

Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands contribute to the natural beauty of Ipswich but also perform many other functions vital to a healthy environment. These include

- **pollution control**
- **protection of ground water**
- **surface water and water supply protection**
- **flood prevention and stormwater control**
- **wildlife habitat and fisheries**
- **erosion control**
- **surface water and water supply protection**
- **plant habitat**



What is a wetland?

Wetland resource areas are defined under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and the Ipswich Wetlands Protection Bylaw. They include but are not limited to

- **salt marshes**
- **coastal beaches**
- **coastal dunes**
- **land under ponds**
- **vernal pools**
- **riverfront areas**
- **streams and inland banks**
- **coastal banks**
- **tidal zones**
- **coastal and inland areas subject to flooding**
- **isolated areas of standing water**
- **freshwater vegetated wetlands**

The WPA and the Bylaw also establish buffer zones around most resource areas in which work may be regulated. These buffer zones, depending on the nature of the resource, are from 100 to 200 feet wide. Wetlands bordering water bodies, known as **Bordering Vegetated Wetlands**, are defined by their plants and soils.

What is the Conservation Commission and what does it do?

The Ipswich Conservation Commission is a seven member board of Town residents. Commissioners are appointed by the Town Manager, are approved by the Board of Selectmen, and serve three year terms.

The Conservation Commission is charged with the protection of the values and functions of wetlands. The Commission derives its authority from the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (MGL Ch.131, s.40) as well as The Ipswich Wetlands Protection Bylaw (Ipswich Bylaws Ch. XVIII.) It regulates all activities that may affect or alter a wetland resource area.

The Town of Ipswich employs a full time Conservation Agent who is trained in procedures and requirements and in wetlands issues and environmental law. The Agent is familiar with all wetland resource areas, monitors permitted work in these areas, and advises the Conservation Commission on issues which come before it including violations of the WPA and the Bylaw.

What are your responsibilities?

Ipswich abounds in wetlands of all kinds. It is a diverse environment containing every type of resource protected under the applicable laws. Many properties contain or abut wetlands or buffer zones, and activities on them are probably subject to Commission jurisdiction. If you plan to do any work in an area under Commission jurisdiction, you must first contact the Conservation Commission to determine the permit and filing requirements.

The areas subject to jurisdiction are wetland resource areas, the 100 foot buffer zones of those areas, the 200 foot buffer zones of perennial streams, and the 150 foot buffer zone of the Parker River-Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Activities subject to jurisdiction include but are not limited to

- **paving**
- **tree removal**
- **vegetation clearing**
- **grading, excavation, filling**
- **new landscaping**
- **new construction or additions, sheds, pools**

You may be required to file an application for approval of your project and to attend one or more public hearings. You may also need the services of a wetlands specialist and an engineering firm. The process can take time, so plan accordingly.

Wetland Do's and Don'ts

Some routine activities in wetland resource areas and buffer zones may not require approval of the Conservation Commission.

These include

- mowing an existing lawn
- working in an established garden
- pruning trees and shrubs for plant health
- maintaining existing landscaping
- engaging in passive recreation such as hiking
- cleaning out culverts by hand
- planting native vegetation species

Other activities are prohibited in wetland resource areas or buffer zones or require a permit, so you must inquire of us. Prohibited activities include

- dumping yard waste such as leaves, grass, sticks, or other waste including manure
- dumping dirt or other fill
- storing plowed snow
- draining or pumping water into or out of a wetland, pond, or stream
- building dams or removing dams, including beaver dams
- expanding an existing lawn or garden
- building driveways or parking areas



Your awareness of laws and adherence to regulations will aid in protecting Ipswich's valuable wetland resources and can help you avoid delays in project commencement or possible enforcement actions including fines due to illegal activities.

Please contact the Conservation Commission Office at the Town Hall for advice about how to proceed with your project.

This information is not meant to be a complete or definitive summary of wetlands law or of your obligations in adhering to proper procedure. Its purpose is to help make you aware that such laws and regulations exist, and that there are a wide variety of wetland resource areas in Ipswich. We encourage you to **ASK BEFORE ACTING**. Please help us protect the environment.



A Guide to Wetlands Protection in Ipswich



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CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

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