

## City of Milford

### Inland Wetlands Agency

Parsons Complex  
70 West River Street  
Milford, Ct. 06460 (203) 782-3256

What can I do with my land? What can't I *do*, and why not? .. Science has shown that the earth and the various natural products of the earth, plants and animals, are all part of a vast and interdependent ecosystem, and the survival of the whole depends on the preservation of the habitats and natural watercourses which allow the entire earth to regenerate and flourish. Therefore, just as -no man Is an island," no piece of artificially divided real estate is truly separate from the whole.

The Connecticut Legislature has recognized this essential fact of nature by protections for our state's delicate natural resources. Our Department of Environmental Protection was created in 1971, to reflect the recognition that "natural resources, taken for granted since the settlement of the state...are...finite and precious."

The law in Connecticut therefore now embodies the idea that the state through its governing bodies is the -trustee of the environment for the present and future generations." This noble concept is widely supported in the abstract but in practice this trusteeship imposes limits on the individual property owner's right to do what he or she wishes with the land he or she has purchased.

At the local level the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency, authorized under Section 223-28 of the statutes acts to protect our natural resources. This agency is composed of Milford residents, appointed by the Board of Selectmen, on a bipartisan basis, to monitor and protect the wetlands and prevent their despoliation and destruction. The Commissioners serve without financial

compensation and generally hold two PUBLIC meetings per month (in Town Hall on the second and third

Wednesday's of the month,) at which applications for activities involving wetlands, tidal water, estuaries, and riparian areas are reviewed and usually approved, after discussion and occasional changes. Therefore, if any plans you or your neighbors or friends may have that could conceivably impact the wetlands, swamps, bogs, streams or rivers within Milford, they should be brought before the agency for review and advice before any action is taken.

Acting in a regulated area without approval of the Wetlands Commission could be hazardous to the health of the land which nurtures us all. It could also subject the hasty landowner to legal action, fines, cease and desist orders, and the possibility of having to undo an expensive but impermissible improvement or development which encroaches on the wetlands. Ask first and avoid trouble; you'll also be helping to preserve the wetlands which help to make our community the natural jewel it is.

### It Can't Be A Wetland. There Are Trees Growing In It !!

#### **Common Myths And Misconceptions About Wetlands And The Startling Truth.**

#### **THIS ISN'T A WETLAND I DON'T SEE ANY WATER.**

Not all wetlands have a continuous occurrence of water on the surface of the ground. Some wetlands have surface water during only a portion of the year. Some wetlands hold water within the soil, where its used by plants growing in the area but can't be seen without digging. Wetlands may have water at or near the surface, and its occurrence may be either persistent or ephemeral.

### **FORGET ABOUT SWAMPS, WE HEED MORE OPEN AREAS TO HUNT AND FISH.**

Wetlands support a variety of animals, including game animals such as deer, muskrat, mink, and ducks. Even wetlands that appear dry at the surface for much of the year often are critical to duck breeding and even fish populations. Wetlands can contribute to local economies through sales associated with hunting, fishing, and other wildlife based recreation.

### **IF WE FILL THESE WETLANDS, WE CAN PREVENT FLOODING PROBLEMS.**

Filling wetlands for protection from flooding may instead contribute to problems from natural disasters. Those wetlands remaining in the watershed may be overloaded and incapable of performing their natural functions, such as storm and flood water storage, and neighboring or downstream properties may suffer the damage. Floods may increase as much as 80% in watersheds with little or no wetlands compared to basins with many wetlands.

### **LET'S MAKE THIS A BETTER WETLAND BY FLOODING IT.**

While water on or in the ground is necessary for a wetland, there can be too much of a good thing. Although deep water is beneficial to certain waterfowl and fish, the value of the area for other fish and wildlife, as well as important wetland processes, may be eliminated. Flooding a wetland can cause much of the ~ vegetation to die. The ability of the wetland to filter " pollutants. provide refuge, and produce nutrients can also be lost. This is a trade-off that is not always beneficial.

**OUR TOWN NEEDS A MORE CONVENIENT SHOPPING CENTER. DEVELOPMENT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WETLANDS.**

Wetlands can benefit communities through their natural processes known as wetland functions -see "Wetlands Are Buggy". The loss of these wetland functions can result in local economic burdens resulting from flooding, erosion, decreased water supply, increased water treatment costs, and lost revenue from recreation, fishing, hunting, and trapping. Legislation has been enacted to protect the unnecessary loss of wetlands. Regulations are not aimed at stopping all development in wetlands, rather their goal is to ensure that development is done only after careful consideration of alternatives and impacts.

**WE SHOULD GET A PERMIT EASILY.**

**WE'LL REPLACE THESE WETLANDS WITH NEW ONES THAT WILL BE JUST AS GOOD.**

A permit may be required, in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, before certain activities can be undertaken in wetlands. The replacement of lost wetlands by creating new wetlands or enhancing degraded wetlands, referred to as compensatory mitigation, is a relatively new technology which lacks a body of evidence on its success. Therefore, emphasis is placed upon considering practicable alternatives, e.g., alternative sites, alternative development plans, and minimization of disturbance. An agreement to provide mitigation is considered only after careful consideration of alternatives. This ensures that wetland resources will not be haphazardly lost when such loss is unnecessary.

**WETLANDS ARE BUGGY, DON'T BOTHER PROTECTING THEM.**

A variety of wetlands, such as swamps, marshes, wet meadows, and bogs, perform functions that are important to the public. Wetlands can provide protection from flooding by retaining peak flood waters and protection from erosion by intercepting the energy of waves and flood waters. They can improve water quality by filtering out pollutants. They can replenish water supplies by retaining precipitation and gradually recharging ground water and streams. They support the food chain upon which fish and shellfish feed, a resource that supports commercial fisheries. The land area comprising the lower 48 states contained nearly 221 million acres of wetlands at the time of colonial America. As of the 1980's, an estimated 104 million acres of wetlands remained -a 53% loss. Wetland losses between the mid 1970's to the mid 1980's averaged 30 acres per hour. Twenty-two states have lost

50% or more, and ten states have lost 70% or more of their original wetlands.

**VERNAL POOLS**

Vernal pool wetlands provide habitat that is critical to the survival of certain wildlife species. Amphibians and reptiles such as frogs, toads, salamanders, and turtles use them for mating and breeding. Certain invertebrate species are also dependent upon them. Populations of some of these species have been declining and, although researchers have not found conclusive reasons for this, many believe that loss of habitat is a contributing factor. Because vernal pools are often small, isolated, as well as very dry much of the year, they can be easily overlooked and inadvertently damaged or destroyed. Efforts to identify and protect vernal pool wetlands in New England have increased in recent years. The Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation in 1995 (P.A.95-313) which gives municipal inland wetlands agencies explicit regulatory authority over vernal and other intermittent watercourses as part of Connecticut's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Law. In order to meet the definition of a vernal pool, a wetland must have the following physical characteristics:

- It contains water for approximately two months during the growing season.
- It occurs within a confined depression or basin that lacks a permanent outlet stream;
- It lacks any fish population; and
- It dries out most years, usually by late summer.

CT. Forest Stewardship Program

**The Truth 15, Wetland Protection is Important.**

**EPA 902-H-94-002**