborough's downloadable Buffer Zone Restoration Guidelines can help.



- **Get Inspired!** Visit New England Wildflower Society's Garden in the Woods in Framingham; its naturalized *native plant* gardens are beautiful! (www.newfs.org)
- **Volunteer.** You could help us care for our numerous conservation areas and trails by becoming a volunteer land steward. And Eagle Scout projects are also appreciated!

For details, please call or visit our website.