



Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

An Introduction to Ponds

Introduction

During years of normal precipitation, ponds are generally a reliable and economical source of water. Ponds are constructed for many reasons including livestock watering, irrigation, fishing, fire protection, wildlife habitat, recreation and aesthetics.

Site Selection

Selecting a suitable site for a pond is important, and there are many factors to consider and many questions to ask. Look around your property - is there a fairly flat area that is not a wetland? Is the area of land sloping toward the flat area protected from erosion, nutrients and toxicants? If your goal is aesthetics, is the flat area within view of your desired vantage point?

You may want to seek advice from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) or the Penn State Cooperative Extension office. Local contractors, environmental consultants and engineers will be able to provide the most direct advice for planning, design and construction.

Will I be impacting any other water resources?

As you consider where to locate your pond, avoid impacts to aquatic resources. DEP strongly discourages the excavation of wetlands or the construction of ponds on-stream.

The number one loss of wetlands in the commonwealth is due to conversion to ponds. Wetlands serve a unique function in the environment and that function is lost when wetlands are excavated or inundated to construct a pond. While ponds do attract a number of aquatic species, the overall biodiversity of a pond ecosystem is less than that of a wetland.

How big should I make my pond?

What is the purpose of your pond? For example, if you would like a fishing pond, it is suggested that the pond be a quarter to two acres in area and have a depth of eight feet over a minimum of 1,000 square feet.

When surface water runoff will be the primary source of water, it is generally suggested that the pond have between two to four acres of drainage for each acre-foot of water stored in the pond. When a pond is excavated and the primary source of water is groundwater, the water in the pond will depend upon the depth and reliability of the groundwater.

Permits

If the pond will impact a wetland or stream (generally by excavation), Chapter 105 Water Obstruction and Encroachment permits and Federal Section 404

permits will be required. If wetlands are impacted during construction, the wetlands are required to be replaced at a minimum of 1:1 ratio. For example, if you propose to excavate two-tenths acre of wetland you will have to create at least two-tenths acre of new wetland nearby. This will raise the cost of the pond construction and increase the time it will take to move on to construction. Further permitting in wetlands is not automatic and, before replacement can be considered, the applicant will first need to demonstrate how impacts to wetlands have been avoided and minimized.

When you believe you have found the right location, you may need to call in a wetland consultant to identify and delineate wetlands and a professional engineer to do a survey and prepare a construction plan.

Remember as you select your site, many impacts to streams and wetlands can be avoided with good planning. Avoiding and minimizing impacts to aquatic resources will save time and money.

If you are considering the construction of a dam, the Chapter 105 Rules and Regulations require a person to obtain a dam permit to construct a dam if one of the following applies:

1. The construction of a dam across a watercourse where the contributory drainage area exceeds 100 acres;
2. The maximum depth of water measured at the upstream toe to the top of the dam is greater than 15 feet; or
3. The impounding capacity is greater than 50 acre-feet.

If you have any questions about dams, contact DEP's Division of Dam Safety at 717-787-8568, or visit DEP's Web site at www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Dam Safety.

Erosion and sediment (E&S) control measures are required to protect receiving waters during earth disturbance activities. You may contact the local county conservation district regarding E&S control requirements.

Additionally, a federal permit will be required for impacts to wetlands and watercourses. Contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for more information.

If a pond is properly planned, constructed and maintained, it will provide you with many years of pleasure. For more information, contact one of the agencies on the reverse side of this sheet.

For more information, visit DEP's Web site at www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Wetlands.

or contact:

| PERMITTING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES SECTION | COUNTY RESPONSIBILITY | PERMITTING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES SECTION | COUNTY RESPONSIBILITY |
|---|---|--|--|
| Northcentral Regional Office 208 W. Third St., Suite 101 Williamsport, PA 17701 570-327-3574 | Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union | Southcentral Regional Office 909 Elmerton Ave. Harrisburg, PA 17110 717-705-4700 | Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York |
| Northeast Regional Office 2 Public Square Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0790 570-826-2511 | Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming | Southeast Regional Office 2 East Main Street Norristown, PA 19401 484-250-5970 | Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia |
| Northwest Regional Office 230 Chestnut St. Meadeville, PA 16335 814-332-6984 | Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren | Southwest Regional Office 400 Waterfront Dr. Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745 412-442-4000 | Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland |

DEP CENTRAL OFFICE

Bureau of Watershed Management
Division of Waterways, Wetlands and Stormwater Management
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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Delaware River Basin
Philadelphia District Corps of Engineers
Wanamaker Bldg.
100 Penn Square East
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-656-6725
Fax: 215-656-6724

Susquehanna River Basin
Baltimore District Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 1715
Baltimore, MD 21203-1715
Phone: 410-962-5673
Fax: 410-962-6024

Ohio River Basin
Pittsburgh District Corps of
Engineers
Room 1817 Federal Bldg.
1000 Liberty Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412-395-7154
Fax: 412-644-2811

or

Baltimore District Corps of Engineers
Pennsylvania Field Office
1631 South Atherton Street
State College, PA 16801
Phone: 814-235-0570
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Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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