

Friends of Stoneham
P.O. Box 80282
Stoneham, MA 02180
July 14, 2014

Town of Stoneham
Conservation Commission; Ellen McBride, Chr.
Stoneham Town Hall
Stoneham, MA 02180

Attn: Ms. McBride:

Clearly established buffer zones are vital to the protection and preservation of the environment of our community. Upon review of the codes of the Stoneham Conservation Commission regarding wetlands, it is noted that the by-law for a wetland buffer zone is stated as follows: "continuous strip no less than twenty-five (25) feet in width, untouched and in its natural state, shall be left undisturbed adjacent to those areas meeting the description of a wetland...." The Friends of Stoneham request examination of this by-law and want it to be amended. We expect increased protection over what is currently approved and believe it is important to tighten regulations to read as follows: *continuous strip no less than one hundred (100) feet in width, untouched and in its natural state, shall be left undisturbed adjacent to those areas meeting the description of a wetland.* This revision will create a zone that defines the important role in preservation of all the characteristics of a wetland: physical, biological, and chemical.

Further examination of the Town of Stoneham Conservation Commission by-laws, reveals the absence of important definitions which are vital when evaluating developable properties, especially land areas that include wetlands. Friends of Stoneham see no definition of an *intermittent stream* in the current bylaw. The Weiss Farm property has an intermittent stream. An intermittent stream, according to information on USGS and EPA sites (see enclosed information), is sensitive to hydrologic impacts. In the process of land development it is imperative that an intermittent stream must be clearly identified and mapped, since it could be subject to possible piping or in-filling. Streams of this nature should require a two hundred (200) foot buffer zone. In addition, an intermittent stream is part of a perennial stream. Its role must be understood. A major impact of changes to the intermittent stream can result in hydrological changes including damages to surrounding private property, damage to the environment as a result of flooding, erosion, etc. Furthermore, within the area of the proposed building site lies Meetinghouse Swamp. This, too, proposes a need for examination.

In addition to the wetland concerns it may be noted that over the years there have been changes to Weiss Farm property. It seems prudent that The Stoneham Conservation Commission demands examination of the composition of land fill that has been trucked onto this property. What is the content of recent fill? What is being covered by new fill? How has the topography changed as a result of land fill? We must prevent further changes in the soil composition, the topography, and the

hydrology that will alter the biological conditions of this entire property and the neighboring property. It is imperative that the Town Of Stoneham Conservation Commission considers tightening eligibility for building/development, whether new bylaws apply to the Weiss Farm issue or for subsequent building sites proposed for Stoneham. Clearly established definitions and more protective by laws inherently increase protection and all play an important role in the preservation in the environment of Stoneham.

It is our understanding that under Chapter 18, Article VI, Section 18-37 of the Stoneham Town Code, as amended, the Zoning Board of Appeals must hold a public hearing within 30 days of receipt of the Application for Comprehensive Permit on the Commons at Weiss Farms, which was received by the ZBA on or about June 30. The ZBA may request the appearance of representatives or local officials, such as members of the Stoneham Conservation Commission, at the hearing if it considers it necessary or helpful in reviewing the Application. In making its decision, the ZBA must take into consideration the recommendations of local officials. If your commission remains unclear as to the findings regarding this property, the Stoneham Conservation Commission must request additional consultant services. The fees for such services are the responsibility of the developer whose application is in question.

The Friends of Stoneham ask you to give our requests/concerns serious consideration. We appreciate your care and concern for Stoneham.

Sincerely,



Mary Lou and John Bracciotti
John Eaton
Marie Meibaum
Paul and Linda Armano
Mary Pecoraro
Russell and Linda Wilson
Paula Sarno

cc. Stoneham Board of Selectmen

Seasonal streams (intermittent) flow during certain times of the year when smaller upstream waters are flowing and when groundwater provides enough water for stream flow. Runoff from rainfall or other precipitation supplements the flow of seasonal stream. During dry periods, seasonal streams may not have flowing surface water. Larger seasonal streams are more common in dry areas.

Rain-dependent streams (ephemeral) flow only after precipitation. Runoff from rainfall is the primary source of water for these streams. Like seasonal streams, they can be found anywhere but are most prevalent in arid areas.

Despite their seasonal or temporary appearance on the landscape, seasonal and rain-dependent streams are critical to the health of river systems, are hydrologically and biologically connected to the downstream waters, and provide many of the same functions and values as rivers and larger streams.

Importance of Streams

Streams, headwaters and streams that flow only part of the year provide many upstream and downstream benefits. They protect against floods, filter pollutants, recycle potentially-harmful nutrients, and provide food and habitat for many types of fish. These streams also play a critical role in maintaining the quality and supply of our drinking water, ensure a continual flow of water to surface waters, and help recharge underground aquifers.

Small streams, headwaters and streams that flow only part of the year protect against floods, and provide flood and erosion protection:

Flood and erosion protection:

Headwaters, seasonal streams and rain-dependent streams absorb significant amounts of rainwater, runoff and snowmelt before flooding. These streams have significant storage ability and play a critical role in protecting downstream communities by moderating flooding during heavy flow and by maintaining flow during dry weather. Over the last 30 years, freshwater flooding has cost an average of \$7.8 billion in direct damage to property and crops each year.¹

Additional Resources:

You will need Adobe Reader to view some of the files on this page. See [EPA's PDF page](#) to learn more.

- [EPA Field Operations Manual for Assessing the Hydrologic Permanence and Ecological Condition of Headwater Streams](#)
- [The Ecological and Hydrological Significance of Ephemeral and Intermittent Streams in the Arid and Semi-arid American Southwest \(PDF\) \(116 pp, 2.6MB, About PDF \)](#)
- [EPA Office of Research and Development Headwater Streams page](#)

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