

DISCOVERING WETLAND RESOURCE AREAS – A HELPFUL GUIDE

What Are Wetland Resource Areas?

The Town of Franklin recognizes Wetlands, Rivers, Bordering/Isolated Land Subject to Flooding (i.e. floodplain/zone), Vernal Pools, Estimated/Priority Habitats, Perennial and Intermittent Streams, and their respective Buffer Zones as jurisdictional Wetland Resource Areas (WRAs).

Where to Start?

Wetland Resource Areas (WRAs) may not always be obvious. Thankfully, there are simple steps you can take to learn if your property has any WRAs within its boundaries!

Step 1: Review Maps

Visit <https://www.axisgis.com/franklinma/> to find an interactive map viewer and search for your address. Check the “MA DEP Wetlands”, “FEMA Flood Map”, “NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife”, “Certified Vernal Pools”, and “Potential Vernal Pools” layer to show probable WRAs. Note that many WRAs have corresponding Buffer Zones which are not shown, but also jurisdictional. If the map shows a probable WRA, consult a Wetland Scientist to verify that you have a WRA and to identify its boundaries. Please note that the interactive map viewer is not an inclusive list of all WRAs within the boundaries of the municipality.



Step 2: Boots on the Ground

Walk the property with the below checklist and look for WRA clues. (Please note that this checklist is not intended to represent an inclusive list of all wetland characteristics. You must receive consult from a professional to verify the presence of a WRA and its respective boundaries).

Step 3: Explore Your Options

If the map indicates WRAs and/or you answered “Yes” to any of the below WRA clue questions below, a WRA is likely present.

If you're buying land, please consider engaging the services of a qualified Wetland Scientist to inspect the property for the presence of wetland prior to submitting a written offer. Wetlands, ponds, streams, rivers, vernal pools, and the immediate areas surrounding them are jurisdictional with the Town of Franklin.

If you're planning to build on land you already own, consult a Wetland Scientist to verify WRAs and their boundaries so you can minimize and avoid adverse impacts. Projects that cannot avoid impacting or working within WRAs will need to be permitted through the Conservation Commission.

Wetland Resource Area Clues Checklist

Yes No

Is There Evidence of Hydrology (Water)?

- Are there ponds, lake, streams, springs or seeps?
- Are there “low spots” where water collects or the ground is soggy for at least a week?
- Are there drainage channels or has the site been ditched or tiled in spots to “dry it out”?
- If the site is a farm field, are there areas where crops do not grow or the plants are stunted or yellowing during years with normal rainfall?
- Are there water marks or stains on tree trunks?
- Do trees have a shallow root system?
- Are there areas where water has scoured away plants and leaves, flattened vegetation or where no vegetation is growing?

Are Hydrophytic (Water Loving) Plants Present?

- Are any of these plants present: cattails, common reed (Phragmites), reed canary grass, sedges, rushes, skunk cabbage, sphagnum moss, or sensitive fern?
- Are any of these shrubs present: dogwoods, willows, alder, or blueberry?
- Are any of these trees present: willows, maples, swamp white oak, Atlantic white cedar?
- Do any plants have roots growing from their stems above the soil?
- Do any trees have multiple trunks or are the trunks expanded or swollen at the base?

Are There Hydric (Wet) Soils?

- Is the soil dark brown, black, dark gray, gray-brown or brown-yellow?
- Does the soil feel moist or when squeezed, does it secrete water?
- Is the topsoil primarily peat (decaying plants) or muck?
- Is the soil marked with orange or red spots or dark streaks?

