



## **Northborough Conservation Commission** **Tree Removal Policy**

Under the [Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act](#) no one may “remove, fill, dredge, or alter” any of the land surface, water levels, or vegetation in wetlands, flood plains, “bordering vegetated wetlands” (BVWs), or other wetland resource areas without obtaining a permit from the local Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission also has the authority to regulate activities in the “buffer zone” of upland that is within 100 feet of a wetland or stream, and the “riverfront area” within 200 feet of perennial rivers or streams.

### **Background:**

Trees maintain water quality by stabilizing soils, keeping water and wetland soils cool, protecting native flora in the shaded understory and supporting wildlife.

Native vegetation at the edge of a body of water is of especially high value ecologically. The roots of trees and shrubs hold the banks of ponds and streams in place and protect against erosion from heavy rains, wave action and flooding. Shoreline vegetation also takes up nutrients from surface water before it gets into ponds and streams and holds back debris, soil and pollutants from bodies of water. Wildlife is particularly active at water’s edge and trees, living or dead that reach out over water play special roles as hunting perches for birds.

### **Removal:**

If a tree poses an immediate safety hazard by virtue of its condition and proximity to a building, an area of habitual activity, driveway or power line, an Emergency Certification Form can be issued by the Conservation Agent. Please contact the Conservation Agent at (508)393-5015 in order to process the Emergency Certification.

If a tree does not pose an obvious safety hazard, and it is within 15 feet of the wetlands, and it is 6 inches or greater diameter at breast height, it is the Commission’s policy that a [Request for Determination of Applicability](#) shall be filed with the Commission. Decisions are made on a case by case process.

Any approval granted by the Conservation Commission does not relieve the applicant from the necessity of complying with all other applicable federal, state, or local statutes, ordinances, or regulations. If the tree is within the public right of way the Department of Public works shall also be contacted by the applicant at (508)393-5030.

### **Tree Replacement:**

Tree replacement shall be required at the discretion of the Commission on a case-by-case basis. Based on the number of trees to be replaced, as well as proximity to the resource area(s), an additional filing may be required.

The replacement trees and/or vegetation shall be guaranteed for a minimum of two growing seasons.