



Vermont Wetlands Program

Mapping Guidance – Natural Communities

Natural Communities

At First Glance: Significant Natural Community mapping is a data layer from [Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department](#) (VFWD). It identifies the best examples of wetland (and upland) natural community types in the state. There are at least [50 wetland natural community types](#) in Vermont, such as a Dwarf Shrub Bog, Emergent Marsh, or Silver Maple-Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest.

Recommended Next Steps: If your parcel has a mapped wetland Significant Natural Community or the adjacent one contains this layer a [State Wetlands Ecologist](#) or [wetland consultant](#) should be contacted to help you determine the location, general boundary, and classification of the wetland before any work is started.

What is this Layer: Significant Natural Communities are mapped by [Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department](#) VTFD on both public and private lands, with permission. “A natural community type is an assemblage of plants and animals that repeats across the landscape wherever similar environmental conditions occur. A natural community type is a concept, or a category, not a place. Each type is described by summarizing the known examples of the type, and these types are used to classify the landscape of Vermont. As more is learned over time, the classification continues to evolve.” This layer was developed by desktop mapping using aerial photos interpretation of vegetation cover and LIDAR, with field verification. A delineation is still required for project purposes to determine the wetland boundary.

Regulatory Meaning: Mapped wetland Significant Natural Communities should be considered significant for at least one function or value. Wetlands that appear in this mapping unit are protected under the Vermont Wetland Rules. Any work in the wetland or its jurisdictional buffer, including filling, dredging, draining, ditching, cutting woody vegetation, may require a permit from the Vermont Wetlands Program. Class II wetlands have a 50-foot buffer which is protected, and Class I wetlands have at least a 100-foot regulatory buffer (the size may vary per wetland). These buffers are measured from the edge of a delineated boundary from the wetland.

Origin: Significant Natural communities are determined by the [VFWD’s Natural Community Inventory](#). There are more than 50 different wetland natural community types that range from Rich Fens to Black Gum Swamps. Some community types are quite rare and contain endangered and threatened species. The community types have a rarity rank based on prevalence in the landscape and individual occurrences are ranked on size, condition, and landscape context.

Accuracy: Mapping is based on desktop resources such as aerial photography and LIDAR and field verification. There is a high likelihood there is a wetland where the layer indicates a Significant Natural Community, but the actual boundaries still need to be ground proofed with a wetland delineation.

Links of Interest

[Vermont Fish and Wildlife Natural Community Inventory](#)

[Vermont Natural Community Types](#)

[Vermont Natural Community Reports](#)

[Landowners Guide to Wetlands](#)

[Vermont Wetland Rules](#)

[VSWI Maps](#)

[National Wetland Inventory](#)

[Wetland Classification](#)

[Wetland Classification Guidance](#)

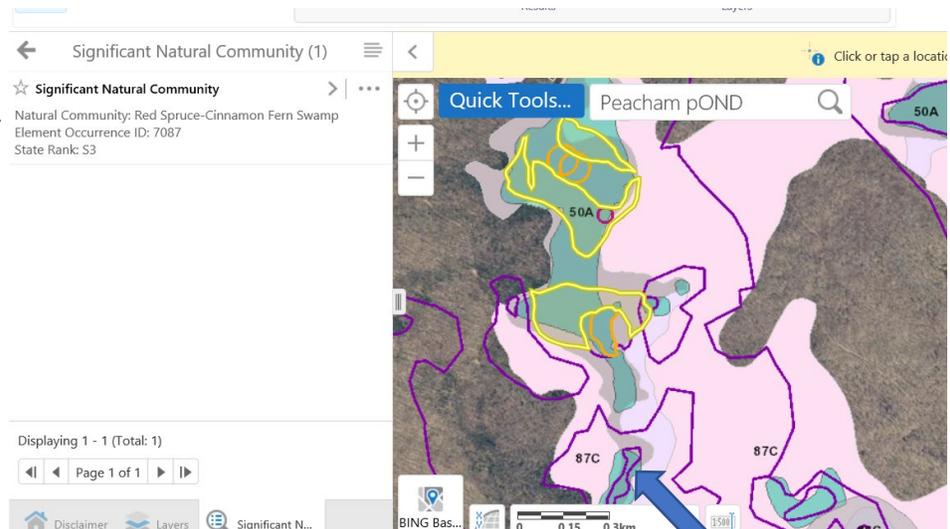
[Contiguous Wetland Guidance Document](#)

[Wetland Permit Information](#)

[What is a Wetland?](#)

[Wetland Function and Values](#)

Clicking to identify will give you a label for the community type



Significant Natural Communities are outlined in purple – you can use the “identify tool” to determine the community type (highlighted in yellow)