

# AUBURN WETLANDS PROTECTION BYLAW



**ADOPTED MAY 1, 2012**

**CHAPTER 12**  
**AUBURN WETLANDS PROTECTION BYLAW**  
**GENERAL BYLAWS**

12.14: Wetland Protection

(1) Purpose

- (A) The purpose of this By-law is to protect the wetlands, water resources, flood prone areas, and adjoining upland areas in the Town of Auburn by controlling activities deemed by the Conservation Commission likely to have a significant or cumulative effect on resource area values, including but not limited to the following: public or private water supply, groundwater supply, flood control, erosion and sedimentation control, storm damage prevention, including water quality, prevention and control of pollution, fisheries, wildlife habitat, rare species habitat (including rare plant and animal species), agriculture, aquaculture, and recreation values deemed important to the community (collectively, the “resource area values protected by this By-law”).

(2) Jurisdiction

- (A) Except as permitted by the Conservation Commission, no person shall commence to remove, fill, dredge, build upon, degrade, discharge into, or otherwise alter the following resource areas: any wetlands, marshes, wet meadows, bogs, swamps, springs, banks, reservoirs, lakes, ponds of any size, beaches, and lands under water bodies; intermittent streams, brooks and creeks; lands adjoining these resource areas out to a distance of one hundred (100) feet, known as the buffer zone; perennial rivers, streams, brooks, and creeks; lands adjoining these resource areas out to a distance of two hundred (200) feet, known as the riverfront area; lands subject to flooding or inundation by groundwater or surface water; and lands subject to flooding (collectively the “resource areas protected by this By-law”). Said resource areas shall be protected whether or not they border surface waters.
- (B) The jurisdiction of this By-law shall not extend to uses and structures of agriculture that enjoy the rights and privileges of laws and regulations of the Commonwealth governing agriculture, including work performed for normal maintenance or improvement of land in agricultural or aquacultural uses as defined by the Wetlands Protection Act regulations, found at 310 CMR 10.04.

(3) Exemptions and Exception

- (A) The applications and permits required by this By-law shall not be required for work performed for normal maintenance or improvement of land in agricultural and aquacultural use as defined by the Wetlands Protection

Act regulations at 310 CMR 10.04.

- (B) The applications and permits required by this By-law shall not be required for maintaining, repairing, or replacing, but not substantially changing or enlarging, an existing and lawfully located structure or facility used in the service of the public to provide electric, gas, water, telephone, telegraph, or other telecommunication services, provided that written notice has been given to the Conservation Commission prior to commencement of work, and provided that the work conforms to any performance standards and design specifications in regulations adopted by the Commission.
  - (C) The applications and permits required by this By-law shall not be required for emergency projects necessary for the protection of the health and safety of the public, provided that the work is to be performed by or has been ordered to be performed by an agency of the Commonwealth or a political subdivision thereof; provided that advance notice, oral or written, has been given to the Commission prior to commencement of work or within twenty-four (24) hours after commencement; provided that the Commission or its agent certifies the work as an emergency project; provided that the work is performed only for the time and place certified by the Commission for the limited purposes necessary to abate the emergency; and provided that, within thirty (30) days of commencement of an emergency project, a permit application shall be filed with the Commission for review as provided by this By-law. Upon failure to meet these and other requirements of the Commission, it may, after notice and a public hearing, revoke or modify an emergency project approval and order restoration and mitigation measures.
  - (D) Other than as stated in this By-law, the exceptions provided in the Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 131, Section 40) and regulations (310 CMR 10.00) shall not apply under this By-law.
- (4) Applications and Fees
- (A) Written application shall be filed with the Conservation Commission to perform activities affecting resource areas protected by this By-law. The permit application shall include such information and plans as are deemed necessary by the Commission to describe proposed activities and their effects on the resource areas protected by this By-law. No activities shall commence without receiving and complying with a permit issued pursuant to this By-law.
  - (B) The Commission in an appropriate case may accept as the application and plans under this By-law any application and plans filed under the Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 131, Section 40) and

regulations (310 CMR 10.00), but the Commission is not obliged to do so.

- (C) Any person desiring to know whether or not a proposed activity or an area is subject to this By-law may in writing request a determination from the Commission. Such a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) or Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) filed under the Act shall include information and plans deemed necessary by the Commission.
  - (D) At the time of an application, the applicant shall pay a filing fee specified in regulations of the Commission. The fee is in addition to that required by the Wetlands Protection Act and regulations.
  - (E) Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53G and regulations promulgated by the Commission, the Commission may impose reasonable fees upon applicants for the purpose of securing outside consultants including engineers, wetlands scientists, wildlife biologists, or other experts in order to aid in the review of proposed projects. Additional consultant fees may be requested where the requisite review is more expensive than originally calculated or where new information requires additional consultant services, as specified by the regulations of the Commission.
- (5) Notice and Hearings
- (A) Any person filing a permit or other application or RDA or ANRAD or other request with the Conservation Commission at the same time shall give written notice thereof, by certified mail (return receipt requested) or hand-delivered, to all abutters at their mailing addresses shown on the most recent applicable tax list of the assessors, including owners of land directly opposite on any public or private street or way, and abutters and others, within one hundred (100) feet of the property line of the applicant, including any in another municipality or across a body of water. The notice shall state a brief description of the project or other proposal and the date of any Commission hearing or meeting date if known. The notice to abutters also shall include a copy of the application or request, with plans, or shall state where copies may be examined and obtained by abutters. An affidavit of the person providing such notice, with a copy of the notice mailed or delivered, shall be filed with the Commission. When a person requesting a determination is other than the owner, the request, the notice of the hearing and the determination itself shall be sent by the Commission to the owner as well as to the person making the request.
  - (B) The Commission shall conduct a public hearing on any permit application, RDA, or ANRAD with written notice given at the expense of the applicant, at least five (5) business days prior to the hearing, in a

newspaper of general circulation in the municipality. The Commission shall commence the public hearing within twenty-one (21) days from receipt of a completed permit application, RDA, or ANRAD unless an extension is authorized in writing by the applicant. The Commission shall have authority to continue the hearing to a specific date announced at the hearing, for reasons stated at the hearing, which may include the need for additional information from the applicant or others as deemed necessary by the Commission in its discretion.

- (C) The Commission shall issue its permit, other order or determination in writing within twenty-one (21) days of the close of the public hearing thereon unless an extension is authorized in writing by the applicant. The Commission in an appropriate case shall combine its hearing under this By-law with the hearing conducted under the Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 131, Section 40) and regulations (310 CMR 10.00).

(6) Coordination

- (A) Any person filing a Notice of Intent with the Commission shall provide copies thereof to the boards and officials as required by the regulations of the Commission. The Commission reserves the right to solicit comments from boards and officials to assist in evaluation of Notices of Intent. The applicant shall have the right to receive any such comments and recommendations and to respond to them at a public hearing of the Commission.

(7) Permits and Conditions

- (A) If the Conservation Commission, after a public hearing, determines that the activities which are subject to the permit application, or the land and water uses which will result therefrom, are likely to have a significant individual or cumulative effect on the resource area values protected by this By-law, the Commission, within twenty-one (21) days of the close of the hearing, shall issue or deny a permit for the activities requested. The Commission shall take into account the extent to which the applicant has avoided, minimized and mitigated any such effect. The Commission also shall take into account any loss, degradation, isolation, and replacement or replication of such protected resource areas elsewhere in the community and the watershed, resulting from past activities, whether permitted, unpermitted or exempt, and foreseeable future activities.
- (B) If it issues a permit, the Commission shall impose conditions which the Commission deems necessary or desirable to protect said resource area values, and all activities shall be conducted in accordance with those

conditions. Where no conditions are adequate to protect said resource area values, the Commission is empowered to deny a permit for failure to meet the requirements of this By-law. It may also deny a permit: for failure to submit necessary information and plans requested by the Commission; for failure to comply with the procedures, design specifications, performance standards, and other requirements in regulations of the Commission; or for failure to avoid, minimize or mitigate unacceptable significant or cumulative effects upon the resource area values protected by this By-law. Due consideration shall be given to any demonstrated hardship on the applicant by reason of denial, as presented at the public hearing. The Commission may waive specifically identified and requested procedures, design specifications, performance standards, or other requirements set forth in its regulations, provided that the Commission finds in writing after said public hearing, that there are no reasonable conditions or alternatives that would allow the proposed activity to proceed in compliance with said regulations; that avoidance, minimization and mitigation have been employed to the maximum extent feasible; and that the waiver is necessary to accommodate an overriding public interest or to avoid a decision that so restricts the use of the property as to constitute an unconstitutional taking without compensation.

- (C) In reviewing activities within the buffer zone, the Commission shall presume the buffer zone is important to the protection of other resource areas because activities undertaken in close proximity have a high likelihood of adverse impact, either immediately, as a consequence of construction, or over time, as a consequence of daily operation or existence of the activities. These adverse impacts from construction and use can include, without limitation, erosion, siltation, loss of groundwater recharge, poor water quality, and loss of wildlife habitat. The Commission may establish, in its regulations, design specifications, performance standards, and other measures and safeguards, including setbacks, no-disturb areas, no-build areas, and other work limits for protection of such lands, including without limitation, strips of continuous, undisturbed vegetative cover unless the applicant convinces the Commission that the area or part of it may be disturbed without harm to the values protected by the By-law.
- (D) In reviewing activities within the riverfront area, the Commission shall presume the riverfront area is important to all the resource area values unless demonstrated otherwise, and no permit issued hereunder shall permit any activities unless the applicant, in addition to meeting the otherwise applicable requirements of this By-law, has proved by a preponderance of the evidence that:
  - (i) There is no practicable alternative to the proposed project with less adverse effects, and

- (ii) Such activities, including proposed mitigation measures, will have no significant adverse impact on the areas or values protected by this By-law.
- (E) The Commission shall regard as practicable an alternative which is reasonably available and capable of being done after taking into consideration the proposed property use, overall project purpose (e.g., residential, institutional, commercial, or industrial), logistics, existing technology, costs of the alternatives, and overall project costs.
- (F) To prevent resource area loss, the Commission shall require applicants to avoid alteration wherever feasible; to minimize alteration; and, where alteration is unavoidable and has been minimized, to provide full mitigation. The Commission because of the high likelihood of failure of replication, may authorize or require replication of wetlands as a form of mitigation, but only with specific plans, professional design, proper safeguards, adequate security, and professional monitoring and reporting to assure success.
- (G) The Commission may require a wildlife habitat study of the project area, to be paid for by the applicant, whenever it deems appropriate, regardless of the type of resource area or the amount or type of alteration proposed. The decision shall be based upon the Commission's estimation of the importance of the habitat area considering (but not limited to) such factors as proximity to other areas suitable for wildlife, importance of wildlife "corridors" in the area, or actual or possible presence of rare plant or animal species in the area. The work shall be performed by an individual who at least meets the qualifications set out in the wildlife habitat section of the Wetlands Protection Act regulations (310 CMR 10.60).
- (H) A permit, Determination of Applicability (DOA), or Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD) shall expire three (3) years from the date of issuance. Notwithstanding the above, the Commission in its discretion may issue a permit expiring five (5) years from the date of issuance for recurring or continuous maintenance work, provided that annual notification of time and location of work is given to the Commission. Any permit may be renewed once for an additional one (1) year period, provided that a request for a renewal is received in writing by the Commission prior to expiration. Notwithstanding the above, a permit may identify requirements which shall be enforceable for a stated number of years, indefinitely, or until permanent protection is in place, and shall apply to all present and future owners of the land.
- (I) For good cause, the Commission may revoke any permit, DOA, or ORAD or any other order, determination, or other decision issued under this By-

law after notice to the holder, the public, abutters, and town boards, pursuant to §V and §VI, and after a public hearing.

- (J) Amendments to permits, DOAs, or ORADs shall be handled in the manner set out in the Wetlands Protection Act regulations and policies thereunder.
- (K) The Commission in an appropriate case may combine the decision issued under this By-law with the permit, DOA, ORAD, or Certificate of Compliance (COC) issued under the Wetlands Protection Act and regulations.
- (L) No work proposed in any application shall be undertaken until the permit, or ORAD issued by the Commission with respect to such work has been recorded at the Registry of Deeds or, if the land affected is registered land, in the registry section of the Land Court for the district wherein the land lies, and until the holder of the permit certifies in writing to the Commission that the document has been recorded. If the Applicant fails to perform such recording, the Commission may record the documents itself and require the Applicant to furnish the recording fee therefore, either at the time of recording or as a condition precedent to the issuance of a COC.

(8) Regulations

- (A) After public notice and public hearing, the Conservation Commission shall promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this By-law, effective when voted and filed with the Town Clerk. Failure by the Commission to promulgate such rules and regulations or a legal declaration of their invalidity by a court of law shall not act to suspend or invalidate the effect of this By-law. At a minimum, these regulations shall reiterate the terms defined in this By-law, define additional terms not inconsistent with the By-law, and impose filing and consultant fees.

(9) Definitions

- (A) The following definitions shall apply in the interpretation and implementation of this By-law:
  - (i) The term “agriculture” shall refer to the definition as provided by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 128, Section 1A.
  - (ii) The term “alter” shall include, without limitation, the following activities when undertaken to, upon, within, or affecting resource areas protected by this By-law:
    - (a) Removal, excavation, or dredging of soil, sand, gravel, or aggregate materials of any kind.

- (b) Changing of preexisting drainage characteristics, flushing characteristics, salinity distribution, sedimentation patterns, flow patterns, or flood retention characteristics.
  - (c) Drainage, or other disturbance of water level or water table.
  - (d) Dumping, discharging, or filling with any material which may degrade water quality.
  - (e) Placing of fill or removal of material which would alter elevation.
  - (f) Driving of piles, erection, expansion or repair of buildings or structures of any kind.
  - (g) Placing of obstructions or objects in water.
  - (h) Destruction of plant life, including the cutting of trees.
  
  - (i) Changing temperature, biochemical oxygen demand, or other physical, biological, or chemical characteristics of any waters.
  - (j) Any activities, changes, or work which may cause or tend to contribute to pollution of any body of water or groundwater.
  - (k) Incremental activities which have, or may have, a cumulative adverse impact on the resource areas protected by this By-law.
- (iii) The term “bank” shall include the land area which normally abuts and confines a water body; the lower boundary being the mean annual low flow level, and the upper boundary being the first observable break in the slope or the mean annual flood level, whichever is higher.
- (iv) The term “person” shall include any individual, group of individuals, association, partnership, corporation, company, business organization, trust, estate, the Commonwealth or political subdivision thereof to the extent subject to town By-laws, administrative agency, public or quasi-public corporation or body, this municipality, and any other legal entity, its legal

representatives, agents, or assigns.

- (v) The term “pond” shall follow the definition of 310 CMR 10.04 except as otherwise defined in the regulations of the Commission.
  - (vi) The term “rare species” shall include, without limitation, all vertebrate and invertebrate animals and all plant species listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, regardless whether the site in which they occur has been previously identified by the Division.
- (B) Except as otherwise provided in this By-law or in associated regulations of the Conservation Commission, the definitions of terms and the procedures in this By-law shall be as set forth in the Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 131, Section 40) and regulations (310 CMR 10.00).

(10) Security

- (A) As part of a permit issued under this By-law, in addition to any security required by any other municipal or state board, agency, or official, the Conservation Commission may require that the performance and observance of the conditions imposed thereunder (including conditions requiring mitigation work) be secured wholly or in part by one (1) or both of the methods described below:
- (i) By a proper bond, deposit of money, or negotiable securities under a written third-party escrow arrangement, or other undertaking of financial responsibility sufficient, in the opinion of the Commission, to be released in whole or in part upon issuance of a COC for work performed pursuant to the permit.
  - (ii) By accepting a conservation restriction, easement, or other covenant enforceable in a court of law, executed and duly recorded by the owner of record, running with the land to the benefit of this municipality whereby the permit conditions shall be performed and observed before any lot may be conveyed other than by mortgage deed. This method shall be used only with the consent of the applicant.

(11) Enforcement

- (A) No person shall remove, fill, dredge, build upon, degrade, or otherwise alter resource areas protected by this By-law, or cause, suffer, or allow such activity, or leave in place unauthorized fill, or otherwise fail to restore illegally altered land to its original condition, or fail to comply

with a permit or an enforcement order issued pursuant to this By-law.

- (B) The Conservation Commission, its agents, officers, and employees shall have authority to enter upon privately-owned land for the purpose of performing their duties under this By-law and may make or cause to be made such examinations, surveys, or sampling as the Commission deems necessary, subject to the constitutions and laws of the United States and the Commonwealth.
  - (C) The Commission shall have authority to enforce this By-law, its regulations, and permits issued thereunder by letters, phone calls, electronic communication and other informal methods, violation notices, non-criminal citations under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 21D, and civil and criminal court actions. Any person who violates provisions of this By-law may be ordered to restore the property to its original condition and take other action deemed necessary to remedy such violations, or may be fined, or both.
  - (D) Upon request of the Commission, the Board of Selectmen and Town Counsel shall take legal action for enforcement under civil law. Upon request of the Commission, the Police Chief shall take legal action for enforcement under criminal law.
  - (E) Municipal boards and officers, including any police officer or other officer having police powers, shall have authority to assist the Commission in enforcement.
  - (F) Any person who violates any provision of this By-law, or regulations, permits, or administrative orders issued thereunder shall be punished by a fine in an amount to be established by the Commission under the Wetland Protection Regulations. Each day or portion thereof during which a violation continues, or unauthorized fill or other alteration remains in place, shall constitute a separate offense, and each provision of the By-laws, regulations, permits, or administrative orders violated shall constitute a separate offense.
  - (G) As an alternative to criminal prosecution in a specific case, the Commission may issue citations with specific penalties pursuant to the non-criminal disposition procedure set forth in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 21D, which has been adopted by the Town in accordance with Section 1.04 of the General By-laws.
- (12) Burden of Proof
- (A) The applicant for a permit shall have the burden of proving by a

preponderance of the credible evidence that the work proposed in the permit application will not have unacceptable significant or cumulative effect upon the resource area values protected by this By-law. Failure to provide adequate evidence to the Conservation Commission supporting this burden shall be sufficient cause for the Commission to deny a permit or grant a permit with conditions.

(13) Appeals

- (A) A decision of the Conservation Commission shall be reviewable in a court of competent jurisdiction in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 249, Section 4.

(14) Relation to the Wetlands Protection Act

- (A) This By-law is adopted under the Home Rule Amendment of the Massachusetts Constitution and the Home Rule statutes, independent of the Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 131, Section 40) and regulations (310 CMR 10.00) thereunder. It is the intention of this By-law that the purposes, jurisdiction, authority, exemptions, regulations, specifications, standards, and other requirements shall be interpreted and administered as stricter than those under the Wetlands Protection Act and regulations.