



As noted during the mapping of natural resources in town, the 58- acre parcel falls within a larger 100 to 250 - acre “core forest” ecosystem. The amphibians that use the vernal pools and wetlands within this ecosystem for reproduction depend upon the surrounding forest outside of the breeding season. This community of amphibians is sensitive to alterations in either the wetland and/or surrounding upland habitats, and they are considered species of “greatest conservation need” in the State’s *Wildlife Action Plan*. It is also likely that spotted turtles move seasonally among wetlands throughout this forest. Spotted turtles are protected by the CT Threatened and Endangered Species Act.

The Conservation Commission recognizes that timber harvests are considered an “as of right” activity, providing financial value and fuel for home heating. Timber harvests can also play an important role in managing for aesthetics, water quality, and wildlife habitat, and improve overall forest health. As is often the case however, balancing these interests depends upon the “where,” “how,” and “when” of the timber harvest.

Therefore, the Commission requests that the landowner(s) not only consider the stewardship value of forest management, but also, that of protecting populations of conservation-sensitive wildlife and their critical habitat(s). We therefore recommend that the landowner(s) work with the forestry company to implement the following best management practices to avoid or minimize impacts to critical wildlife species and their habitat<sup>1</sup>.

- Do not disturb or harvest trees within the vernal pool depressions or wetland boundaries.
- Maintain a minimum of 75% forest canopy cover (trees 20-30 ft. tall) within a zone of 100 feet surrounding each of the vernal pools and the forested wetland.
- Avoid operating heavy machinery within the 100 ft. zone surrounding the vernal pools and wetlands, except along the existing main forest access road.
- Limit timber harvesting operations to the winter months (November-February), ideally under frozen ground conditions.
- Use appropriate erosion control measures at wetland and drainage crossings, and removed prior to March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Minimize the creation of ruts and smooth out any rutted areas 6 inches or greater in depth at the completion of the operation to prevent them from holding water.
- Leave tops and limbs where the trees are felled.

A representative of the Conservation Commission with expertise in vernal pool and wetlands conservation is available to provide “in the field” guidance regarding the harvest plan, should this be of interest to the landowners and/or the foresters.

<sup>1</sup>*Forestry Habitat Management Guidelines for Vernal Pool Wildlife*. Calhoun, A.J.K. and P. deMaynadier. 2004. MCA Technical Paper No.6, Metropolitan Conservation Alliance, Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx, NY.