VOTE IN FAVOR: WETLANDS PROTECTION BYLAW

Why does Southampton Need a Wetlands Protection Bylaw?

**Bylaw section 2. Purpose**
The purpose of this Bylaw is to aid in the consistent and effective implementation of the Wetlands Protection Act. Further, it provides protection of the public water supply, flood control, erosion control, storm damage prevention, prevention of water pollution, and protection of wildlife habitat.

How does this bylaw protect our water resources?

**Bylaw section 4.3 Conservation Zone**
Defines a “Conservation Zone”: A 25-foot wide strip of undisturbed vegetation within the 100-foot Buffer Zone maintained along Resource Areas (wetlands, vernal pools).
- No work, structures or alterations will be allowed within the Conservation Zone unless permitted by the Commission.
- Minor activities, such as mowing, gardening, and pruning within existing lawn, garden or landscaped areas are allowable.

**Bylaw section 4.3.3 Vernal Pools**
- Extends protection to vernal pools, important seasonal breeding habitats for rare plants and animals.
- Vernal pools hold extra spring flood water, reducing flood damage to properties.

What happens if there is a violation?

**Bylaw section 12. Enforcement Order**
Violators of the bylaw may be ordered to restore the property to its original condition, and/or remedy the violations, may be fined, or a combination.

On the recent Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) community survey, 85% of respondents said it is important or very important to protect the town’s water resources and 80% said protecting wildlife habitat is important too!
Vernal Pool and Wetlands Bylaw Information

Definition of vernal pool
- Depression in the land that fills with spring rains and snow melt, most will dry up before the end of the summer
- Some are part of a larger wetland (protected by the state-wide WPA), some are isolated (not protected by state-wide WPA)
- The isolated vernal pools are only protected when certified, or a town bylaw protects them.

Importance of vernal pools
- No water in the summer = no fish= few egg eaters = safe breeding grounds for salamanders, wood frogs, peepers, fairy shrimp, and other wildlife
- Water resources for animals coming out of hibernation/migration
- Hold extra spring flood water, reducing flood damage to properties

Importance of conservation zone
- Control erosion, keeps soil from falling into waterways
- Clean the surface water before it gets to the waterways, keeping it safer for wildlife and people who use that wildlife (fishing)
- Clean surface water before it gets to the groundwater supply, keeping well water safe to drink
- Recharge groundwater supply, potentially limiting water restrictions in the summer
- Keep waterways cooler, which is important for cold water fish and wildlife
- Extra carbon sequestration helps with climate change
- Falling leaves from bordering trees provide protection for hibernating amphibians
- Bordering trees and vegetation help keep the pools from drying out too quickly before frogs, toads, and salamanders can metamorphose.

Why this Bylaw?
- It customizes the very general state-wide WPA for landowners and boards in Southampton specifically.
- Provides much needed protection for our limited water resources

How many MA towns have similar bylaws?
- 203/351 (about ⅔ or 66%) cities and towns in MA have wetland bylaws, including South Hadley, Sunderland, Holyoke, Northampton (9-2020).
- Our Closest town by size and distance, Hadley has a Bylaw: 35 ft no disturb zone (Conservation Area)

Why Southampton?
- Southampton residents appreciate the natural beauty around us - protecting wetlands helps protect the natural beauty and the natural resources of the area
- The Open Space and Recreation Plan (made with community input) includes goals to protect our wetlands, rivers, water supply, and wildlife. A majority of people who participated in the survey said they value protecting our drinking water, surface water, wetlands, and wildlife habitats.

This bylaw will help ensure:
- Clean drinking water
- Healthy fishing stock
- Cost savings (flooding costs $$$$$ every year)
- Protected natural landscapes
- A clear process when a violation happens