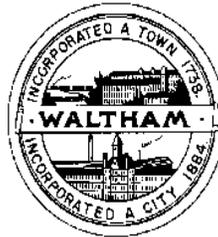
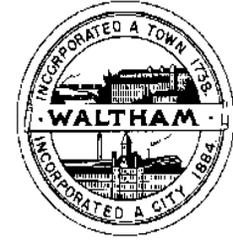


## DID YOU KNOW?

- Wetlands on both public and private property are regulated.
- You are responsible for activity that occurs on your property. Before you hire a tree company, landscaper, or contractor, call the Conservation office to determine if you need a permit.
- Wetlands can be wooded or meadow-like; wetlands often appear dry in the summer.
- The Conservation Commission takes enforcement action for work done without a permit.



**Waltham Conservation  
Commission**  
119 School Street  
Waltham, Massachusetts 02451  
(781) 314- 3846  
[conservation@city.waltham.ma.us](mailto:conservation@city.waltham.ma.us)



## LIVING WITH WETLANDS

### A Guide to Wetland Protection Laws in Waltham

**Read this before you  
dump, cut, or build  
near wetlands.  
You may need a  
permit.**

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## WHAT WETLANDS ARE PROTECTED?

By law, wetlands are defined by the kind of plants that grow in them (such as jewel weed, red maples, or skunk cabbage) and the kind of soils that exist there. The Conservation staff or a wetland specialist can help you determine whether you live near a wetland.

Work may not be performed, except by permit from the Commission:

- Within 100 feet of a:
  - Swamp or marsh
  - Forested wetland
  - Vernal pool
  - Pond
  - Intermittent stream
- Within 200 feet of a stream that flows year round
- Within the 100-year flood zone

Wetlands may not be wet all the time. Low areas that flood in the spring may be wetlands.

Wetlands are valuable because they reduce flooding, provide wildlife habitat, help recharge aquifers, and filter polluted water.

## ARE BUFFER ZONES AROUND WETLANDS PROTECTED?

Yes! Buffer zones, the land within 100 feet of wetlands, are critical in maintaining health and productivity of wetlands.

Laws also regulate work within 200 feet of a stream.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE REGULATED?

The Conservation Commission must permit and allow activities that will alter wetlands or their buffer zones.

Regulated activities include:

- Dumping leaves, brush, grass, debris
- Cutting trees or shrubs
- Reconstructing lawns
- Building or constructing structures or a septic system
- Grading, excavating, or filling
- Changing storm water discharge
- Polluting wetlands or streams

You can maintain lawfully existing (grandfathered or permitted) structures, lawns and landscapes, and you can do some limited vista pruning of trees, but **cutting of whole trees, clearing understory, construction, disturbing earth, or altering drainage requires a permit.**

## WHAT WETLAND LAWS APPLY?

The **Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act** protects the above-mentioned wetlands and buffer zones from construction, filling, landscaping, and cutting.

## WHAT'S THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

The process depends upon the scope and likely impact of the proposed activity. If the projected impact is very minor, you may request, by filling out the appropriate form, that the Commission determine that the proposed activity is sufficiently minor

that you may proceed, under certain conditions, without notifying abutters. If the work is more substantial, on the other hand, you must fill out a **permit application**, notify your abutters, attend a **public hearing**, and resolve any concerns about protecting the wetlands (the office will help). Then you may receive a **permit** for the work.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A PROJECT IN MIND?

1. Determine if your project will occur within a wetland or buffer zone. You start by contacting the office.
2. Complete the appropriate application.
3. Attend a public hearing.
4. Get a permit or other permission before starting work.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO VIOLATORS?

Under the Wetland Protection Act, the Conservation Commission can require illegally altered land to be restored to its original condition, and can issue fines.

## HELP PROTECT WETLANDS!

*You can do more than just obey the law.*

- Do not use fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, or deicers near wetlands.
- Encourage native vegetation and native wildlife.

