



TOWN OF WESTBOROUGH MASSACHUSETTS

Conservation Commission

Hazard Tree Removal Policy for Landowners

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Introduction: The Conservation Commission is a 7-member volunteer board responsible for administering the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and regulations (310 CMR 10.00) and the Westborough Non-Zoning Wetlands Protection Bylaw and its implementing regulations.

The Commission has jurisdiction over the following protected areas (Jurisdictional Areas) on public and private property:

- Wetland Resource Areas, defined as 100-year flood zones, wetlands, streams, ponds, and marshes.
- Riverfront Areas - Land within 200 feet of a perennial stream.
- Buffer Zones - Land within 100 feet of a Wetland Resource Area and 125 feet of a certified vernal pool. A strict standard of review applies to the area within 20 feet of a Wetland Resource Area (Westborough's Limit of Disturbance Buffer Zone).

Presumptive Ecological Value of Trees: Trees in Jurisdictional Areas perform ecological functions by providing habitat for wildlife, stabilizing soil, assisting nutrient uptake that improves water quality, providing shade that contributes to healthy vegetation, and regulating water temperature for aquatic organisms. Even dead trees provide habitat for cavity nesters and organic nutrients for soil. Equally important, trees provide carbon sequestration, mitigate heating and cooling costs, and provide flood storage.

Policy: No trees may be cut from a Jurisdictional Area unless permission has been granted by the Conservation Commission or its Agent.

The Commission will allow tree removal for:

- Safety reasons (i.e. the tree(s) poses a threat to the home, private property, family gathering area, etc.)
- The tree(s) is diseased or dying and could become a threat
- The tree(s) has been classified as invasive by the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group (MIPAG)
- Standard maintenance of Stormwater management systems like detention basins and swales

The Commission may have the following conditions for removal:

- Limitations on equipment use
- Limitations on stump grinding
- Removal of brush/logs

Review Process:

- A Hazard Tree Removal Application must be completed at: [Hazard Tree Removal Application](#)
- The Conservation Agent will conduct a site visit prior to any tree removal; an Administrative Approval permit will be issued for requests consistent with this policy.

*All other tree removal within jurisdictional areas, including for lawn/garden expansion, solar installation, aesthetic purposes, or as part of a construction project, will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may require mitigation/replanting and/or the filing of a wetland permit application. E-mail conservation@town.westborough.ma.us to schedule a site visit with the Conservation Agent.

Applicability: This policy applies only to "Natural Areas", or areas currently comprised primarily of naturally occurring vegetation. Tree removal within "Landscaped Areas", or areas currently comprised primarily of lawn grass and/or gardens, does not require review under this policy.

Emergency Tree Removal: If a tree(s) becomes an imminent danger to life or property, it can be removed without prior approval provided that a Hazard Tree Removal Application is retroactively submitted to the Conservation Department, with photo documentation of the tree(s), within 48 hours of removal. Care should be taken to limit ground disturbance and damage to surrounding vegetation in natural areas to the maximum extent practicable.