

# Shoreland Protection Act

## Overview



The Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act, originally named the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA), was enacted into law in the 1991 session of the Legislature. The act establishes minimum standards for the subdivision, use and development of shorelands adjacent to the state's public water bodies. On July 1, 2005, Senate Bill 83 established a commission to study the effectiveness of the comprehensive shoreland protection act. Among other things, the commission was charged with assessing land-use impacts around the state's public waters; size, type, and location standards pertaining to structures as outlined in the CSPA; shoreland buffer and setback standards; and nonconforming use, lot, and structure standards. The commission was comprised of 24 members representing a variety of stakeholders including the General Court, the conservation community, the regulatory community, natural resource scientists, agricultural interests, business and economic interests, and members of the general public. The final report of the commission contained 17 recommendations for changes to the CSPA. Sixteen of those recommendations for change were enacted into law and became effective April 1, 2008 and July 1, 2008. The changes were broad in scope and included limits on impervious surfaces, a provision for a waterfront buffer in which vegetation removal was limited, shoreland protection along rivers designated under RSA 483 (Designated Rivers), and the establishment of a permit requirement for many new construction, excavation and filling activities within the Protected Shoreland. During the 2011 legislative session, the CSPA was renamed to the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act and included changes to vegetation requirements within the natural woodland and waterfront buffers, the impervious surface limitations and included a new shoreland permit by notification process.

The Shoreland Program provides multiple services to the public. Permitting staff review shoreland permit applications and waiver requests for compliance with the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act. The review process is designed to provide a level of oversight for construction, fill, and excavation activities to ensure that projects are carried out in a manner that meet the minimum standards of the act and protect water quality.

Compliance staff responds to written complaints alleging violations of the SWQPA. Complaints are triaged according to the level of environmental impact and investigated. A typical investigation involves a site inspection and follow-up with the appropriate parties to restore any violations.

Outreach personnel travel around the state with a variety of multi-media presentations that explain and illustrate the standards of the SWQPA. In addition, the outreach and education staff have developed brochures, fact sheets, website documents and other educational tools to help the public understand the requirements of the SWQPA. Questions about the SWQPA can be emailed directly to the shoreland staff via "contact us" on the Shoreland Program webpage. The staff make every effort to respond to inquiries on a daily basis.