



CAPE COD COMMISSION

3225 MAIN STREET
P.O. BOX 226
BARNSTABLE, MA 02630
(508) 362-3828
FAX (508) 362-3136
E-mail: frontdesk@capecodcommission.org

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DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL IMPACT GUIDELINES FOR NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY (PLANT AND WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT)

BACKGROUND

The Regional Policy Plan specifies that “Applications for Developments of Regional Impact that propose to alter undeveloped areas shall contain a natural resources inventory. Such inventory shall identify the presence and location of wildlife and plant habitat, including vernal pools, and serve as a guide for the layout of the development. Developments shall be planned to minimize impacts to wildlife and plant habitat.” (2.4.1.1.)

These guidelines summarize the recommended content of a DRI Natural Resources Inventory. The information required by these guidelines should be submitted in narrative form and on plans as appropriate. Natural resource inventories should be conducted by individuals qualified through appropriate academic credentials and field experience in biology, botany, ecology or similar discipline or at least three years professional experience in botanic and wildlife assessments on Cape Cod or similar coastal glacial areas such as Martha’s Vineyard, Nantucket or Long Island. A statement of credentials should be submitted with the assessment along with a description of the methodology used and the dates and times of the field visits and the weather conditions encountered.

It is recommended that natural resource inventories be prepared from April–June or September–November wherever possible. In unusual circumstances, such as where the presence of rare species is indicated, the Commission may require field surveys during breeding/flowering seasons.

CONTENT OF INVENTORIES

Soils

- Describe soils underlying the development site. Map areas with different soils as appropriate based on results of field testing (not Natural Resources Conservation Service mapping).

Vegetation

- Describe the major upland vegetational communities located on the site, include canopy/trees; shrub layer, low ground cover, herbaceous vegetation. Note approximate depth of leaf litter, and

size and height of mature trees. Note locations of specimen trees. If several different zones of vegetation are present on the site, note the location of these areas on a site plan (suggested scale: 1"=40').

- Identify and delineate wetlands, waterbodies, banks, dunes, flats, and floodplain areas located on the site. Describe the major vegetational communities located in these areas as above. Note whether wetland delineations have been verified by the town conservation commission.
- Note the relative abundance or scarcity of vegetational community(ies) identified on the site in areas immediately surrounding the development site. In particular, note nearby areas of similar unfragmented habitat. Identify vegetational communities that are unique to the development site.
- Identify and delineate the presence of any invasive species listed in Invasive Species TB 01-001.

Wildlife

- Identify wildlife species and evidence of wildlife observed in each vegetational community. Search for amphibians and reptiles under rocks and fallen logs. Identification/observations may include sightings of animal species, identification of species from calls/sounds, tracks, scat, burrows, browse marks, nests, feathers, bone fragments, etc. At least two field visits for the purpose of wildlife identification should be made. Such field visits should occur within one hour of sunrise and within one hour of sunset during good weather.
- Identify presence of wildlife migration areas and corridors, denning, nesting and breeding areas, and deer yards and travel corridors.
- Note presence of snags and significant dead vegetation that may serve as nesting sites for bird species.
- Note presence of fish, amphibians and other species associated with wetlands and waterbodies located on the site.

Vernal Pools

- Note presence of kettle hole depressions and other areas that may function as vernal pools (regardless of association with other wetland area or state certification). If such areas exist, note presence/evidence of vernal pool species. Refer to the state vernal pool certification guidelines for identification of vernal pools. When possible, vernal pool surveys shall be conducted during April, May and June.

Development Impact

- Describe the short-term alterations to the existing vegetation and wildlife habitat that would result during construction of the proposed development.
- Describe the long-term alteration of the existing vegetation and wildlife habitat that would result from the proposed development. Describe any proposed fencing.

- Demonstrate that the proposed development has been planned to minimize impacts to plant and wildlife habitat, including habitat fragmentation.

Mitigation

- Include description of any proposed mitigation measures that are specifically intended to reduce the impact of the proposed project upon plant and wildlife habitat and/or populations. Include any measures designed to enhance existing plant and wildlife habitat that would provide an overall benefit to the area. Where appropriate, describe any revegetation and restoration that is planned after development and associated monitoring. The Commission may request photographs if they will aid in monitoring the success of mitigation projects. Revegetation should emphasize plant species indigenous to Cape Cod.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION

A variety of information which may assist in developing the Inventory is available from the Cape Cod Commission. This includes:

APCC Cape Cod Critical Habitats Atlas and text
Natural Heritage Atlas, 2000 – 2001 Edition
Natural Heritage Program listing of common and rare animal species on Cape
1:25,000 Color infrared aerial photographs of Cape Cod
2000 McConnell land use maps and data
USGS Soil Maps
Federal Flood Insurance maps
Coastal Zone Management Shoreline Change maps
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, maps and text
Department of the Interior Natural Wetland Inventory Maps (1977)
Regional Policy Plan – Significant Natural Resource Areas Map
Prior DRI Submittals

It is requested that individuals who would like to use this information make an appointment with the Commission's staff.