

When is a permit required from the Conservation Commission?

Any activity that involves disturbance of the soil or vegetation in or within 100 feet of wetlands, streams, water bodies, lands subject to flooding, salt marsh, coastal dune or beach or within 200 feet of perennial streams, requires a permit from the Conservation Commission. Contact the Conservation Office at (978)499-0358 for more information or see DEP regulations - 310 CMR 10.00.

BEFORE Starting a Project Contact the Commission:

A large percentage of Salisbury homeowners have resource areas on or near their property. If you plan to do any work in a resource area, within the 100 foot buffer zone of a resource area, or within 200 feet of a river, such as:

- Tree removal or other vegetation clearing
- Grading or excavation
- New landscaping
- Construction, additions, etc.
- Seawalls, bulkheads or revetments

or any other activity that might alter wetlands or their buffer zones, you must contact the Commission.

Do not assume your contractor will automatically pull all necessary permits. If you do need approval, professional staff is ready to answer your questions and help guide you through the application process.

The complexity of the approval process is commensurate with the type and scale of the activity proposed. Minor projects such as removing a few trees may be handled by a simple approval letter, while a large construction project may require a detailed application and evaluation during more than one public hearing.

What are Wetlands?

Just because you don't see open water doesn't mean you're not looking at a wetland or other resource area. "Wetland resource areas" include the commonly known cattail marsh and open water pond, but also include rivers and the 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. Some other resource areas that are within the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission include Dunes, Beach, Salt Marsh, Land Under Water Bodies.

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 yet "free" services including:

- Drinking water purification
- Groundwater recharge
- Flood control

- Pollution prevention

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

Wetland “Do’s and Don’ts”

Many activities near wetland resource areas are allowed and do not require 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

Other activities are prohibited in wetland resource areas or buffer zones and are subject to enforcement:

- Dumping yard waste such as leaves, grass, 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

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