



**Town of Sharon**

# CONSERVATION



**“In wilderness is the preservation of the world.”**

Henry David Thoreau, *Walking* (1862)

# *Sharon Conservation Commission History*

---

Sharon residents have been involved in conservation since the 1950s.

The Conservation Act of 1957 officially established municipal conservation commissions throughout the state.

The Sharon Conservation Commission, created in 1959, protects natural and watershed resources while promoting passive recreation.

In 1972, the legislature passed the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) making conservation commissions regulatory bodies under “home rule.”

In addition to the WPA, the Town of Sharon implemented a local bylaw pertaining to wetlands protection as well as rules and regulations.

More recently, the Conservation Commission has become the local Stormwater Authority increasing its jurisdiction and ability to protect groundwater resources.







# *The Conservation Department*

The Conservation Department assists the commission with the permitting process, land acquisition, and enforcements/violations.

Together, the Lake Massapoag Advisory Committee and the Conservation Department monitor lake water quality and levels.

The Conservation Administrator works closely with other town departments on overseeing development (like the Board of Health with septic, and the Building Inspector with construction).

Environmental stewardship is an important part of the job. Hunting, shooting, dumping, trapping, camping, fires, and trespassing are prohibited on conservation land. The Department collaborates with the Engineering/GIS Division, Forestry and Grounds Division, and Animal Control.

Other collaborations include the MA Departments of Environmental Protection as well as Fish and Wildlife.

# *Wetlands Legislation and Local Ordinances*

## **Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) MGL c. 131, s. 40**

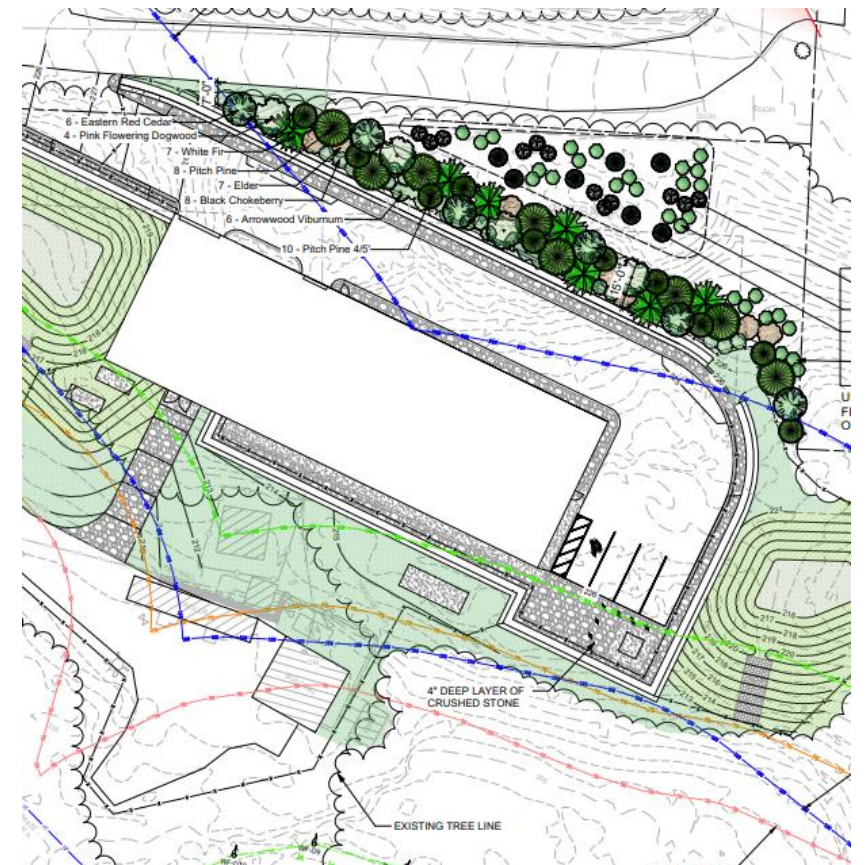
Enacted in 1972, the WPA charged DEP and Conservation Commissions with upholding wetlands protection laws and regulations.

## **310 CMR 10.00: The Wetlands Protection Act Regulations**

DEP outlined a public review and decisions-making process, setting standards for regulating activities affecting water supply, pollution and all areas identified in the WPA.

## **Town of Sharon Bylaws Chapter 262 Wetlands Protection**

**Rules and Regulations of the Sharon Conservation Commission Amended July 1, 2021**





# *Wetlands and Resource Areas*

---

**Wetlands** – Areas with water at or below surface determined by assessing: hydrology, vegetation, and soil composition.

**Riverfront area** – Area starting at the mean high water mark of an intermittent stream continuing to 200 feet from the mean high water mark.

**Resource Area** – Areas defined by the WPA also known as “Areas Subject to Protection under the Bylaw,” including Freshwater Wetlands, Banks, Land Under Water, and Land Subject to Flooding.

**Buffer Zone** – Land within 100 feet from the outer border of a resource area.

**Areas of Critical Environmental Concern** – Areas and resources designated by the state that have additional regulations for the purpose of long-term preservation, management and use or stewardship: Canoe River Aquifer and Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog.



# Wetlands Protection Permitting

The WPA, Town of Sharon Wetlands Protection Bylaw, and related regulations address activities proposed within 100 feet of a resource area and within 200 feet of a riverfront area. There are 4 main applications sought for work done within the commission's jurisdiction.

**RDA** – A “Request for Determination” is filed for minor projects.

**NOI** – A “Notice of Intent” is filed for major disturbance projects.

**ANRAD** – An “Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation” assess the presence and location of wetland resource areas and boundaries on a property.

**Variance Request** – A “Variance Request” asks the commission to permit a project that would not be in compliance with the WPA, local bylaw, or any related rules or regulations.



Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Water Resources - Wetlands

**WPA Form 1- Request for Determination of Applicability** \_\_\_\_\_  
Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act M.G.L. c. 131, §40 Municipality \_\_\_\_\_

## A. General Information

Important:  
When filling out  
forms on the  
computer, use only  
the tab key to move  
your cursor - do not  
use the return key.



1. Applicant:

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

2. Property Owner (if different from Applicant):

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Representative (if any)

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

## B. Project Description

1. a. Project Location (use maps and plans to identify the location of the area subject to this request):

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/Town \_\_\_\_\_

Latitude (Decimal Degrees Format with 5 digits after decimal  
e.g. XX.XXXXX) \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude (Decimal Degrees Format with 5 digits after  
decimal e.g. -XX.XXXXX) \_\_\_\_\_

[How to find Latitude  
and Longitude](#)

[and how to convert  
to decimal degrees](#)

# *Wetlands Protection Permitting Process*

Contacting the Conservation Department while a project is still in the planning stages is helpful at the beginning of the permitting process.

The Conservation Administrator can offer guidance about which application would be suitable for a proposed project.

Sometimes applicants will attend a meeting to discuss the project with the commission before filing.

Public hearings are held twice monthly to review complete applications.

The commission will vote to approve or deny an application. It is common for the commission to add special conditions when approving a project.



# *Stormwater Legislation and Local Ordinances*

---

The Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.) and the Town of Sharon Bylaws Chapter 230

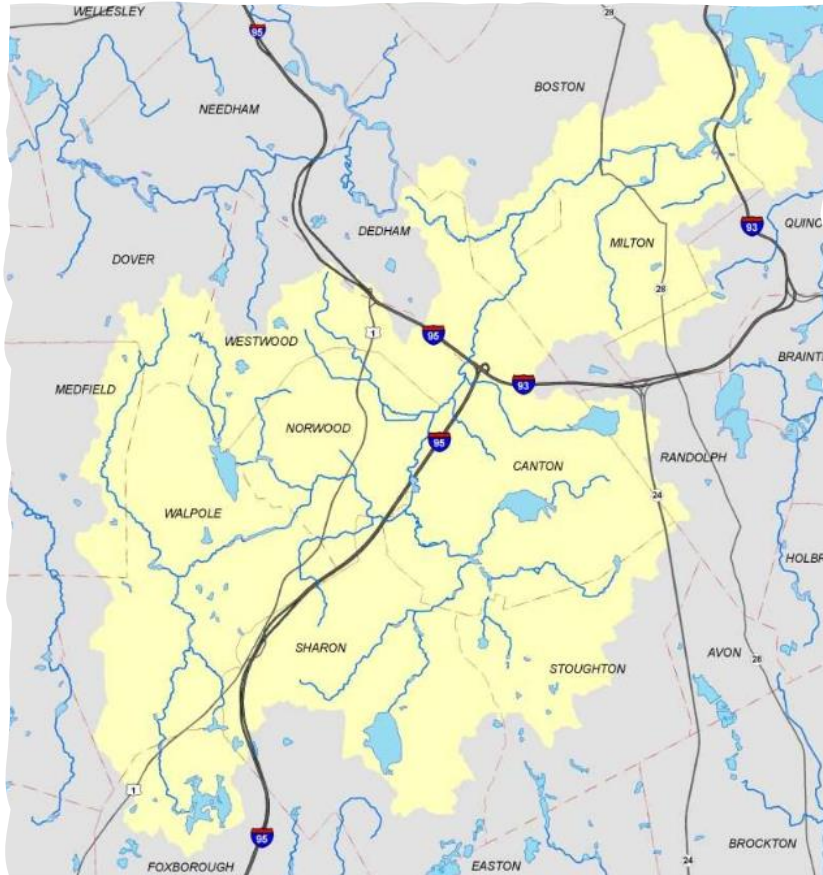
- To comply with the town's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Permit, the town enacted a Stormwater Bylaw having two parts.
- Article I – Illicit Discharges to Storm Sewers regulating discharges to the Town's municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4)
- Article II – Construction Activity Discharges regulating stormwater discharges resulting from construction activity
- Land Disturbance Reviews and Permits





# *Regional Watershed Organizations*

---



Fun Fact: As a Great Pond, Lake Massapoag is part of the “common wealth” of Massachusetts and is owned by the state and overseen by the Select Board. The banks, bordering wetlands, and land under the water are under the Conservation Commission’s jurisdiction.

Sharon sits at the top of both the Neponset and Taunton River Watersheds. The water in town wells comes from the precipitation that falls in town.

**Lake Massapoag Advisory Committee**

**Neponset River Watershed Association**

**Canoe River Watershed and Aquifer**





# *Rattlesnake Hill*

---

- Rattlesnake Hill is a 329-acre parcel between Bay Road and Mountain Street that was acquired in 2020.
- It is now a town-owned parcel with a Conservation Restriction held by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- The parcel is open for passive recreation: hiking, birding, biking, and other non-motorized pursuits.





# Cranberry Bog Naturalization

---

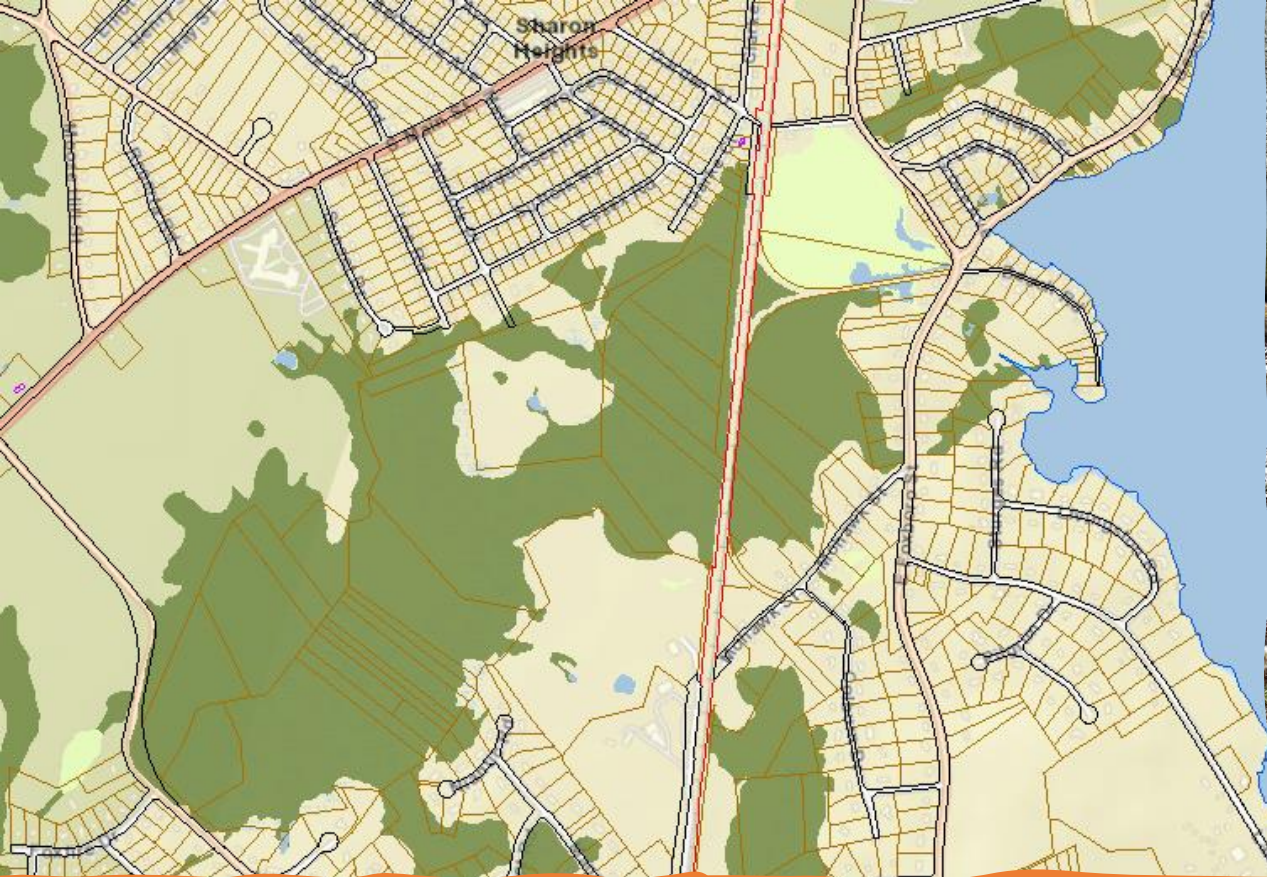


# *Gavins Pond Grassland Management*

- This grassland parcel across from the Gavins Pond soccer fields is home to bluebirds and the rare frosted elfin butterfly.
- The parcel is managed as a grassland. The management plan calls for periodic cutting of trees to maintain the open space.
- Yearly mowing occurs once the butterfly larvae has formed cocoons.







# *The Great Cedar Swamp*

- This approximately 300-acre cedar swamp is between Wolomolopoag Street and East Foxboro Street behind the Sharon Heights neighborhood and the Ward's farm fields.
- The swamp crosses the boundary between the Neponset River watershed and the Taunton River watershed.
- In the 1950s or 60s a ditch was dug through the swamp to drain it, and this decreased the flow of groundwater from the swamp toward the lake. It also drained water from within the soils of the swamp, exposing the peat to the air.



# Trail Maintenance and Conservation Restriction Monitoring

---





# *Environmental Stewardship Collaborations*

Periodically, there is an opening on the **Conservation Commission**. Commission members are appointed by the Select Board, and open positions are posted on the town website.

The **Sharon Friends of Conservation** is a local non-profit group of volunteers. In addition to assisting with trail maintenance and hosting programming throughout the year, the Sharon FOC has been instrumental in land acquisition projects and other conservation successes.

Local **Eagle Scout candidates** have also made excellent contributions throughout the town, built trails, and repaired bridges.

The **Sustainable Sharon Coalition** brings the Sharon community together through education, invasive species management events, and outreach.