

Mary Ann Tilton,
Wetlands Bureau Assistant Administrator

RE: Draft Wetlands Rules

Probably most of the comments you have heard regarding the proposed wetlands regulations as they apply to forestry have come from forest industry professionals. It's important to bear in mind that they are outnumbered, by far, by their clients who actually own the land they manage, and who are equally as affected by the same regulations.

My family situation is typical; we manage a 170 acre woodlot for income, but a significant portion of our holding is lower quality woodland that we manage for forest health, wildlife habitat, protection for endangered species, erosion control and other stewardship objectives. These beneficial activities are funded by the sale of timber harvested incidentally to those operations. If the cost to do this management is increased by regulation to exceed the value of the incidental harvest, then the operations become infeasible.

Overly protective regulations can backfire by actually reducing the level of responsible forest stewardship if they make it too expensive to be worthwhile. In order to be effective, regulations must be comprehensible and transparent, with required approvals issued on a timely basis.

It's simply not possible to write regulations that anticipate every possible situation, and overly complicated regulations invariably breed unintended consequences. A far better result will be realized by requiring desirable outcomes rather than dictating the minutiae of how things are to be done. The skilled professionals responsible for outcomes in the field understand the long term value of protecting the client's investment in land and need the latitude to make good decisions and to select alternative approaches based on conditions as they actually exist.

I am not a forest professional, so I defer to the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association for specific recommendations regarding the draft proposal. I understand, however, that it is a significant improvement over the first draft, but more work needs to be done to make them usable and fair.

Thank you for considering my input.

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cc: Jasen Stock
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