

During the spring and summer months, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection typically receives a high volume of complaints from the public regarding work in streams and wetlands. Upon inspection, we frequently find a number of these activities have occurred without permits, including dredging, which is cleaning out a stream; ditching, filling in or draining wetlands; placing fill in a floodway to build up the property; relocating a stream; stabilizing a stream bank; and installing culverts, bridges, boat docks or ramps.

Municipalities, homeowners, and landowners may not be aware that state, and often federal law requires a DEP permit for certain types of work they want to do on their own property within regulated waters of the Commonwealth. DEP is here as a resource and a partner for Pennsylvanians who are planning any activity in or around streams and wetlands, so the project can be done safely and without impacting the environment, public safety, or adjacent and downstream neighbors.

Just like the Public Utility Commission's 'PA One Call' for excavators, the best first step for homeowners and landowners is to call the local DEP office to find out what is required before any work begins.

Municipalities, residents, and landowners should follow these tips when conducting activities in and around streams:

- If there are low-lying, wet areas on the property where a landowner would like to fill in, consult first with the DEP Waterways and Wetlands program that serves your county.
- Do not mow or cut trees and shrubs along a stream's edge. This can potentially lead to stream-bank erosion. Leaving a buffer along the edge of a stream or wetland is an effective way to increase a stream bank's stability, reduce stream bank erosion, increase wildlife habitat, and provide a pollutant filtering area for surface water which drains through the buffer.
- If a project is being planned in a stream channel or floodway, work should not be conducted without the required permits within the channel or 50 feet from the top of the stream bank. A stream's floodway is typically 50 feet from the top of each stream bank unless a detailed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood study determines the floodway at issue is smaller or larger than 50 feet. FEMA floodplain study information can be found at local township and borough offices and online at FEMA's website.
- Filling, ditching, or draining of a wetland requires a permit from DEP and the Army Corps.

The DEP has developed a booklet and flyer to explain what work can be performed in and around streams without a permit, projects where a call should be made to our office prior to starting, and those projects which would require a permit. These documents may be found by clicking either link below:

[Guidelines for Maintaining Streams in Your Community Booklet](#)
[Guidelines for Maintaining Streams in Your Community Flyer](#)

Please feel free to post these links on your website or community newsletters, print them off for your lobby, or distribute them to others who would have interest in the content.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to call me at the number below.