

## WETLAND LAWS

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Holliston Wetland Protection Bylaw require landowners to secure permits from the Conservation

Commission before doing work near a **Resource**

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



You may not clear, cut, fill, dump (even leaves, grass clippings, or dirt), grade, landscape or build in the following areas without a permit from the Commission:

- Wetland Resource Areas (wetland, swamp, stream, pond, land subject to flooding, vernal pool, etc.)
- Upland Resource Areas (100-foot area around a Wetland Resource Area)
- Riverfront Areas (the area of land within 200 feet of a stream)

Anyone who wants to build, landscape, grade, and/or cut vegetation within 200 feet of a river or stream or within 100 feet of a wetland or vernal pool must first apply to the Conservation Commission. In general, you must fill out a permit application (we have the forms for you), attend a public meeting (easy), and resolve any concerns about protecting the wetlands (we help). Then you may receive a permit for the work. Call the Commission's office for details and for any help you may need.

You can, of course, maintain existing structures and landscapes that were created before the wetlands laws were enacted or that have been given approval by the Commission, as long as that maintenance doesn't degrade the wetland.

So don't worry! Mowing your lawn and re-planting and maintaining your garden are fine!

If you have questions about an activity that you would like to undertake, check with the Conservation Commission—we'll give you pointers on getting the job done while complying with wetland laws.

**For more information, please visit our website at:**

[www.townofholliston.us/ConCom/index.html](http://www.townofholliston.us/ConCom/index.html)

Holliston Conservation Commission  
Town Hall  
703 Washington Street  
Phone 508-429-0607

Hours: 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
Monday through Friday

Conservation Agent's Email:  
[piercej@holliston.k12.ma.us](mailto:piercej@holliston.k12.ma.us)

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for the use of this pamphlet:**  
Maynard Conservation Commission  
Framingham Conservation Commission

## HOLLISTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

### A 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 Holliston, conserving wetlands helps to ensure our water supply, to aid in flood control, and to provide wildlife habitat.

## WHAT ARE WETLANDS?

The legal definition of wetlands include: ponds, streams, rivers, marshes, vernal pools, red maple swamps, wet meadows, and lands subject to flooding. Wetlands may 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 Holliston's Wetland Protection Bylaw.

A soggy or mushy area may be a wetland protected by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Holliston's Wetland Administration Bylaw (both are administered by the Holliston Conservation Commission).



Bylaw wetlands are defined by the kind of plants that grow in them, such as jewel weed, red maples or skunk cabbage. The kind of

soil can also be used to define a wetland. The Conservation Commission or a wetland specialist can help 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 streams and rivers.



Animals such as herons, ducks, hawks, songbirds, river otters, muskrat, fishers, deer, foxes, raccoons, turtles, salamanders, frogs, snakes, fish, insects, and many endangered species use the marshes and ponds of Holliston. Wetlands and their buffers provide places for a wide variety of animals to feed, breed and live. Also, these wild wet places provide Holliston with much needed open space which contributes to the scenic beauty of our town.

Currently, the health of our wetlands is threatened by the invasion of non-native plants, excessive nutrients, litter, and pollutants from storm drains.

## HELP PROTECT WETLANDS

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

**Do not use fertilizers in or near wetlands.** Fertilizer overuse causes algal “blooms” and nuisance plant growth to cover the water. It then rots causing bad odors and fish-kills.

**Do not use herbicides, insecticides, pesticides or deicers near wetlands.** They kill plants and animals indiscriminately.



**Encourage native vegetation and native wildlife.** Native species are critical to healthy wetland ecosystems. Consider restoring part of your yard to native plants; contact the Commission for a copy of their Buffer Zone Restoration Guidelines. In addition, the New England Wildflower Society's Garden in the Woods has excellent resources on landscaping with native species.

**Join a group of volunteer land stewards.** The Conservation Associates volunteer to care for Holliston's 700-plus acres of open space and trails. Help build bridges, kiosk, trails and join the camaraderie of a clean-up day. If interested, please call Marc at (508) 429-8627 or visit their website: [www.townofholliston.us/ConAssoc/index.htm](http://www.townofholliston.us/ConAssoc/index.htm).

**Learn more about our natural resources.** If you have questions, ideas, or concerns, call the Commission at (508) 429-0607.