

CHECK FOR WETLANDS BEFORE YOU BUY OR BUILD

Understanding Vermont Wetlands

Wetlands are where land and water meet. They are commonly called marshes, swamps, and bogs. Class II wetlands and their 50-foot buffer zones are regulated in Vermont because of the functions they provide, like flood water storage, water quality protection, and wildlife habitat. The location of wetlands is hard to identify because their hydrology and vegetation can change throughout the seasons. While the State has been working to update the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (VSWI), many protected wetlands remain unmapped.

Activity in a state-protected wetland or its associated 50-foot buffer zone is prohibited unless the activity is considered exempt, is an allowed use under the Vermont Wetland Rules, or is authorized by a wetland permit. However, not all projects can receive a state wetland permit. Before you start planning, check for wetlands on or near a property.

Step 1: Identify if there is a wetland on your property

Visit the [Check for Wetlands Before You Buy or Build Website](#) for a comprehensive overview of how landowners and land buyers can check for wetlands.

- Use the [Wetland Screening Tool](#) to see if a property has wetlands or to know if your plan may be affected by the Vermont Wetland Rules. The screening tool offers an initial check for nearby wetland-related layers, like hydric soils and wetland projects. The results explain each layer and recommend action steps. You can also produce a map of the results.
- Refer to the [What is a Wetland?](#) web page with information on how to identify wetlands on the ground.
- Read the [Landowner's Guide to Wetlands](#), which includes a checklist to help spot a potential wetland or buffer zone on the ground. While only a District Wetlands Ecologist can verify whether land may be subject to state wetland regulations, there are a variety of wetland characteristics you can look for when considering a property purchase or building project.
- Determine if your project is an allowed use under the Vermont Wetland Rules by reviewing the [Wetland Allowed Uses and Best Management Practices](#).

Step 2: Contact Wetlands Staff

If a property has a wetland, and a project might impact the wetland or its 50-foot buffer zone, [Contact Wetlands Staff](#). The time and money it takes to fix a wetland violation are more than the cost to get a wetland permit before building.

- **Request a review:** Fill out a [New Project Wetland Inquiry Form](#) or an [Existing Project Wetland Inquiry Form](#) to request a desktop review or a site visit from the Wetlands Program to confirm if your project is impacted by wetlands and the next steps available to you. A permit may be required.
- **Hire a professional:** If you're proposing a project near a wetland or its 50-foot buffer zone, you will likely need a wetland delineation. Hire a wetland professional to delineate the wetland during the growing season (approximately April to October), so you know the wetland boundary in relation to your project. The State provides a courtesy [Wetland Consultant List](#).
- **Buying land?** Make sure there is plenty of upland for your driveway, home, lawn, and septic. An existing wastewater permit does not mean that there are no wetland concerns that need to be designed around. A state wetland permit may be needed to develop the parcel.
- **MORE INFO:** anr.wsmdwetlands@vermont.gov