



"Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. Water saturation largely determines how the soil develops and the types of plant and animal communities living in and on the soil. Wetlands may support both aquatic and terrestrial species. The prolonged presence of water creates conditions that favor the growth of specially adapted plants and promote the development of characteristic wetlands soils."

-- EPA, America's Wetlands: Our Vital Link Between Land and Water

Why Are Wetlands Valuable To You?

Wetlands function to protect the following eight statutory interests:

- 1) Protection of public and private water supply: Water quality is also improved by removing nutrients, pesticides, and bacteria from surface waters as they are absorbed or broken down by plants, animals, and chemical processes within the wetland.
- 2) Protection of ground water supply: Wetlands are reservoirs for rainwater and runoff. As this water is released into the ground, it recharges water tables and aquifers, and extends the period of stream flows in many parts of the United States.
- 3) Flood Damage Protection: Wetlands help to prevent flooding by temporarily storing water, allowing it to soak into the ground or evaporate.
- 4) Storm damage protection: Wetlands help reduce peak water flows after a storm by slowing the movement of water into tributary streams which allows potential floodwaters to reach mainstream rivers over a longer period of time.

- 5) Prevention of pollution: By filtering out sediments and contaminants suspended in runoff water wetlands help protect lakes, reservoirs, and other resources.
- 6) Protection of land containing shellfish: Wetlands enhance the decomposition of organic matter, incorporating nutrients back into the food chain.
- 7) Protection of fisheries: Wetlands are the nursery and spawning grounds for 60 to 90 percent of U.S. commercial fish catches.
- 8) Protection of wildlife habitat: Both coastal and inland wetlands provide breeding, nesting, and feeding habitat for millions of waterfowl, birds, fish, and other wildlife.

Other values society receives from wetlands include providing sites for hunting, fishing, trapping, photography, outdoor classrooms or environmental education, and the enjoyment of open spaces. The ecological diversity and high productivity of wetlands make them one of the most scenic features on any landscape.

What does the Mashpee Conservation Commission do?

In Mashpee the seven-member Conservation Commission applies the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (131 ss 40) and Regulations (310 CMR 10.00) as well as the Mashpee Wetlands Protection By-Law (Chapter 172). The Commission protects wetlands surrounding areas such as: rivers, streams, marshes, bogs, vernal pools, beaches, lakes, saltmarshes, ponds, rivers, streams and tidal flats. This office also coordinates the newly formed Land Stewardship Committee. Feel free to contact our office with questions: #508-539-1400 ext. 540.