



Easton Wetlands Regulations: A Resident's Guide to Compliance and Protection

A Publication of the Town of Easton Conservation Commission

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What are Wetlands?

Simply put, wetlands are areas of saturated soil, such as swamps, marshes and bogs. Ponds,

lakes, streams and rivers are also wetland resources. Even areas that dry up during part of the year, such as intermittent streams and vernal pools are wetland resources. In addition to the resources themselves, protective zones around the areas (called buffer zones) protect these features from human impacts and provide valuable wildlife habitat. Buffer zones can extend up to 200 feet from the wetlands or rivers, thus even if there is no visible water feature on your property; there may be buffer zones, which are regulated by the Easton Conservation Commission, under the state Wetlands Protection Act, Riverfront Act and Town of Easton bylaws.

Why are Wetlands Important?

In 2007, over 250 million gallons of Easton's groundwater were used by town residents and businesses¹. Our wetland resource areas are an essential component in the protection (continued on page 2)

¹ Source: 2007 Annual Report of the Town of Easton Water Division
http://www.eastondpw.org/water/AnnualReports/2007_report.htm



ATVs Prohibited on Easton's Conservation Lands

Over 2,000 acres of land are set aside for the enjoyment of Easton Residents. We encourage you to use this land for passive recreation, including: hiking, jogging, canoeing, dog walking, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing. Unfortunately, the use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorbikes, three wheelers and other motorized vehicles have destroyed habitat, killed wildlife, endangered pedestrians, and caused erosion.



As of November 26, 2007, motorized vehicles are PROHIBITED outside of specified parking areas on Conservation-owned land. This includes Wheaton Farm and Town Forest. ATVs are also prohibited by state law in the Hockomock Swamp and at Borderland State Park.

A violation of these regulations is **punishable by a fine** and/or additional penalties for violations under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and/or Easton Wetlands By-law and remediation of any damages. The complete list of Conservation land use prohibitions and a map of Conservation lands is available on line at www.easton.ma.us

Why are Wetlands Important? (continued)

of this drinking water by providing water purification, groundwater recharge and pollution prevention. In addition, wetlands offer flood control and valuable habitat for plants and animals.



What does the Conservation Commission have to do with me?

Conservation commissions were established in 1957 under Massachusetts General Law which gave the cities and towns the authority to promote, develop and protect natural resources, including wetlands. An integral part of the Easton's Department of Planning & Community Development, the Conservation Commission administers and enforces state laws and town regulations and bylaws affecting wetland resources.

Under Massachusetts law and Easton Bylaws, the Commission has jurisdiction over activities which will alter wetlands and/or their associated resource areas located within 100 feet (and sometimes 200 feet) of a

resource area, as defined by these regulations. This requires individual homeowners or their contractors to notify the Commission of their intent to work in these areas by filing an application BEFORE beginning work.

Permitted Activities in a Wetland or Buffer Zone

Many activities near wetland resource areas are allowed and do not require Commission approval, including:

- Mowing an existing lawn
- Working in an existing garden
- Pruning and maintaining existing landscaping
- Cleaning out culverts

Prohibited Activities

Other activities are prohibited in wetland resource areas and are subject to fines, including but not limited to:

- Dumping of yard waste such as leaves, grass clippings, or other waste products, including manure
- Dumping dirt or otherwise filling a wetland
- Draining or pumping water from a wetland, pond or stream
- Building dams or drainage ditches
- Cutting trees/clearing brush



Contact the Commission BEFORE Starting a Project



A large percentage of Easton homeowners have wetland resource areas on or near their property. If you plan to do any work in a wetland resource area, within the 100 foot buffer zone of a wetland, or within 200 feet of a river, such as:

- Tree removal (including dead trees) or other clearing of vegetation
- Grading or excavation
- Septic system repair or replacement
- Fence installation
- New landscaping
- Construction of a deck, pool, driveway, shed or home addition

or any other activity that might alter wetlands or their buffer zones, you must contact the Commission. **Do not assume your contractor will automatically pull all necessary permits.**

If you do need approval, or are unsure, our professional staff are ready to answer your questions and help guide you through the application process.

The complexity of the approval process is commensurate with the type and scale of the activity proposed. Minor projects such as removing a few trees may be handled by a simple approval letter, while a large construction project may require a detailed application and evaluation during one or more public hearings.



QUESTIONS?

Our Land Use Agent, Stephanie Danielson, is available to answer your questions. Please contact her at 508-230-0641 or SDanielson@easton.ma.us.

REMEMBER

Wetlands function best in a natural state. Resist the urge to clear them or clean them up if they exist on your property. Wildlife often thrives in areas with brush piles, rotting logs, and other things some people might consider unsightly.

Clearing or cleaning the area without Conservation Commission approval can result in fines.



The Easton Conservation Commission

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