



2026 Newsletter

Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program



Image courtesy of maryland.gov

Included in this newsletter:

- Updates from most recent legislative session
- Overview of application fee increases
- Emergency Authorization Procedures
- Pre-Application Meetings Overview
- Addition of EnviroScreen review box to acknowledgment letter
- Environmental Service Center

Recent Legislative Changes

Each listed legislative item is linked to the corresponding government page.

House Bill 613 - Waivers for Living Shorelines and Nonstructural Shoreline Stabilization Measures: Updates the evaluation process for living shoreline and nonstructural shoreline stabilization waivers, requiring the implementation of a standardized scoring system to assess project feasibility, conduct mandatory site visits, and perform local notifications during waiver reviews. The updated law also establishes a formal definition for living shoreline to guide future assessments.

Senate Bill 523 - Identification of Vernal Pools: Directs the Department of Natural Resources, in coordination with MDE, to identify and track qualified vernal pools across the state, and create and maintain a list of qualified vernal pools while training staff on identification of these habitats.

House Bill 250 - Appropriation or Use of Water and Dam Safety: Authorizes MDE to impose an administrative penalty for certain violations related to appropriation or use of water and dam safety, repealing a certain limitation on the Department's authority to issue certain orders, and requires the Department to take certain actions before imposing civil or administrative penalties.



Maryland

Department of the
Environment

Water and Science Administration



Updated Fee Schedule

Effective July 17th, 2026

Fees for Wetlands and Waterway Application reviews have increased.

These adjustments ensure the continuation of high-level service to the regulated community, reducing delays and supporting the overall efficiency of the application review process.

What has changed?

Existing fees for Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program applications have been adjusted to account for inflation.

How was this calculated?

Application review fees may be adjusted annually in accordance with Md. Code Ann., Envir. § 5-203.1, using the Annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) published by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics for the period ending each December.

For specific application fee changes, please review the complete breakdown here:
[Fee Schedule](#)

Environmental Service Center



- The New Environmental Service Center provides an easy and streamlined database for information regarding environmental authorizations and the ability to apply online for many of them (more to be added soon)
- Key Features:
 - **Search:** Find the specific authorization you need
 - **Apply:** Submit the required application materials and pay fees online (for many permits)
 - **Track:** If the application was submitted online, you can check the status of your application until a decision is made
- To check for existing authorizations, check the link [here](#)
- For additional information or assistance, please visit our [website](#), contact our central office at 410-537-3000, or general emails can be sent to mde.webmaster@maryland.gov

Updated Acknowledgement Letters: Include MDEnviroScreen Reviews

MDEnviroScreen is an environmental justice mapping tool used by MDE to identify communities disproportionately impacted by pollution and socioeconomic stress. Checking these scores upon application receipt provides early notification if specialized community outreach may be required, allowing staff to identify qualifying projects immediately and initiate necessary coordination without delay.



Nontidal Waterways: Emergency Notification and Authorization Procedures

To facilitate emergency actions/repairs which impact State-regulated wetland and waterway resources, MDE Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program has established procedures for expediting the regulatory process for conducting emergency repairs.

What Constitutes an Emergency Condition?

- If the emergency repairs will prevent a threat to life, severe loss or damage to property, or an imminent threat to public safety or the environment

AND

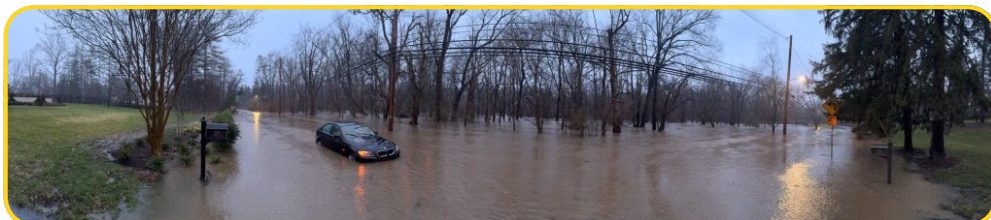
- the anticipated threat, loss, or damage may occur before an authorization can be issued by MDE

How should I handle an Emergency Condition?

- While you are strongly encouraged to contact MDE before beginning any emergency work, you may initiate emergency repairs immediately.
- **Additionally, you must:**
 - Notify MDE no later than the next business day after beginning an emergency regulated activity (MDE's 24-hour number: 1-866-633-4686)
 - Limit repairs to only what is necessary to abate the emergency
 - Employ standard best management practices during the emergency work if practicable
 - Submit an application after-the-fact for review and approval, as required

For additional information, please visit:

- [Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program Emergency Notification and Authorization Request Procedures](#)
- [General Guidance for Emergency Action and Repairs](#)



Highlight: Pre-Application Meetings

The submission of a complete application often results in an expeditious review of a project, while an incomplete application can result in processing delays. A Pre-Application meeting is an excellent opportunity to find out what information is necessary to submit a complete application.

Benefits of Attending a Pre-Application Meeting

- Meet with an MDE Project Manager, who is familiar with your area and knowledgeable about the regulatory process
- Highlight the review procedures and provide guidance on the information necessary to advance the project
- MDE can provide you with an estimate of the processing time and costs

Schedule a Pre-Application Meeting

- For proposed activities in tidal or nontidal wetlands, or a nontidal waterway, please go to the link below and complete and submit the Pre-Application form.
 - Once submitted, you will be contacted to set up a meeting.

**Link to Submit:
[Pre-Application Meeting Request](#)**