

WETLAND LAWS

The **Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act** and **Wellesley's Wetlands Protection Bylaw** require landowners to secure permits

from the Wetlands Protection Committee before doing work near a

Resource Area (wetland, swamp, stream, pond, land subject to flooding, vernal pool, etc.). Violation of these laws can result in fines.



You may not clear, cut, fill, dump (*anything*, including leaves, grass clippings, dirt, etc.), grade, landscape or build upon the following areas without a permit from the Wetlands Protection Committee:

- **Resource Areas** (wetland, swamp, stream, pond, land subject to flooding, vernal pool, etc.)
- 100-foot **Buffer Zone** Resource Areas
- **Riverfront Area** (the area that is located within 200 feet of the bank of a stream that flows year-round)

You may maintain existing ("grandfathered") structures and landscapes, as long as:

- They were created/built before the wetlands laws were enacted, or
- They are projects that were approved by the Wetlands Protection Committee,

but only if the proposed maintenance will not result in any harm to a wetland Resource Area. In other words, maintenance work such as mowing your (existing) lawn and/or re-planting your garden (without prior approval of the Committee) will be fine.

If you are proposing to build, landscape, grade, and/or cut vegetation:

- within 200 feet of a river or stream, or
- within 100 feet of any other wetland

you must first determine whether you will need to file a wetlands application for your project. In general, you will need to submit an application, attend a public hearing or meeting, and resolve any concerns that the Committee may have about your proposed project. You will then receive a (three year) wetland permit for the proposed work.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call the Wetlands Protection Committee's office. For more information, you can also visit the Committee's website:

www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_NRC/wetlands/index



Wetlands Protection Committee

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Special Credits to:

Maynard Conservation Commission
Framingham Conservation Commission
Jeff Gammon
Sandra Coffey



WELLESLEY WETLANDS PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Guide to Living with Wetlands



Wetlands are the Kidneys of Nature

LIVING WITH WETLANDS



State and local laws protect wetlands from construction, filling, landscaping, and cutting. In densely developed towns such as Wellesley, conserving wetlands helps to protect our water supply, aid in flood control, and provide wildlife habitat.

WHAT ARE WETLANDS?

The legal definition of “wetlands” includes: ponds, streams, rivers, marshes, vernal pools, red maple swamps, wet meadows, and lands subject to flooding. Wetlands might not actually be wet all the time.

A depression in the ground that floods in the spring may be a vernal pool - a temporary pond that hosts a wealth of unique wildlife and some threatened species. Vernal pools are protected under Wellesley’s Wetlands Protection Bylaw.

A soggy or mushy area may be a wetland protected by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection



Act and/or Wellesley’s Wetland Protection Bylaw (both are administered by the Wetlands Protection Committee).

Wetland areas are defined by the species of plants that grow in them, such as jewelweed,

red maples or skunk cabbage. Soils (conditions) are often used to define a wetland. A wetland specialist can help you determine whether you live near a wetland.

IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS

State and local laws preserve wetlands because of their contribution to our quality of life. Wetlands store floodwater to release slowly down stream preventing storm damage and reducing flood levels.

They help ensure the quality and quantity of our public and private water supply by allowing water to filter slowly into the ground. Wetlands absorb excess nutrients and trap many kinds of pollution, filtering water before it reaches our rivers, streams, ponds and lakes.



Many types of animals, including herons, ducks, hawks, songbirds, otters, muskrats, fishers, raccoons, deer, foxes, turtles, salamanders, frogs, snakes, fish, and insects use Wellesley’s marshes, streams and ponds. Wetlands and their vegetated buffer zones provide places for a wide variety of animals to feed, breed and live. In addition, these wild wet places provide Wellesley’s residents with much needed open space, and contribute to our Town’s scenic beauty.

Currently, the health of our wetlands is threatened by excessive nutrient input (from fertilizers, etc.), the invasion of non-native plant species, trash/litter, and pollutants that run into roadway storm drains.

HELP PROTECT WETLANDS

In addition to abiding by the laws, here are other ways that citizens can help:

Do not use fertilizers near wetlands.

Fertilizer overuse causes algal “blooms” and nuisance plant growth, which can cover our ponds. When these unwanted plants die, they rot, causing bad odors and fish-kills.

Do not use chemicals near wetlands,

including herbicides, pesticides, or deicers. They kill plants and animals indiscriminately.



Encourage native vegetation and wildlife.

Native species are critical to healthy wetland ecosystems. Consider restoring part of your yard with native plants. For more information, see “Wetlands Restoration Guidelines,” downloadable from the Committee’s website. In addition, the N.E. Wildflower Society’s Garden in the Woods has excellent resources about landscaping with native plant species (www.newfs.org).

Join Wellesley’s Trails Committee. Help care for over 900 acres of protected open space and trails. Visit their website at: www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_Trails/index

Learn more about our natural resources. If you have questions, ideas or concerns, please call the Wetlands Protection Committee’s office at (781) 431-1019, x2294.