

WHAT ARE WETLANDS?

“Wetland resource areas” include the commonly known *cattail marshes* and open water *ponds*, also *rivers* that generally flow throughout the year, 200-foot *riverfront areas* which border rivers on both sides, *intermittent streams* that dry up during part of the year, low-lying *flood plains* and *vernal (springtime) pools*. These areas (except riverfront areas) are surrounded by “*buffer zones*” – 100-foot-wide protective zones around wetlands that protect wetlands from human impacts and provide valuable wildlife habitat.

Wetland resource areas provide critical habitats for wildlife and help maintain the aesthetic beauty of our town. They also provide priceless yet “free” services like the following for Webster:

- Natural drinking water purification
- Groundwater recharge of our watersheds
- Flood controls
- Pollution prevention for runoff through groundwater infiltration



***Most wetlands in Webster recharge our drinking water supplies both public and private.**

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE REGULATED?

The Conservation Commission **must permit activities** that will alter wetlands within their buffer zones (100ft) and Riverfront Areas (200ft), and Vernal Pools.

Regulated activities include:

- Placement of any sheds or like structure, or storage of materials and stock piles.
- Cutting of trees or shrubs
- Reconstructing lawns, all walls (including any retaining) or landscaping and patios

- Building of structures, redevelopments, all structural repairs (windows, siding, doors, roofs, additions, decks, or work to septic systems
- Any earth moving needed, grading, excavating, or filling including (driveways)
- Changing stormwater discharge, erosion control, replacement of pipes or drains
- **Docks and Marinas:** MassDEP Chapter 91 Requires Registering a dock or and structure that is over water.

You can maintain lawfully existing (grand-fathered or permitted) structures, lawns and landscapes, and do some limited pruning of trees, but **cutting of whole trees, branch trimming, any construction, earth disturbing activities, or drainage altering activities require a permit.**

WHAT WETLAND LAWS /LOCAL REGULATIONS APPLY?

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

Webster Conservation Commission Setback Policy – Online at the Commissions Website

WHAT’S THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

You must fill out a **permit application online (NOI, RDA, ANRAD)**, notify your abutters (we have those forms), attend a **public hearing**, and resolve any concerns about protecting the wetlands (we help). Then you may receive a **permit** for the work pending commission decision with an Order of Conditions for the project.

Do not assume your contractor will automatically pull all necessary permits.

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. Call the Conservation Office with questions.
3. Complete the required application.
4. Attend a public hearing with commission and public at-large.
5. Get a permit **before** starting work.



WHAT HAPPENS TO VIOLATORS?

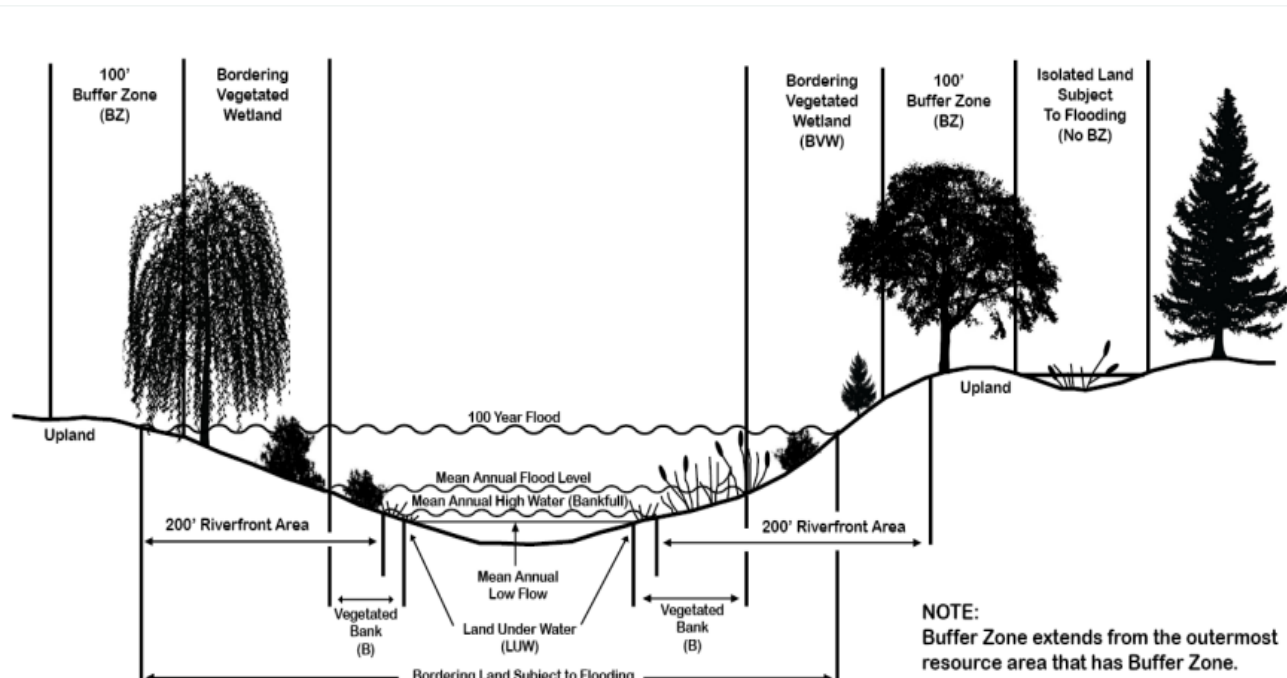
Violations include but are not limited to the following:

- Any work without a permit in the 200ft within Riverfront Area, any work within the 100ft Buffer without a permit
- Cutting of trees or shrubs within Riverfront Area, a wetland, or buffer
- Altering lakefront including but not limited to boat ramps, weed/aquatic plant removal without board approval, adding sand, gravel, rocks, other materials to the resource
- Dumping into Riverfront Area, wetland or buffer zone: grass clippings, leaves, brush, yard waste and other considered waste materials.
- Polluting: dumping trash, any fill, any illicit discharge of chemicals, stormwater, or wastewater, storage or placement of any items such as but not limited to sheds, boats, vehicles, trailers, docks, planters

Under the Wetland Protection Act, the Conservation Commission requires illegally altered land to be restored to its original condition and may issue fines for violations.

Wetland Resource Areas and Buffer Zones

A Guide to Wetland Resource Protection in The Town of Webster



Information on understanding Wetlands in Webster.

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 any contractor call the Conservation office to determine if you need a permit. **You and your contractor(s) can be held liable for violations.**
- Wetlands can be wooded or meadow-like. Wetlands can also often appear dry in the summer.
- A large percentage of Webster falls under wetland regulations (so your property may, too).
- The Conservation Commission takes enforcement action for work done without a permit.

HELP PROTECT WETLANDS OF WEBSTER!

You can do more than just obey the law.

- Do not use fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, or deicers near wetlands as they end up in ground water.
- Clean up trash near the street and wet areas.
- Adopt a catch basin in your neighborhood. Keep it clear and clean for proper Stormwater flow to limit flooding.
- If you see something, say something to the commission office. Water protection is everyone's business.
- Utilize Native Vegetation plantings in gardens and projects. A list can be found on the Commission Website
- All docks must have Chapter 91 Permits through the MassDEP. These permits last up to 15 yrs. Commission will request registration if visiting your property.

Do you require a permit for work on your property? Are you potentially in a violation situation?

Please Read. The Commission is here to help you!

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For more information visit at:
<https://www.webster-ma.gov/330/Conservation-Commission>