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Town of Vassalboro

Homeowner's Guide to Vegetation Removal in the Shoreland Zone

Excerpts from the State of Maine Handbook for Shoreland Owners:

(Vassalboro's Shoreland Zoning supersedes these guidelines when more restrictive than the state standards)

- **Clearing Vegetation (Other than for Commercial Timber Harvesting)**

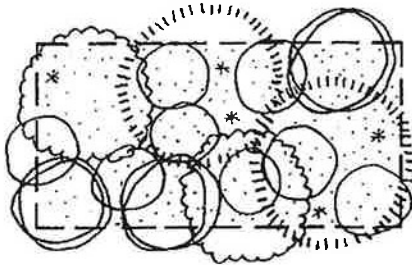
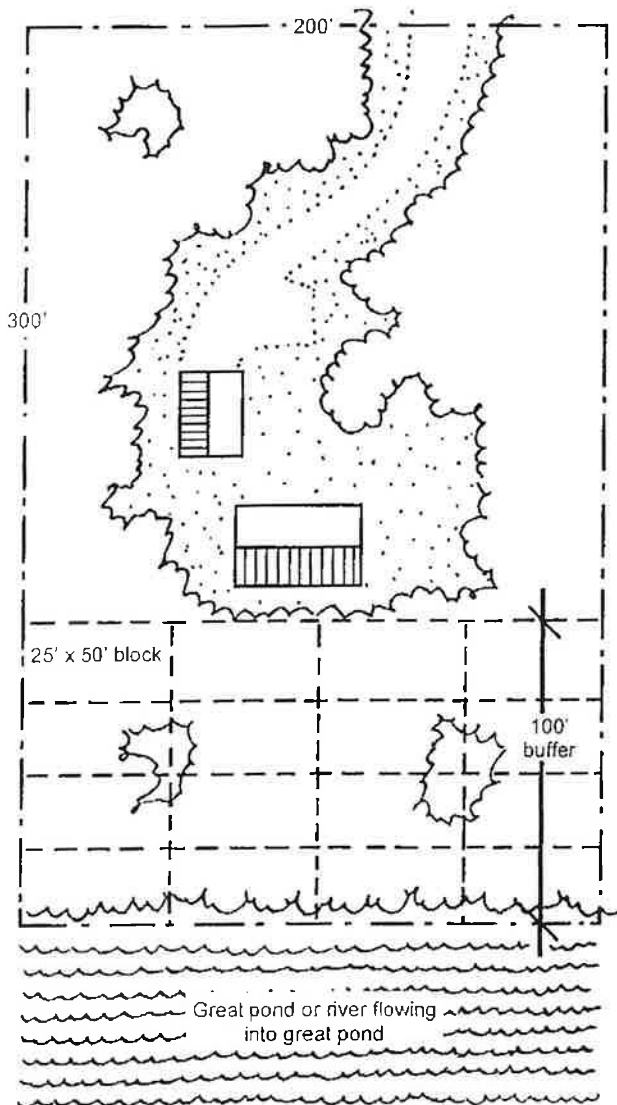
Clearing Vegetation in the Buffer Areas:

- 1) In a Resource Protection District abutting a great pond, there shall be no cutting of vegetation within the strip of land extending 75 feet, horizontal distance, inland from the normal highwater line, except to remove hazard trees as described in section Q. Elsewhere, in any Resource Protection District the cutting or removal of vegetation shall be limited to that which is necessary for uses expressly authorized in that district.
- 2) Except in areas as described in Section P (1), above, within a strip of land extending one hundred (100) feet, horizontal distance, inland from the normal high-water line of a great pond classified GPA, a river flowing to a great pond classified GPA, from any other water body, tributary stream, or the upland edge of a wetland, a buffer strip of vegetation shall be preserved.
- 3) In all other shoreland areas, no more than 40% of the total volume of trees over 4 inches in diameter in the buffer area may be harvested in any 10-year period. Furthermore, vegetation less than 3 feet in height, including groundcover, cannot be removed from the shoreland buffers. Lastly, pruning the lower third of the branches of a tree within the buffer area is allowed.

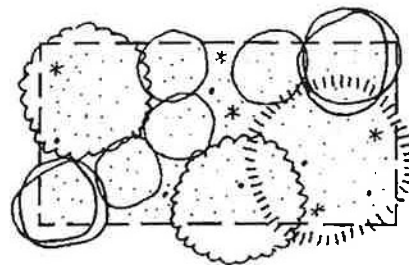
KEY	
Vegetation/Size	Symbol
Stump (0 points)	.
Under 3 ft. high (0 points)	•••••
Saplings to < 2" diameter (0 points)	*
Trees 2" to < 4" diameter (1 point)	○
Trees 4" < 8" diameter (2 points)	◉
Trees 8" to < 12" diameter (4 points)	⊗
Trees over 12" diameter (8 points)	⊙

Every 25' x 50' area within the 100' buffer must contain at least 24 points plus 5 saplings and all vegetation under 3' high. Whenever possible, no more than half of the points counted toward the 24-point threshold within any 25-foot by 50-foot rectangular area may consist of trees greater than 12 inches in diameter.

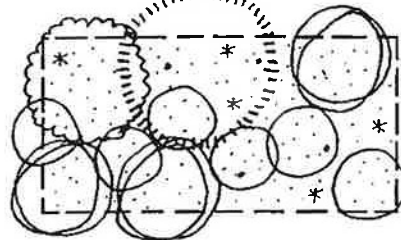
NOTE: Towns have the option to use a different point system, which uses a smaller plot and different point assignments. Check with the Town Ordinance or Code Enforcement Officer.



A 25' by 50' area before vegetative clearing. Trees are removed while leaving at least 24 points' worth of trees standing.

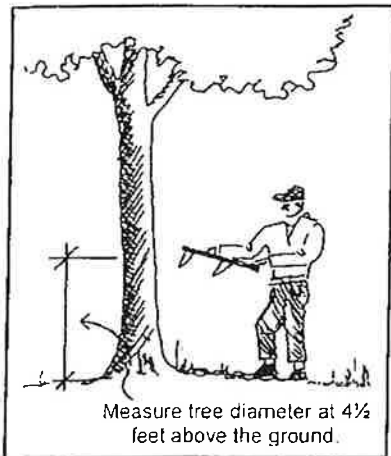


Two clearing options, each with 24 points' worth of trees left.



Within 100 feet of great ponds and rivers flowing into great ponds, and within 75 feet of all other water bodies and streams:

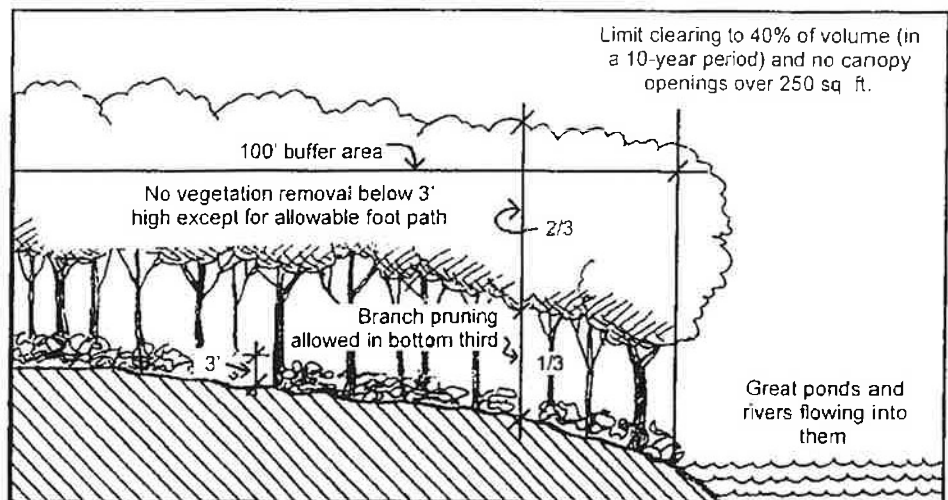
- no opening in the forest canopy may exceed 250 square feet;
- a winding footpath not more than 6 feet wide is allowed,
- selective cutting is allowed, provided a well-distributed stand of trees remains.



The standards establish a rating system which defines a "well-distributed stand of trees." Within the buffer area, the property owner must maintain a minimum number of "points" worth of trees within any 25-foot by 50-foot area, and at least 5 saplings. Twenty-four points worth must be maintained adjacent to great ponds and rivers flowing to great ponds, and 16 points worth must be maintained elsewhere. Points are assigned to trees, depending on their size. The following table shows how points are assigned.

Diameter	Points
Under 2"	0
2" to < 4"	1
4" to < 8"	2
8" to < 12"	4
12" or greater	8

Typical Buffer in a Residential Zone:



Clearing Limitations within 100-foot Buffer

Clearing Beyond the Shoreland Buffer

Beyond the 75 foot or 100 foot buffers mentioned above, clearing is also limited to no more than 40% of the volume of trees over 4 inches in diameter within a 10 year period. This means that the more land that is cleared for buildings, lawn, and driveways, the less can be thinned elsewhere. Further, cleared openings cannot exceed 25% of the lot area within the shoreland zone, or 10,000 square feet, whichever is greater. (Note: this 25% provision does not apply in the General Development or Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities districts)

