

WHAT WETLANDS ARE PROTECTED?

Quite simply wetlands are lands that are wet. By law, wetlands are water resources 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. A Conservation Commissioner or a wetland specialist can help you determine whether you live near a wetland.

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

The Commission must issue a permit for work that will remove, fill, dredge, or alter any wetland resource or:

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



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 that flows throughout the year .

WHAT WETLAND LAWS APPLY?

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

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE REGULATED?

The Conservation Commission must permit activities that will alter wetlands or their buffer zones. Examples of regulated activities include:

- Building or constructing structures or a septic system
- Grading, excavating, or filling
- Changing storm water discharge
- Polluting wetlands or streams
- Dumping harmful materials

You can maintain lawfully existing (grandfathered or permitted) structures, lawns and landscapes, and you can do some limited vista pruning of trees. Tree removal may or may not require a permit. Please contact the Conservation Commission to determine if your proposed project does or does not require a permit.

WHAT'S THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

In general, you must fill out a **permit application** (we have the forms for you), notify your abutters (we have those forms too), attend a **public hearing** (it's easy), and resolve any concerns about protecting the wetlands (we 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 – [see the graphic on the back of this flyer.](#)
2. Contact the Conservation Commission.
3. Complete the required application.
4. Attend a public hearing.
5. Get a permit before starting work.



WHAT HAPPENS TO VIOLATORS?

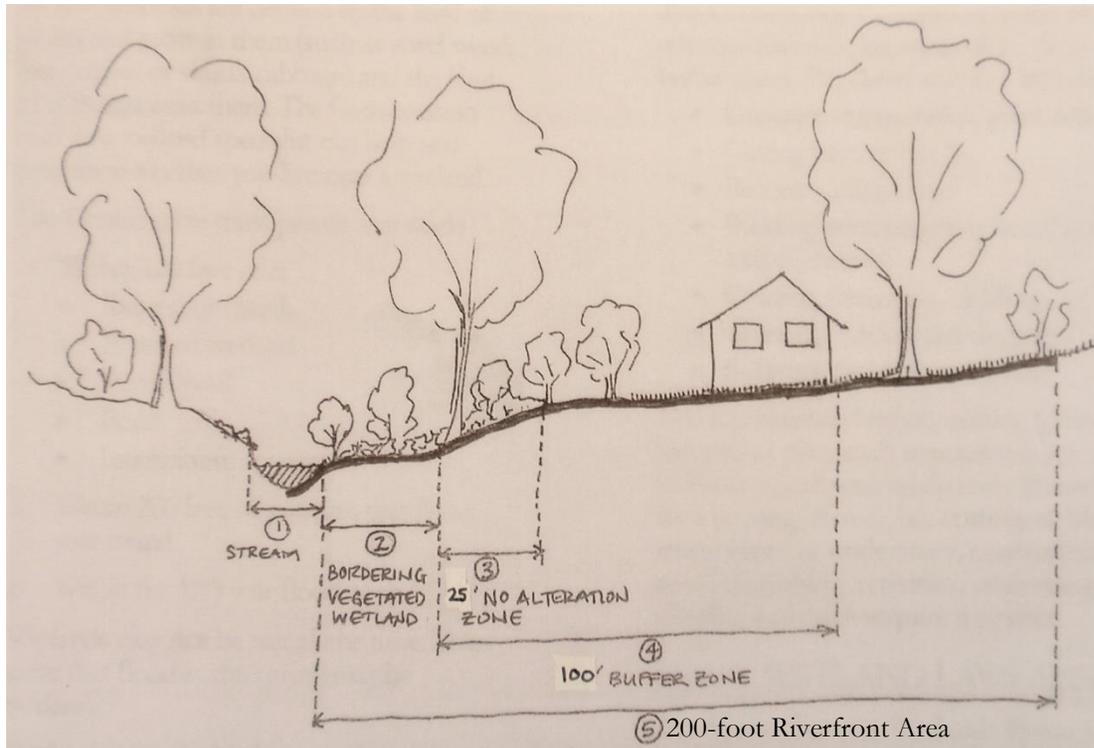
Violations include unpermitted activities in or near a wetland. Under the Wetlands Protection Act, the Conservation Commission can require illegally altered land to be restored to its original condition and can issue fines.

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.

Wetland Resource Areas and Buffer Zones



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 contact The Conservation Commission to determine if you need a permit.
- Wetlands can be wooded or meadow-like; wetlands often appear dry in the summer.
- Many areas in Chesterfield fall under wetland regulations and may exist on your property.
- The Conservation Commission takes enforcement action for work done without a permit.

LIVING WITH WETLANDS

A Guide to Wetland Protection Laws in Chesterfield



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

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