

Memo



TO: Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Kate Homet, Environmental Planner; Peter Britz, Director of Planning & Sustainability
DATE: January 3, 2025
SUBJ: January 8, 2025 Conservation Commission Meeting

**333 Borthwick Avenue
HCA Health Service of NH Inc., Owner
Assessor Map 201 Lot 14**

This application is for the removal of three existing 24” culverts within a stream, replacement with a concrete box culvert and riprap apron and associated de-watering and soil excavation activities related to the culvert install. The proposal includes the use of plastic-free erosion control blankets for stabilization of the streambank and a temporary diversion berm for de-watering during construction. The area above the culvert will maintain its existing use as a gravel accessway for gas utility work. Overall, this project proposes approximately 1,600 s.f. of temporary wetland impacts and approximately 750 s.f. of permanent wetland impact.

1. The land is reasonably suited to the use activity or alteration.

A majority of the work area is already disturbed wetland with an existing culvert and roadway crossing. The replacement of this culvert and associated repair work proposes to improve the flow of water through this stream.

2. There is no alternative location outside the wetland buffer that is feasible and reasonable for the proposed use, activity or alteration.

The proposed location is where an existing culvert system and roadway are located today. While the proposal is a direct wetland impact, the post-construction culvert system is proposed to fix current sedimentation and flow issues that exist today.

3. There will be no adverse impact on the wetland functional values of the site or surrounding properties.

This replacement project will have direct wetland impacts but construction activities are proposed to minimize direct impacts to the stream during the replacement project.

4. Alteration of the natural vegetative state or managed woodland will occur only to the extent necessary to achieve construction goals.

This proposal shows work involving the stream bank and utilizing erosion control blankets. The applicant proposes seeding the banks for stabilization with a conservation mix. The applicant should provide a maintenance plan to ensure the establishment of the seed mix and for long-term vegetation maintenance that would consider aspects such as sustaining wildlife habitat and maintaining sediment trapping.

5. The proposal is the alternative with the least adverse impact to areas and environments under the jurisdiction of this section.

This proposal appears to be the least adverse impact to the wetland as the alternative to increasing flow would be to dredge most of the length of the stream. This proposal limits the permanent impacts as well as the temporary impacts compared to dredging and will hopefully solve the flow issues within this wetland.

6. Any area within the vegetated buffer strip will be returned to a natural state to the extent feasible.

Applicant is proposing temporary disturbance of the streambank for construction activities. Applicant has indicated areas on plan that will receive conservation seed mix/New England wet mix.

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of this wetland conditional use permit to the Planning Board with the following conditions:

1. The use of fertilizer is prohibited within this jurisdictional wetland and wetland buffer per section 10.1018.24 of the City of Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance. Please note this on plans.
2. Applicant should include a plan for invasive species management in the proposed disturbance area.
3. Applicant should include a maintenance plan of the seeded stream bank to ensure vegetation establishment and the long-term health of the stream and wider ecosystem.
4. Applicant shall note on plans the location of wetland boundary markers. These shall be permanently installed prior to the start of construction between the edge of pavement and the top of the stream bank every 50' to deter foot traffic in the sensitive area.