The MassDEP’s Massachusetts Wildlife Habitat Protection Guidance for Inland Wetlands, June 2006 adopted a new approach for assessing wildlife habitat impacts associated with work in wetlands. This approach utilizes maps developed at the University of Massachusetts Amherst using the Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS). The maps depict ‘Habitat of Potential Regional or Statewide Importance’ that may trigger more intensive levels of review. For more information on how to assess wildlife habitat impacts, see Section III of the Guidance document: http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/laws/wldhab.pdf.

The CAPS model assesses the ecological integrity of Massachusetts landscape features as influenced by environmental stressor metrics (e.g., pollution, fragmentation). CAPS relies on data that are broadly available across Massachusetts. Ecological features which are not consistently surveyed or uniformly available, such as certified vernal pools, rare species, and contamination sites are not included in CAPS. When available, this more specific ecological information may be used in conjunction with the CAPS outputs to better understand particular sites in Massachusetts and support informed conservation decision-making. For more information on the statewide maps produced by the CAPS model, see: http://www.masscaps.org.

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