



Introduction to Wetlands Protection in Rowley

What are Wetlands?

Wetlands usually occur near bodies of water such as ponds and streams. However, they can occur in isolated wet areas. Wetlands are defined by their vegetation, soils, and hydrology. *At certain times of the year these areas can look dry* but some combination of indicator characteristics are present throughout the year. Wetlands include ponds, rivers, streams, hillside seeps, bogs, wet meadows, swamps, marshes, vernal pools, and intermittent (seasonal) streams.

Most of these Wetlands Resource Areas are surrounded by “Buffer Zones” – 100-foot-wide protective zones that protect wetlands from human impacts and provide valuable wildlife habitat. Riverfront Area is resource area bordering both sides (200 feet on each side) of a stream that generally flows throughout the year.

Why are Wetlands Important?

Apart from their aesthetic and recreational values, Wetlands perform important environmental functions that benefit the Town of Rowley. Among these FUNCTIONS AND VALUES are:

- Groundwater recharge
- Drinking water purification
- Floodwater storage and control
- Erosion and sedimentation control
- Water pollution prevention
- Wildlife and plant habitat protection.

Wetlands are important in the Town of Rowley because the Town depends upon both public and private wells, and private septic systems. Wetlands allow rainwater, and surface water to be passed through a natural "filter" that introduces clean water into recharge areas and groundwater that feeds public and private wells.

Contact the Conservation Commission BEFORE Starting a Project

If you plan to do any work in a wetland, within 100 feet of the edge of a wetland, or within 200 feet of a stream, you must call the Rowley Conservation Commission Office. This work may include activities such as:

- Tree removal and other vegetation clearing
- Grading or excavation
- General construction, additions, adding a pool
- Septic system upgrade or repair
- Adding a deck, gazebo, or shed
- New landscaping
- Any other activity that might alter Wetlands or their Buffer Zones.

Do not assume your contractor will automatically apply for all necessary reviews and permits. If you do need approval and a permit, the Conservation Agent is ready to answer your questions and help guide you through the application process. The Rowley Conservation walk-in office hours are Monday to Thursday from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM. The Conservation Agent is available Monday through Thursday; some work is in the field, so please call first to assure that someone is available. The office phone number is 978-948-2330. The e-mail address is conservation@townofrowley.org.

The complexity of the review and permitting process is commensurate with the type and scale of activities proposed. Minor projects such as removing a few trees at the outer edge of a Buffer Zone may be handled by a simple administrative permission. Larger construction jobs usually require a detailed application (Notice of Intent) and evaluation during one or more public hearings.

The Conservation Commission wants to see Rowley landowners proceed with their projects while simultaneously protecting the valuable Wetland Resource Area functions and values that benefit everyone.

Activities Near and In Wetlands

Many activities near Wetlands Resource Areas are allowed and do not require Conservation Commission approval, including:

- Mowing an existing lawn
- Working in an existing garden
- Pruning and maintaining existing landscaping in developed yards
- Planting native vegetation
- Hiking, horseback riding, and other passive recreation
- Cleaning out culverts by hand.

Other activities are prohibited in Wetlands Resource Areas and are subject to tickets with fines (some are allowed, but only with a permit):

- Dumping yard waste such as leaves, grass, wood chips, etc., or other waste products, including manure
- Constructing animal paddocks
- Dumping dirt or other fill
- Draining or pumping water from a wetland, pond, or stream
- Building dams or removing beaver dams
- Cutting trees or brush in a Wetland or in a Buffer Zone.

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

Rowley's Wetlands...

Improve and protect water quality and quantity, provide flood storage, and provide important wildlife habitat.