

## Conservation Commissioners' Responsibilities

The Wilmington Conservation Commission is charged with upholding the interests of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (M.G.L. Chapter 131, §40 and its regulations at 310 CMR 10.00). The primary functions of the Conservation Commission are overseeing conservation land and the administration and enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act. The Act is intended to protect eight public interest issues related to inland wetlands: flood control, storm damage prevention, protection of public and private water supply, protection of ground water supply, prevention of pollution, protection of fisheries, protection wildlife habitat and protection of land containing shellfish.

Wilmington has an abundance of wetland resource areas, including the banks of and land under water bodies (streams, ponds, etc.), bordering vegetated wetlands (swamps, marshes, etc.), bordering land subject to flooding (100-year floodplain), and riverfront areas (area within 200 feet of perennial streams). Activities reviewed by the Commission can include tree removal and landscaping; and construction of houses, subdivisions, lawns, driveways, additions, septic systems, and utilities in wetland resource areas and within 100 feet of banks or bordering vegetated wetlands. Each filing involves one or, in some cases, multiple public hearings before the Commission. The Commission seeks to work through the permitting process with the applicant to provide protection of the public and private water supply as well as groundwater supply, provide flood control, prevent storm damage and pollution, and protect wildlife habitats. Residents are encouraged to attend and provide comment relative to work in or near wetland resource areas.

When the Wilmington Conservation Commission was originally formed in 1964, its purpose was to inventory, promote, develop and conserve the town's natural resources. Today, the primary responsibility of the Conservation Commission is the administration and enforcement of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. Conservation Commissioners are appointed to three-year terms by the Town Manager.

Prospective Commissioners should have an interest in regulating land use to protect the environment, observing nature, and enjoying the benefits of the outdoors. Commissioners must have a basic understanding of the Wetlands Protection Act, but that is not a prerequisite for consideration. It is helpful if Commissioners have a background in environmental science, civil engineering, law, landscape architecture, and/or construction, but an interest and a willingness to learn and to keep an open mind is even more critical. The ability and willingness to visit sites under review by the Commission is also beneficial, although not all Commissioners are able to visit each site that comes before the Commission. Commissions are offered instruction periodically through various outlets including the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions.