

Now that the beautiful autumn colors are upon us,
Please remember to
Protect your Stoneham wetlands and natural areas!

Do not pile or dump leaves, grass clippings, or brush

Wetlands are crucial resources for all Stoneham town residents.

Wetlands:

- Play a critical role in preventing storm flood damage to our properties
- Slow storm water and allow ground infiltration
- Help clean pollutants from our water resources
- Provide important wildlife habitat

Dumping yard waste damages wetlands and natural areas.

Piled material:

- Displaces water storage capacity
- Creates new soil, decreasing potential to mitigate flood events
- Creates nutrient overload, encouraging dangerous algal blooms on site and down stream
- Smothers vegetation, further reducing the capacity for the site to handle incoming water
- Reduces desirable wildlife habitat

Properly handle and dispose of your yard waste.

Examples:

- Rake and properly bag leaves for yard waste pickup
- Shred leaves and use as free mulch in flower beds
- Compost on your property, away from wetlands and other natural areas

The fine print (from Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions maccweb.org):

- The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (General Laws Chapter 131, §40; the Act) protects important water-related lands such as wetlands (“swamps”), floodplains, riverfront areas, and other areas from destruction or alteration. Most work proposed to be done in those areas requires a permit (known as an Order of Conditions) from the local conservation commission.
- Under the Act no one may “remove, fill, dredge, or alter” any wetland, floodplain, bank, land under a water body, land within 100 feet of a wetland, or land within 200 feet of a perennial stream or river (25 feet of a few urban rivers), without a permit (known as an Order of Conditions) from the local conservation commission that protects the wetland “interests” identified in the Act.

- The “interests” or values protected by the Act are: flood control; prevention of storm damage; prevention of pollution; and protection of fisheries, shellfish, groundwater, public or private water supply, and wildlife habitat.
- The term “alter” is defined to include any destruction of vegetation, or change in drainage characteristics or water flow patterns, or any change in the water table or water quality. The wetland regulations prohibit most destruction of wetlands and naturally vegetated riverfront areas, and require replacement of flood storage loss when floodplains are filled.

Find out more information about the Stoneham Conservation Commission or contact us at:
<https://www.stoneham-ma.gov/588/Conservation-Commission>