

Testimony on Wetland Amendment S.223

Importance of Protecting Mapped and Unmapped Significant Wetlands

“66% of the known wetlands
on Prospect Heights aren’t on
the state’s map” – Laura
Lapierre, VT DEC

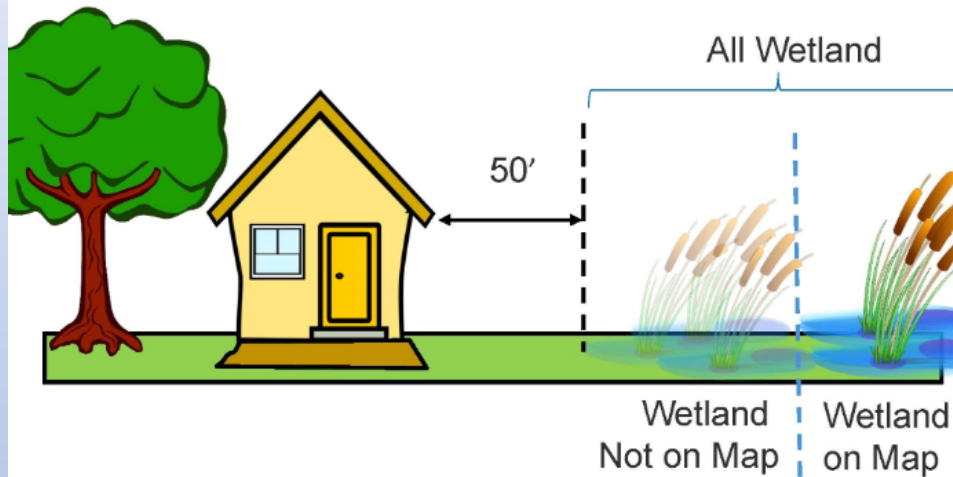


Testimony of Karina Dailey to House
Environment, VNRC April 16, 2026

<https://www.sevendaysvt.com/news/environment-news/scotts-proposal-to-ease-wetlands-protections-hits-a-muddy-patch/> - January 28, 2026

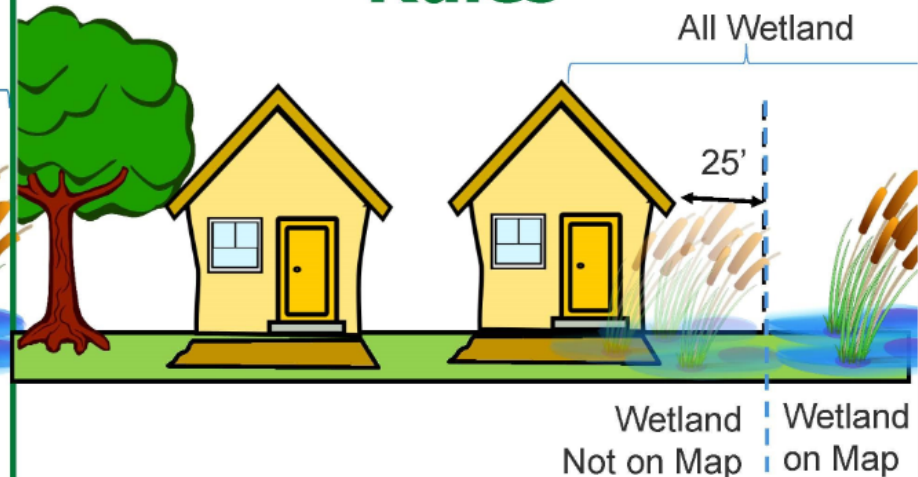
Importance of Protecting Mapped and Unmapped Significant Wetlands

Existing VT Wetland Rules



Wetland area is determined by a wetland professional in the field (delineation). Residential housing projects must either avoid wetland and the fifty foot buffer zone or receive a permit. The wetland map, called the Vermont Significant Wetlands Inventory (VSWI) map, is used for planning purposes only.

Proposed VT Wetland Rules



Wetland area is not field reviewed by a wetland professional. Residential housing projects must either avoid VSWI and a 25-foot setback (unless it is a utility crossing) or receive a permit. The VSWI is used on the site plan instead of a delineation. Federal permitting requires field review of wetlands.

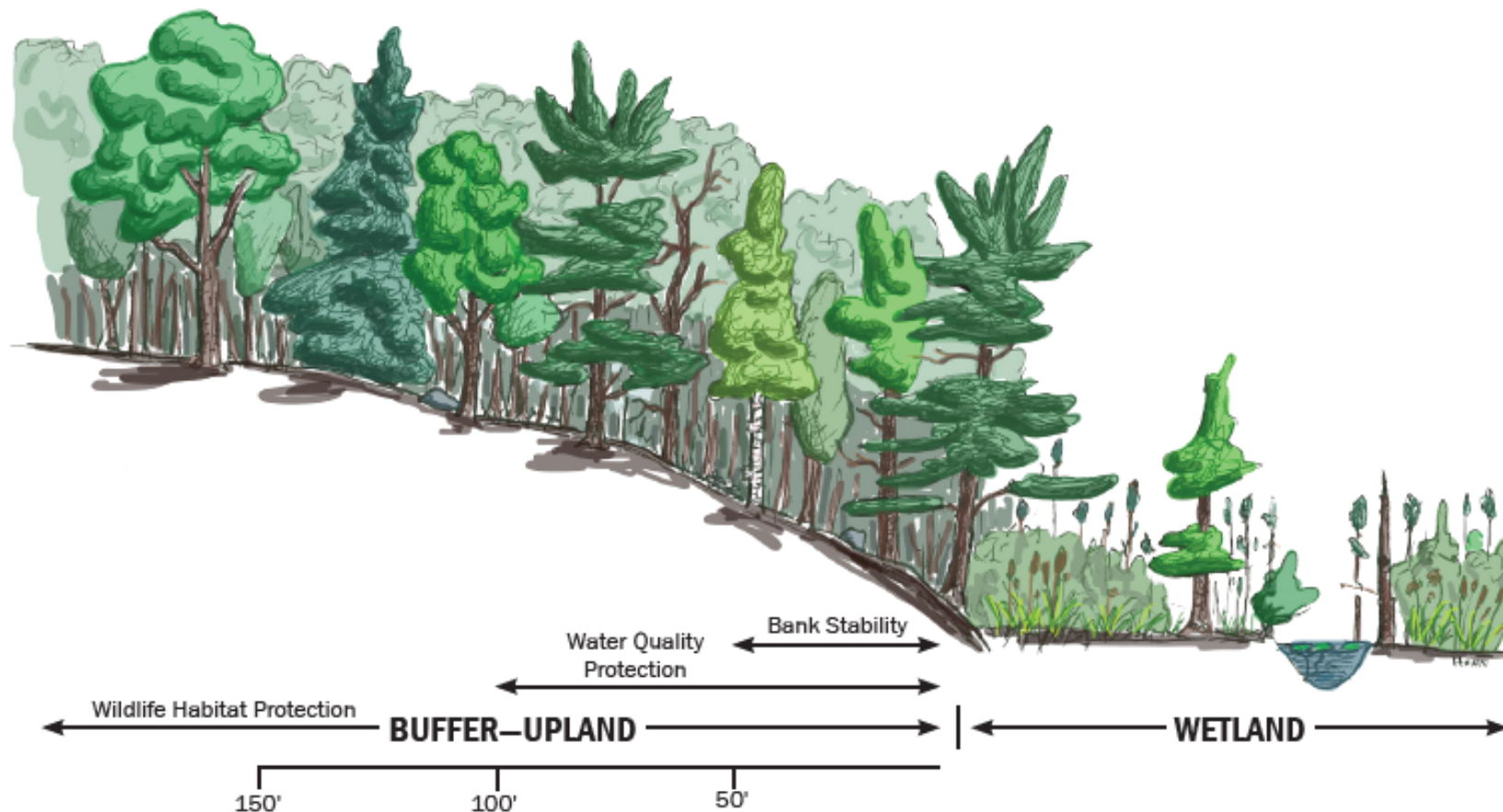


Wetland functions are not protected without buffers

WHY ARE BUFFERS IMPORTANT?

In natural conditions, wetlands in Vermont are surrounded by upland ecosystems—usually forests. When development or disturbance occurs in this protective forest shell, impacts can spread to the wetland ecosystem as

well. Ecologists refer to these effects as edge effects. Edge effects can extend for at least 300 feet, but decrease with distance, so preserving a wide buffer offers more protection to a wetland than a narrow one.



Wetland Science and Wetland Scientists are Critical for Navigating Development and Wetland Protection



VAWS mission is to:

- *“foster understanding and collaboration across multidisciplinary professions by providing wetland training, education, and networking for members and the general public, encouraging the use of science-based management and policy, promoting wetland research and the protection and restoration of wetlands and associated aquatic resources, and responding to future wetland challenges and opportunities in the State.”*

Other Ideas:

- Increase resources and capacity of the Wetland Program (on-site ecological review, delineation review, and VSWI updates)
- Prioritize wetland mapping in growth areas
- Employ additional staff or permit specialists to assist applicants for housing projects in growth areas – VT Environmental Assistance Center
- Simplify the permitting process with electronic submittal
- Wetland General Permit

