

Flood Plain Districts

ARTICLE 39

2025 Annual Town Meeting
April 2025

Flood Plain or Watershed Protection District Overview

The Flood Plain or Watershed Protection District Bylaw

- Ensure public safety by reducing threats to life and property
- Eliminate new hazards to emergency response officials
- Prevent public emergencies resulting from water quality, contamination, and pollution due to flooding
- Avoid the loss of utility services damaged by flooding and impact beyond the site of the flooding
- Eliminate costs associated with the response and cleanup of floods
- Reduce damage to public and private property resulting from floods

Purpose

- Amend **Section 3.7 Flood Plain or Watershed Protection Districts** Bylaw by adopting certain provisions of the most recent version of the 2020 Massachusetts Model Floodplain Bylaw as well as new FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS).
- If adopted, the article will bring Town Bylaws into compliance with Federal and State Requirements and ensure that Town residents can continue to purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Background

- In the 1970s, Wellesley adopted 100-year base flood elevations for bodies of water in town and set restrictions for new construction within flood plains.
- FEMA concurrently issued a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) that identified hazard areas.
- The FIRMs are updated periodically, most recently at ATM 2012 (Article 28).
- The Bylaw language was last updated at ATM 2022 (Article 33).

Overview

- Article 39 revises the Zoning Bylaw text to conform to the most recent version of the 2020 MA State Model Floodplain Bylaw.
- Issuance of FEMA Maps was expected in 2022; however, it was delayed a couple of years. This article will incorporate new maps that will take effect in July 2025.
- All proposed changes to the bylaw have been conditionally approved by the State.

Revisions

- **Section B:** Add six definitions as required by the State's Model Bylaw
- **Section C:** References the updated Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS)
- **Section E:** Further restrictions on encroachments in floodways
- **Sections H and I:** Deletes outdated state and federal reporting agency addresses
- **Section J:** Provide a Disclaimer of Liability

Summary

Adoption of Article 39 is required to:

- Bring Town Bylaws into compliance with Federal and State Requirements
- Ensure that Town residents can continue to purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)