

## SO WHAT EXACTLY IS THE CONCOM?

The Conservation Commission is a state mandated town board charged with protecting Medway's wetlands, rivers, streams, vernal pools, and their surrounding areas via enforcement of the Massachusetts' Wetlands Protection Act, Rivers Protection Act and the local Medway Wetlands By-Law.



Cattails by a pond—a common site around conservation land.

## Medway Conservation Commission



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MEDWAY  
CONSERVATION  
COMMISSION



*Preserving Our Natural  
Resources*

This brochure was compiled for the Town of Medway Conservation Commission as part of the Eagle Scout Project of Andrew Collegio and by the generous contribution of AdPrint.



## WETLANDS

Wetlands are present throughout the state, and provide a clean drinking supply, protection from both floods and storms, and shelter a variety of wildlife species. Though they are not necessarily "wet" in the common sense, they can be identified by their "hydric" soil, as well as by the vegetative life surrounding them.

**The Wetlands Protection Act**  
[Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 131, Sec. 40] administered and enforced by our Conservation Commission, protects Wetlands and the public interests they serve. These interests are protected through a careful review of proposed work which might potentially alter wetlands. 100-year floodplains, the Riverfront Area (added by the Rivers Protection Act), waterways, salt ponds, and the ocean are also protected through such review.

Wetlands may be present in multiple forms, such as bogs, moors, swamps, vernal pools, ponds and rivers, and the surrounding buffer areas. No matter what form, Endemism — the presence of organisms native to only that area — is high.

Common plant life in wetlands include Ferns, Skunk Cabbage, High Bush Blueberry, and Cattails. The endemic wildlife present includes mammals such as beaver, otter, and muskrat, vertebrates such as frogs and salamanders, invertebrates like dragonflies and damselflies, beetles and water scorpions. Many fish such as Bluegill and Sunfish are present.

## VERNAL POOLS

Vernal pools are some of the most unique, biologically important, and delicate habitats on Earth. They shelter amphibian and vertebrate animals where they breed. Other names for vernal pools are ephemeral pools, autumnal pools or temporary woodland ponds. Vernal pools fill with water in the autumn and winter because of melting snow, rising groundwater and rainfall, and remain a pond throughout spring and into the summer. By mid-to-late summer every year, or at least every few years, vernal pools dry out completely. Numerous species have adapted to be dependent upon these vernal pools during parts of their life cycle.

These "obligate" species of vernal pools include the wood frog, spadefoot toad, four species of salamander and two species of fairy shrimp. Other "facultative" species use wetlands for various parts of their life activities. These include frogs, turtles, leeches, insect larvae, fingernail clams and amphibious air-breathing snails. (Source: NHESP). Vernal pools serve as watering holes for larger animals.

Because of their delicate and irreplaceable nature, vernal pools and their surrounding areas are protected by numerous laws at the State and local level. The Medway Conservation Commission enforces these protective measures.

## WHY ARE WETLANDS IMPORTANT?

Wetlands are very biologically diverse, and are the habitat of some of the Earth's most rare and beautiful endemic species. As wetlands are environments where land meets water, both the terrestrial and aquatic parts of the biome are interdependent. They are known as "ecotones" or transition areas between biomes, and as a result, are very delicate. Vegetation flourishes, attracting animal life.



## CONCOMBY-LAWS

The purpose of the ConCom bylaw is to strengthen the rules and regulations set forth in the state of Massachusetts' Wetlands Protection Act in the Town of Medway. The Medway Conservation Commission controls all activities which may significantly affect resource area values. Some of these include private water supplies, groundwater, flood control, erosion and sedimentation control, fisheries, wildlife habitat, rare species habitat, agriculture, aquaculture and recreational values. The by-law also details the areas in which one can work as well as fees suitable for actions taken out of step with the bylaw. For the complete bylaw, follow these directions:

Visit [www.townofmedway.org](http://www.townofmedway.org)  
Select "Boards and Committees"  
Select "Conservation Commission"  
Select "ConCom By-Law"

**Resources Reference:**  
Massachusetts Dept of Environmental Protection,  
[www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep)  
National Heritage and Endangered Species Program,  
[www.mass.gov/dnr/ehw/nhespnhesp.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dnr/ehw/nhespnhesp.htm)