

BEFORE Starting a Project Contact the Commission

A large percentage of Chesterfield homeowners have wetland resource areas on or near their property. If you are one of them, contact the Conservation Commission before you start doing any work in a wetland resource area that might alter wetlands or their buffer zones. This includes work within the 100 foot buffer zone of a wetland, or within 200 feet of a river, such as:

- ◆ Tree removal or other vegetation clearing
- ◆ Grading or excavation
- ◆ New landscaping
- ◆ Construction, additions, etc.

Do not assume your contractor will automatically pull all necessary permits. If you do need approval, Commission members are ready to answer your questions and help guide you through the application process.

The complexity of the approval process is commensurate with the type and scale of the activity proposed. Minor projects such as removing a few trees may be handled by a simple approval letter, while a large construction project may require a detailed application and evaluation during one or more Public Hearings.

The Commission wants to see Chesterfield landowners proceed with their projects while simultaneously protecting the valuable wetland resources that benefit

► *EVERYONE* ◀



Chesterfield Conservation Commission
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POSTAL CUSTOMER

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WETLANDS PROTECTION IN CHESTERFIELD



CHESTERFIELD
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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What are Wetlands?

“Wetland resource areas” include the commonly known *cattail marsh* and open water *pond*, also *rivers* that generally flow throughout the year, 200-foot *riverfront area* which border rivers on both sides, *intermittent streams* that dry up during part of the year, low-lying *flood plains* and *vernal (springtime) pools*. These areas (except for the 200-foot riverfront area) are surrounded by “*buffer zones*”— 100 foot wide protective zones around wetlands that protect wetlands from human impacts and provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat.

Why are Wetlands Important?

Wetland resource areas provide critical habitat to wildlife and help maintain the aesthetic beauty of our town. They also provide priceless yet “free” services including:

- ◆ Drinking water purification
- ◆ Groundwater recharge
- ◆ Flood control
- ◆ Pollution prevention

All Chesterfield residents benefit from these services because of our reliance on natural settings for property values, wells for drinking water, and septic systems for waste disposal. The Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting these areas by enforcing state wetland protection laws and regulations.



Wetland “Do’s and Don’ts”

Many activities near wetland resource areas are allowed and do not require Commission approval, including:

- ◆ Mowing an existing lawn
- ◆ Working in an existing garden
- ◆ Pruning and maintaining existing landscaping
- ◆ Planting native vegetation
- ◆ Hiking, horseback riding, and other passive recreation
- ◆ Cleaning out culverts

Other activities are prohibited in wetland resources areas or buffer zones such as those listed below, and are subject to fines. (Some are allowed but only with a permit.)

- ◆ Dumping yard waste such as leaves, grass, etc., or other waste products, including manure
- ◆ Constructing animal paddocks
- ◆ Dumping dirt or other fill
- ◆ Draining or pumping water from a wetland, pond or stream
- ◆ Building dams or removing beaver dams
- ◆ Tree cutting/clearing

Wetlands function best in a natural state. Do not clear them or “clean them up.” Wildlife often thrives in areas with brush piles, rotting logs, and other things some people might consider “untidy”.

Conservation of Land

The first powers given to Commissions in the Conservation Commission Act focused on “promotion and development of natural resources...and protection of watershed resources.” Your Conservation Commission works to conserve the rural character of the town and to maintain its healthy natural resources. As part of that goal, the Conservation Commission can help landowners who are thinking about conserving land for future generations. Commission members can provide local contacts and possible opportunities for conservation of land through private non-profit organizations or with federal or state agencies. If you have an interest or know someone in town who is thinking about land conservation in any form, please do call a Commissioner who can help you understand your options for the near term or in the future. Conserving lands makes fiscal sense. The American Farmland Trust, August 2004 reported that residential land costs a town in services \$1.15 for every tax dollar raised, while working, open space or land in conservation costs only 36 cents.

Limiting Chemical Use and

Conserving Water:

Do you know what comes out of your weed killer bottle or the lawn care spray truck? Chemicals—many of which can be harmful to humans, pets, wildlife and plants. They do a lot more than make your lawn green. The Commission *recommends* that you avoid using chemicals anywhere on your property due to the potential hazards that they pose to your drinking water, your children, and your pets. If you live next to a pond fertilizer use can also cause excessive plant growth in the water harming both the environment and aesthetics. Many natural lawn care alternatives are readily available—and they work. The Commission also recommends you use water responsibly when maintaining your lawn or other landscaping. Excessive lawn watering contributes to severe low-flow conditions in streams and rivers in all but the wettest years.