
What are Wetlands?

The **Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act** protects wetlands and buffer zones on public as well as private property. By law, wetlands are defined by the kind of plants that grow in them (such as red maples or skunk cabbage) and the kind of soils that exist there. Wetland resource areas include: cattail marshes, open water ponds and lakes, rivers, intermittent streams, low-lying flood plains and vernal pools. Wetland resource areas are surrounded by 100-foot buffer zones that protect them from human impact and provide valuable wildlife habitat. Dudley also has a 25-foot No Disturb Zone within the 100-foot Buffer Zone. Riverfront areas are protected by 200-foot zones on each side of a river.

Why are Wetlands Important?

Wetland resource areas provide critical habitat to wildlife and help maintain the aesthetic beauty of our town. They also provide priceless “free” services including:

- Drinking water purification
- Groundwater recharge
- Flood control
- Pollution prevention

All Dudley residents benefit from these services because of our reliance on natural settings for property values, wells for drinking water, and septic systems for waste disposal. The Dudley Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting these areas, by enforcing state and local wetlands protection laws and regulations.

Wetland Activities

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

- Mowing existing lawns
- Working existing gardens
- Pruning and maintaining existing landscaping
- Planting native vegetation
- Cleaning out culverts
- Hiking, horseback riding, and other passive recreation

Activities that might require approval are:

- Tree removal, vegetation clearing
- Grading or excavation
- New landscaping
- New construction, additions, etc

Activities that are prohibited in wetland resource areas or buffer zones and are subject to fines (some are allowed, but only with approval):

- Dumping yard waste - leaves, grass, etc, or waste products, including manure
- Constructing animal paddocks
- Dumping dirt or other fill
- Draining or pumping water to or from or a wetland, pond or stream
- Building dams or removing beaver dams

Wetlands function best in a natural state. Do not clear them or “clean them up.” Wildlife thrives in areas with brush piles, rotting logs, and other things some people might consider “untidy.”

What Happens to Violators?

Violations include unpermitted:

- Dumping of yard waste in a wetland or buffer zone
- Cutting of trees or shrubs within Riverfront Area, wetland, or buffer
- Building without a permit within Riverfront Area, wetland, or buffer

Under the Wetland Protection Act, the Commission can require illegally altered land to be restored to its original condition, and can issue fines.

What Should I Do if I Have a Project in Mind?

You are responsible for activity that occurs on your property. Before you hire a tree company, landscaper, or contractor, call Conservation to determine if you need a permit.

In general, you must fill out an **application** (*we have the forms for you*), notify your abutters (*we have those forms, too*), attend a **Meeting or Public Hearing** (*it's easy*), and resolve any concerns about protecting the wetlands (*we help*). Then you may receive approval for the work.

If you have hired a contractor, do not assume your contractor will automatically pull all necessary permits. If you do need a permit, professional staff are ready to answer your questions and help guide you through the application process.

The Commissioners want to see Dudley landowners proceed with their projects while protecting the valuable wetland resources that benefit everyone.

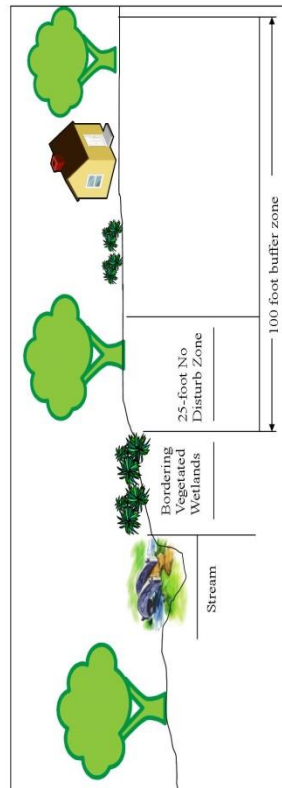
Chemical Use & Water Conservation: A Few Words About Lawn Care



Do you know the chemicals that come out of your weed killer bottle or the lawn care spray truck can be harmful to humans, pets, wildlife and plants? They do a lot more than make your lawn green.

The Commission *recommends* that you avoid using chemicals anywhere on your property due to the potential hazards that they pose to your drinking water, your children, and your pets. If you live next to a pond, fertilizer use can also cause excessive plant growth in the water, harming both the environment and aesthetics. Many natural lawn care alternatives are readily available – and they work. Call our office for details.

The Commission also recommends you use water responsibly when maintaining your lawn or other landscaping. Excessive lawn watering contributes to severe low-flow conditions in streams and rivers in all but the wettest years. Call our office for ideas and resources that will help you reduce your water use while still maintaining a beautiful yard.



DUDLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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click Departments, then click Conservation

LIVING WITH WETLANDS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WETLAND PROTECTION IN DUDLEY



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