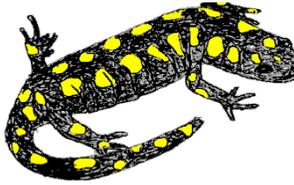


### **What are Wetlands?**

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 Topsfield. Among these FUNCTIONS AND VALUES are:

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

Wetlands are important in the Town of Topsfield 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 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 Topsfield 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

or 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 Administrator is ready to answer your questions and help guide you through the application process. Topsfield's Conservation walk-in office hours are Monday and Wednesday from 9:00 AM to Noon. The Conservation Administrator is available Monday through Friday; some work is in the field, so please call first. The office phone number is 978-887-1510. The E-mail address is [conservation@topsfield-ma.gov](mailto:conservation@topsfield-ma.gov) .

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 Administrator permit (TCCAP). Larger construction jobs usually require a detailed application and evaluation during one or more public hearings (Notice of Intent).

*The Conservation Commission wants to see Topsfield 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
- 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):

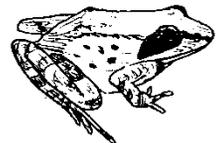
- Dumping yard waste such as leaves, grass, wood chips, etc., or other waste products, including manure
- Constructing animal paddocks
- Dumping dirt or other fill
- Draining or pumping water from a wetland, pond, or stream
- Building dams or removing beaver dams
- Cutting trees or brush in a Wetland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

### **Topsfield's Wetlands...**

**Improve and protect water quality and quantity, provide**

**flood storage and provide important wildlife habitat.**



**Removal of Invasive Plant Species.**

The Conservation Commission wants to assist landowners with projects to eradicate invasive plant species. You are encouraged to contact the Conservation Administrator for guidance and recommendations for a project to remove invasive plants from your property.

**Lawn Care – Limit Chemical Use and Conserve Water**

Except when undertaking a project to remove invasive plants, the Conservation Commission urges you to avoid using chemicals such as weed killers and pesticides on your property due to the potential hazards that they pose to your drinking water, your children, and your pets. Many natural lawn care alternatives are readily available – and they work. Call the Conservation office for details.

The Commission also encourages you to use water responsibly when maintaining your lawn and other landscaping. In all but the wettest years, excessive lawn watering contributes to severe low-flow conditions in streams and rivers, such as in the Ipswich River, which flows through Topsfield and is one of the most threatened rivers in the country. Call our office for ideas and resources that will explain how you can reduce your water use while still maintaining a beautiful yard.

**The Commission needs your help.**

To protect the wetland resources of Topsfield, the Conservation Commission needs the help of Topsfield residents. Please call if you have questions about projects on your property or in your neighborhood. Attend meetings. Certify vernal pools. Get involved in protecting your environment and everyone’s water resources

**TOPSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**Topsfield Town Hall**  
**8 West Common Street**  
**Topsfield, MA 01983**  
**978-887-1510**  
[conservation@topsfeld-ma.gov](mailto:conservation@topsfeld-ma.gov)

TOPSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
 8 WEST COMMON STREET  
 TOPSFIELD, MA 01983

TOPSFIELD RESIDENT/LANDOWNER  
 TOPSFIELD, MA 01983

UNITED STATES  
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 01983

# A GUIDE TO WETLANDS PROTECTION IN TOPSFIELD

The Topsfield Conservation Commission was established by town meeting in March 1960 "to coordinate, recommend and on occasion conduct conservation programs in Forestry, Recreation, Fish, Wildlife, Soil & Water Conservation Education."

In 1972 statewide legislation was passed which regulates all activity in and around wetlands. This charged local Conservation Commissions with implementing The Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and its associated regulations. In addition, in 1983 Topsfield Town Meeting adopted a General Wetlands Bylaw, which gives the Commission added jurisdiction and powers of enforcement.

On August 7, 1996, the Massachusetts Legislature gave more protection to the state’s rivers and streams with the passage of the Rivers Act. This law created a new Resource Area called a **Riverfront Area**. Riverfront Area is a 200-foot zone from the “mean annual high-water line” on both sides of a stream or river that generally flows throughout the year.

**Your Conservation Commission**

The Topsfield Conservation Commission is a five-member commission, aided by a full-time Administrator, a part-time Administrative Assistant, and a Minutes Secretary. The Conservation webpage is at [www.topsfeld-ma.gov/conservation](http://www.topsfeld-ma.gov/conservation) . Commissioners are appointed for a three-year term by the Board of Selectmen and volunteer their time to help protect the wetland resources of Topsfield.

The Conservation Commission typically meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM in the Topsfield Town Library conference room. All meetings are open to the public. If you would like to assist the Commission or become involved in conservation matters, please contact the Conservation Administrator at 978-887-1510 or [conservation@topsfeld-ma.gov](mailto:conservation@topsfeld-ma.gov) .