

The Proposed Plympton Wetlands Bylaws

The PURPOSE of this new bylaw is to help protect the wetlands, water resources, and wildlife habitat of Plympton for the benefit of all residents.

The town's bylaws will complement the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act by minimizing environmental damage caused by construction, degradation, or pollution.

Current protection provided by the state Wetlands Protection Act includes:

- ✓ Wetlands that have surface connections to ponds and rivers are protected from most development or construction activities.
- ✓ Town Conservation Commissions are responsible for monitoring and enforcing protection of watersheds and natural resources, but are provided no funding.
- ✓ Landowners and builders are required to submit detailed plans of projects for review and approval before proceeding with construction activities.
- ✓ The Act authorizes towns to establish their own local regulations (bylaws) to address particular needs of the community.

What's New? The town's proposed bylaws will update and supplement the Act with the following needed protections not covered in existing state regulations:

- Isolated wetlands that are not connected to rivers or ponds by surface water will be given protection.
- Vernal ponds will be included as protected wetland resources.
- The bylaws establish a protected space around wetlands including a 25 foot "no touch" zone and a 50 foot "no build zone" unless activity has no negative impact.
- Filing fees will be increased to help pay for improved monitoring and administration of wetlands protection and with ongoing expenses of environmental conservation.
- Violators of state or town wetland laws will be subject to penalties.

Questions & Answers

Q. Why does Plympton need wetland bylaws?

A. Southeastern Massachusetts is experiencing tremendous growth with housing and commercial development rapidly appearing in new areas. The number of new houses, yards, septic systems, and roads is endangering our groundwater, natural resources, property values, and community natural beauty. The state Wetlands Act establishes minimal levels of protection and current zoning laws do not adequately address the increasing threat to our water resources.

Q. How will these new bylaws benefit residents in Plympton?

A. The quality of life and value of our homes depends upon the quality of our natural environment. The bylaws will help protect our vital drinking water and the wetlands that we are so fortunate to have. Homeowners can be confident that threats to our water will be minimized and new residents will have clear, practical guidelines to follow.

Q. Will the new bylaws prevent construction of new homes or improvements?

A. Absolutely not! The purpose of the bylaws is to make sure that ongoing development happens with a minimum amount of environmental damage and impact on public welfare. Continued development in this region is inevitable and these bylaws will help preserve the water resources that we depend on for our natural beauty and public welfare for everyone in Plympton.

Q. Why is there so much concern about the town's wetlands?

A. Wetlands are the most ecologically productive ecosystem, they provide vital benefits to the community, and they are universally being degraded by the expansive development of the region. Specifically, the quality and supply of our groundwater depends directly on the ability of surface wetlands to collect and purify the water. If we allow our wetlands (large and small) to be destroyed or contaminated, our future sources of reliable, clean drinking water will be reduced and the quality of all natural resources endangered.

Q. How will the town pay for the added wetlands protection?

A. The bylaws will not cost the town anything. Filing fees paid by builders will be used to cover minimal administrative costs. No tax dollars will be used!