

A GUIDE TO HAMPTON FALLS' LAND USE REGULATIONS THAT PROTECT CRITICAL WATER RESOURCES

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE HAMPTON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION



In Hampton Falls, wetlands and their buffers are protected because they benefit the whole town by mitigating flood waters, cleansing stormwater of contaminants, providing wildlife habitat, allowing for recreational and scenic enjoyment and creating the rural character that maintains property values.

It is every property owner's responsibility to be aware of these protections and how they may affect your property. This guide is a helpful resource but you are strongly encouraged to contact the Building Inspector prior to initiating any projects near any suspected wetlands.



INSIDE

Hampton Falls Wetland Ordinances

Understanding the State's Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act

Our Aquifer Protection District

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and more...

TOWN WETLAND ORDINANCES

VERNAL POOLS

Vernal Pools and vernal streams are areas that fill with water anytime there is too much surface water for it to be absorbed into the ground. The word vernal means spring and generally vernal pools are most identifiable during spring months. They are vital breeding habitats for many amphibians and crustaceans such as wood frogs, spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp, and are important feeding habitats for many other animals, including the state endangered Blanding's turtle.

Because vernal pools are temporary, they are often not readily identified as wetlands and thus not adequately protected by our wetlands ordinance. It is up to responsible homeowners to protect these areas on their land. Do not fill vernal pools with lawn waste and do not clear trees and brush around them.



Wetlands are ponds, bogs, marshes, lakes, rivers and streams as well as poorly and very poorly drained soils. These are soils with water at or near the surface long enough during the growing season to support plants that are found in wetlands. In Hampton Falls, wetlands have a 100 ft buffer that is also protected.

A general overview of the Town's wetlands is shown on the map in this brochure; the Hampton Falls Conservation Commission or the Building Inspector also has information on wetland locations.

Because wetlands hold such a high ecological value, there are actions that are prohibited in these areas and in the buffers.

Buildings, pavement, parking spaces and any other structure that prevents water from soaking into the ground may not be built in the wetlands or wetland buffer. Waste, septage, or sludge disposal is prohibited, as well as storage of gasoline, fuel oil, other hazardous materials and road salt stockpiles.

Allowed uses include agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat development and management, the development of conservation areas and nature trails, and passive recreation.

As a rule, never excavate or fill in areas that are wetlands or in the 100 ft buffer. For construction projects planned on your property in or near wetlands, a site-specific wetland delineation should be completed by a Certified Wetland Scientist or Certified Soil Scientist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE TOWN'S WETLANDS CONSERVATION DISTRICT, PLEASE REFER TO SECTION 8 OF THE HAMPTON FALLS ZONING BOOK AVAILABLE IN THE TOWN HALL OR ON [THE TOWN WEBSITE](#).



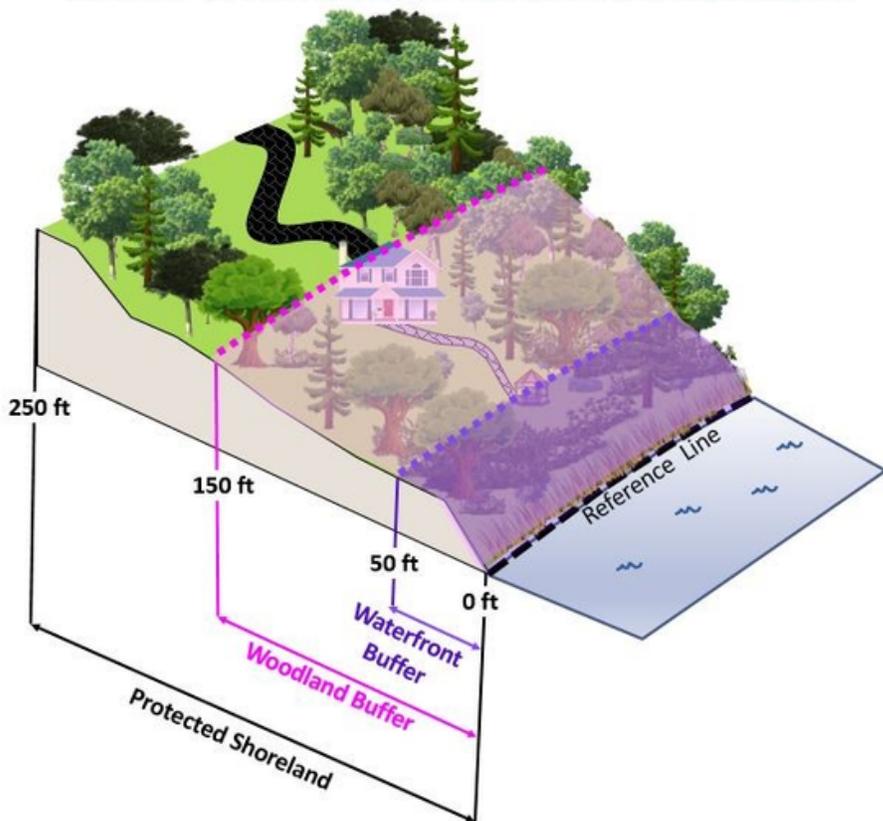
NHDES SHORELAND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION ACT

The Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (SWQPA) is a state law that establishes minimum standards for shorelands within 250 feet of the state's larger water bodies. In Hampton Falls, surface waters subject to the SWQPA include the Taylor River up to Ash Brook, Hampton Falls River and coastal tidally influenced waters.

The SWQPA defines specific three shoreland zones which are measured from the reference line: a 250 ft protected shoreland, a 50-150 ft Natural Woodland Buffer and a 0-50 ft Waterfront Buffer.

Each shoreland zone is subject to specific standards including, but not limited to impervious surface cover, removal of vegetation, setbacks for structures and septic systems and application of pesticides and herbicides

Areas Within the Protected Shoreland



VEGETATION MANAGEMENT FOR WATER QUALITY

Nature's most economical and efficient water purification system is a combination of native shoreland plants.

Plants help remove the oils, salt, heavy metals, fertilizers, and other contaminants from stormwater runoff before they enter our lakes and rivers. Even the dense mats of leaves and needles under trees play a unique role in purifying our water. The best vegetation for healthy waterbodies are native plants. Native plants slow down, absorb, and purify much more stormwater than plants with shallow roots typically found in lawns and mulched garden beds. Additionally, birds, fish, and insects rely on the shade, protection, and fruits provided by native shoreland plants.

To protect water quality and wildlife habitat, the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (SWQPA) regulates the removal of ground cover, shrubs and trees

If you are planning any projects within the SWQPA, it will likely require a State Permit. Scan the QR code here and use the [Shoreland Program Permit Guidance tool](#) for help determining what permit you may need, or contact the Shoreland Program by email at shoreland@des.nh.gov or by phone at (603) 271-2147 with any questions.



HAMPTON FALLS' AQUIFER PROTECTION DISTRICT

In 2007, the residents of Hampton Falls established an Aquifer Protection District (APD) and adopted regulations that protect and maintain our groundwater supplies. By limiting activities that could pollute the groundwater, the Town has protected the public health and general welfare of its citizens and ensured that future growth and development in the town will have sufficient quantity and quality of clean water for drinking and other uses.

An aquifer is a geologic feature that contains usable amounts of water. In Hampton Falls there are a few major aquifers, the most extensive of which is located along Kensington Rd. The land above the Town's aquifers is considered the APD and certain activities are restricted, such as the storage or disposal of hazardous waste, installation of underground gasoline tanks, dumping of brush or stumps in piles, outdoor storage of road salt, or operating an automotive/small engine service and repair shop. Many activities--such as fishing, hunting, bicycling and horseback riding--are allowed in the APD because they have minimal impact on groundwater.

Horse paths and bridges are also permitted. Other activities are allowed but with certain restrictions. Maintenance or repair of an existing structure is permitted if impervious surfaces (such as pavement or concrete) are not increased. Farming, gardening, forestry, and grazing are allowed provided that fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, manure, and other substances that can soak through the soil and contaminate the aquifer are used appropriately. For the complete list of acceptable and prohibited activities in the APD, please refer to Section 13 of the Hampton Falls Zoning Book available in the Town Hall or on the [Town website](#).

CONTROLLING INVASIVE SPECIES



Asiatic bittersweet



Japanese knotweed



Glossy buckthorn

Asiatic bittersweet, Japanese knotweed, and glossy buckthorn are a few of the non-native, invasive plants that are disrupting the ecology of Hampton Falls. Some invasive plants, such as Norway maple, Japanese barberry, and burning bush, were legal in the past but have recently been banned. The problem with invasive plants is that they displace many beneficial native plants that provide habitat for wildlife. Some invasives, like Asiatic bittersweet, kill all other plants around them, thus ruining a well-balanced landscape. Property owners should be on the lookout for any plants that seem to be "taking over" because they are likely invasive plants. To control most invasive species, a yearly combination of hand pulling and herbicide treatment is needed. Always read herbicide labels carefully and never apply them in a wetland. Planting native plants once the invasives are gone helps prevent re-infestation. Seal all invasive plant cuttings, especially Japanese knotweed, in garbage bags and throw them away.

For information about controlling invasive plants, contact the Hampton Falls Conservation Commission.

HAMPTON FALLS' NATURAL RESOURCES

The Town of Hampton Falls has many resources that make our community one that we can all be proud of and that will endure for generations to come. The rural character of the town is what drew many of us to this community; however, the features that give the town its character are fragile and need protecting.

WETLANDS AND WETLAND BUFFERS

Hampton Falls has many wetland areas that serve numerous functions in the community. Wetlands and the land adjacent to them--called wetland buffers--provide multiple benefits such as great recreational opportunities for hiking, kayaking and wildlife viewing. They are an important part of the hydrologic cycle, positively affecting water quality and water supply. Wetlands provide valuable flood storage, sedimentation control, and natural water filtration. Wetlands are vital wildlife habitats, home to some of the most endangered species in New Hampshire, including the sedge wren and the ringed bog haunter dragonfly

AQUIFERS

An aquifer is any formation in bedrock or sand and gravel that can yield a useable amount of water. Hampton Falls has predominately sand and gravel aquifers which are more susceptible to contamination from land use activities.

SHORELAND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION ACT

Areas in Hampton Falls that are affected by this state law include all of the tidal salt marsh areas in the southwest part of the town and land along the Taylor River up to Old Stage Road.

PRIME WETLANDS

Approved by Town Vote in 2008, Hampton Falls designated 1,270 acres of high-value wetlands as Prime Wetlands which receive further protection from the State of New Hampshire. All activities that alter the terrain in a Prime Wetland or in the uplands within 100 feet of a prime wetland are classified as major projects and require a wetlands permit, a New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) field inspection, and a public hearing.

To view a map of Prime Wetlands in Hampton Falls, visit: tinyurl.com/2w63se6h

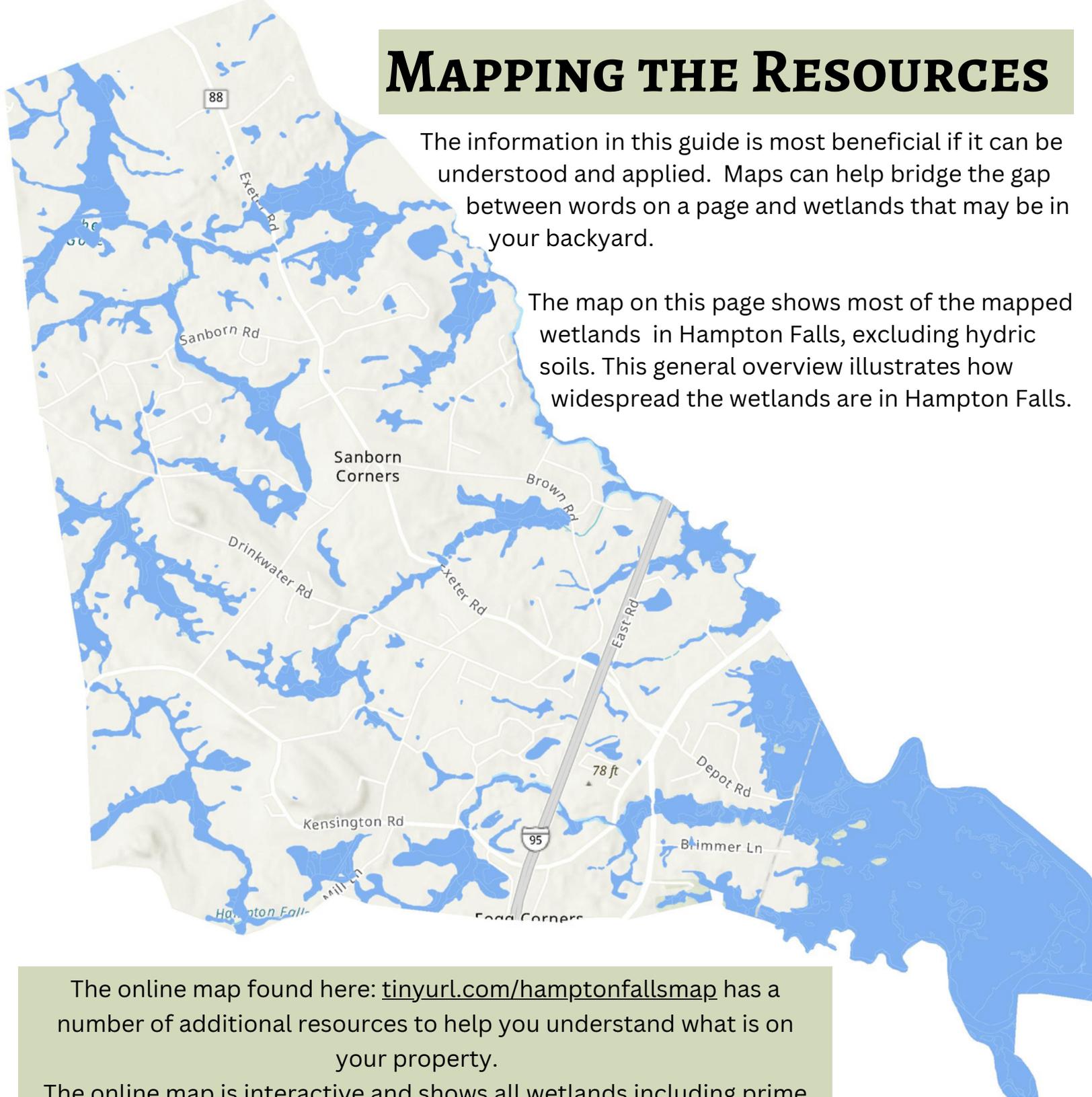
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PRESERVING AND PROTECTING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S TIDAL AND FRESHWATER WETLANDS, PLEASE VISIT NHDES'S WETLANDS RESOURCE PAGE.



MAPPING THE RESOURCES

The information in this guide is most beneficial if it can be understood and applied. Maps can help bridge the gap between words on a page and wetlands that may be in your backyard.

The map on this page shows most of the mapped wetlands in Hampton Falls, excluding hydric soils. This general overview illustrates how widespread the wetlands are in Hampton Falls.



The online map found here: tinyurl.com/hamptonfallsmap has a number of additional resources to help you understand what is on your property.

The online map is interactive and shows all wetlands including prime wetlands and their buffers as well as the aquifers in Hampton Falls. It offers a search feature so you can search an address and see what resources fall within the boundaries. Keep in mind this tool is for information purposes, and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. The presence of wetlands must be verified by a certified wetland scientist.

You can find a how to guide to help you navigate the map on the Hampton Falls Conservation Commission website!

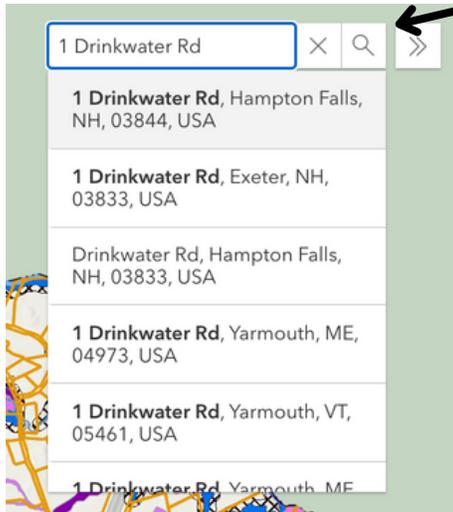


Scan this QR code for easy access to the map!

The online map can be used in many different ways. To check what resources are on your property, follow the steps below.

STEP 1

Select the magnifying glass icon in the top right and enter your address. Make sure you select the right town.



STEP 2

Use the tools on the left hand side of the screen...



Brings you to the default map view.

Zoom in or out- you can also use the scroll wheel on your mouse.

Displays the layers.

Displays the legend.

Allows you to take screenshots of portions of the map.

UNDERSTANDING THE LAYERS

Each layer corresponds to a different set of data. To turn a layer off (hide it)- click on the eye icon to the left of the layer name. To turn a layer back on, click the eye icon again.

New Hampshire Political Boundaries

This layer blocks out all of the other Towns in New Hampshire so that it is easier to focus on the data within Hampton Falls' political boundaries. It is recommended to keep this layer on for ease of viewing Hampton Falls only, but if you are interested in viewing the data for other towns within the state you can turn it off.

Property Parcels

This layer shows property boundaries according to deeds, tax maps and other data. These are not surveyed boundaries and may not be exactly accurate.

Prime Wetlands

This layer shows the Prime Wetlands and their buffers. The Prime Wetlands are indicated with the color royal blue and it's wetland is shown in black and white hatching.

Wetlands- NWI

This layer shows all wetlands, not just those designated Prime although you'll notice that nearly all wetlands are Prime. It includes Estuarine and Marine Deepwater, Estuarine and Marine Wetland, Freshwater Emergent Wetland, Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland, Freshwater Pond, Lake, Riverine and other. This is desktop data that comes from the National Wetland Inventory. It can look confusing but take your time to look at this layer and understand the different colors that represent each type of wetland.

Aquifer Transmissivity

This layer shows the location of the Aquifer Protection District in Hampton Falls.

WHEN YOU PROTECT RESOURCES LOCALLY, YOU ALSO PROTECT...



Air Quality & Climate

Coastal Wetlands absorb carbon 3-5x faster than tropical forests.



Fishing Industry

Coastal & estuarine recreational fishing brings in \$245 million to New Hampshire each year.



Flooding & Safety

50% of flood exposure is reduced by healthy wetlands absorbing runoff & water.



Wildlife

Healthy wetlands support rich & diverse species attracting residents & visitors.



Property & Infrastructure

Healthy wetlands can increase real estate values by 30% and decrease costs for infrastructure like treatment facilities.



Beaches & Economic Health

Healthy wetlands filter bacteria which reduces safety risks & beach advisories which can have a negative impact on local business.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT OUR RESOURCES

Wetlands are the link between land and water, where the flow of water, the cycling of nutrients and the energy of the sun meet to produce a unique ecosystem characterized by hydrology, special soils, and vegetation. Unhealthy, polluted and poorly maintained ecosystems affect your well water and living things around your home that rely on clean water to survive and function properly. Practicing good stewardship of your land contributes to long term ecological health and resilience within your community.

There are currently over 40 million acres of maintained lawn in the United States which is a poor use of water and chemicals and limits biodiversity.

Mowing your lawn higher than 3 inches will produce a lush turf that holds water, is weed-resistant, and requires less fertilizer. If you really want to go the extra mile, consider replacing some of your lawn with native vegetation.

MOW HIGH OR REPLACE YOUR LAWN

LANDSCAPE WITH NATIVE PLANTS

Planting native plants reduces need for chemical pesticides and fertilizers because these plants are well suited for the local environment.

Furthermore, native plants provide food and habitat for many wildlife species.

Maintaining lush native plant growth in areas with steep slopes will also hold soil in place and minimize erosion. When you seed areas, use straw mulch to further protect from erosion.

REDUCE FERTILIZER USAGE

On average, only 50% of added nitrogen (one of the main ingredients in fertilizer) gets used by the intended plants. This means that it is making its way into the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas or into our waterways, causing a number of environmental problems.

Growing and maintaining plants that don't require chemicals allows the local ecosystem to remain as strong and healthy as possible.

Slope driveways and patios to direct rainwater and snow melt to vegetated areas that recharge groundwater. When planning for additions or renovations, be sure to leave plenty of room to direct stormwater.

Consider installing a rain garden and directing downspouts and sump pump discharges to areas planted with water-loving plants.

MANAGE STORMWATER ON SITE



MINIMIZE IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Impervious surfaces prohibit water from infiltrating directly into the ground. When this happens, water heats up, collects in large volumes and flows across surfaces collecting pollutants and sediments. The amount of water that is properly infiltrated before it returns to the watershed is greatly minimized.

Be mindful of your footprint, build the smallest buildings, patios, and driveways possible and use water-permeable materials when you can.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services recommends that septic systems be inspected annually and pumped every three to five years. Never send grease, toxic chemicals, pharmaceuticals, or nonbiodegradable materials down the drain. These materials cause can thousands of dollars worth of damage.

MAINTAIN YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM



The Hampton Falls Conservation Commission works to preserve and protect the natural resources of the town including its watersheds, forests and wildlife habitats. We serve to promote proper utilization of these resources through education, advising other boards on environmental issues, and maintaining a natural resources inventory.

The Conservation Commission typically meets monthly, on the second Tuesday at 6:30 PM at Hampton Falls Town Hall.