

Living with Wetlands

A Quick Guide to Wetland Protection in Stoneham

Did you know...?

- Stoneham has a wealth of wetland resources.
- Wetlands can be forested, shrub swamps, or meadows; wetlands often appear dry in the summer.
- Wetlands on both public and private property are regulated
- Many houses and their yards predate wetlands legislation and might not be permitted in the same locations today. A 25 foot natural buffer or “no disturb zone” is required for new construction.
- Owners are responsible for activity that occurs on their property. Before you hire a tree company, landscaper, or contractor contact the Conservation Commission office to determine if you need a permit.

The Wetlands Protection Act and Stoneham Wetlands Protection Bylaw protect wetlands and the public interests they serve, including:

- Protection of public and private water supply
- Protection of groundwater supply
- Flood control
- Storm damage prevention
- Prevention of pollution
- Protection of wildlife habitat

These public interests are protected by regulating activities that may alter wetlands.

What Wetlands Are Protected?

Wetlands are defined by the kind of plants that grow in them and the kind of soils that exist there. The Conservation Agent or a wetland specialist can help you determine whether you live near a wetland. Wetlands may not be wet all the time. Low areas that flood in the spring may be wetlands.

The property owner must obtain permission for any work:

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

What Activities Are Regulated?

The property owner must obtain permission from the Conservation Commission for activities that will alter wetlands or their buffer zones. Regulated activities include:

- Dumping yard waste, debris or manure

- 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 (grand-fathered or permitted) structures, lawns and landscapes, and do some limited vista pruning of trees, but cutting of whole trees, clearing understory, construction, earth disturbing activities, or drainage altering activities require a permit.

As long as wetlands are not adversely affected, most projects can be permitted!

What Should I Do If I Have A Project In Mind?

1. Determine if your project will occur within a wetland or buffer zone -- the Conservation Commission can help, or contact a Wetland Scientist.
2. Call the Conservation Office with questions. 781-279-2696
3. Complete the required application. <https://www.mass.gov/lists/wetlands-permitting-forms>
4. Attend a public hearing.
5. Get a permit before starting work.

Help Protect Our Wetlands!

Wetlands function best in a natural state.

- Do not clear their edges or clean them up. Bordering vegetation protects water quality and wildlife thrives in edge areas, brush piles, rotting logs, and other “untidy” spots.
- Do not use fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, or deicers near wetlands. Fertilizer, synthetic or natural, will cause excessive growth of algae and other vegetation in a wetland. Many natural lawn care alternatives are available.
- Encourage native vegetation and native wildlife in your landscaping <https://grownativemass.org/> and learn about invasive plants. <https://www.mass.gov/massachusetts-prohibited-plant-list>

Questions?

Contact Stoneham Conservation Commission 781-279-2696
www.stoneham-ma.gov/588/Conservation-Commission

Thank you!