

5 HOW DO WE PROTECT PLUM ISLAND RESIDENTS?

In addition to providing critical public services such as water, sewer, transportation and emergency response, Newburyport tries to protect its residents and the island in three main ways:

1. Requiring new or “substantially improved” structures to be elevated at least two feet above the FEMA flood elevation or the ground surface to prevent storm damage and flooding of homes.
2. Protecting the dunes’ ability to move in response to wind and waves by preventing solid structures from blocking this movement.
3. Protecting of the native vegetation that holds sand in place on the island and encouragement of the planting of new native vegetation wherever possible.

6 WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP PLUM ISLAND?

Residents and visitors are encouraged to enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities across Plum Island, while remaining sensitive to the fragility of the dunes, marshes and beaches. Pathways should be followed rather than walking across dune or marsh grass; plantings should be native to the beach environment and not require the input of soils or mulch; permanent structures should be elevated and fences should be open to allow the free movement of sand; unvegetated surfaces should consist of sand, gravel, crushed shells or small stone.

7 WHAT ACTIVITIES REQUIRE REVIEW OR PERMITTING?

- Construction of solid structures such as homes, decks, sheds, etc. Removal of vegetation from the island or planting of lawn grasses or other non-native vegetation.
- Construction of impervious surfaces such as paved driveways, walkways, patios or other features using asphalt, cement, brick, stone or wood.
- Construction of any coastal engineering structure, such as a seawall, revetment, groin or placement of any hard structures on the beach that would affect the free movement of sand and water.
- Excavation or filling in of land.

When in doubt about an activity on your property, please contact the Newburyport Conservation Commission to ask whether or not your planned activity would require a permit.
cityofnewburyport.com/conservation-commission



QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the information in this pamphlet, contact the Newburyport Conservation Administrator at:

conservation@cityofnewburyport.com

Additional useful information about living and working in the Barrier Beach environment can be found at:

cityofnewburyport.com/conservation-commission

KEEP PLUM ISLAND BEAUTIFUL

HOMEOWNERS GUIDE



The home improvement do's and don'ts of living on a barrier beach to protect Plum Island and its residents.

WHY PLUM ISLAND NEEDS PROTECTING

1 WHAT IS A BARRIER BEACH?

Plum Island is a Barrier Beach and one of Newburyport's most treasured resources. A Barrier Beach is a narrow, low-lying strip of beach and coastal dunes that lies parallel to the coastline, separated from the mainland by a body of water or wetland, such as Plum Island Sound and the salt marshes that border it.

2 WHAT MAKES PLUM ISLAND SPECIAL?

Plum Island and its coastal dune system is a protected natural resource because it provides critical storm and flood damage protection to its residents and the City's mainland. It also provides recreation opportunities for beachgoers, fishermen, and others; and habitat for unique plants and wildlife, including rare and endangered species. Hundreds of barrier beaches line the coastline, but Plum Island is one of the largest and most densely populated.

3 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE ON A BARRIER BEACH?

On populated barrier beaches such as Plum Island, the needs and desires of property owners are often at odds with the natural functions of the dunes and beaches. Dynamic coastal shorelines change constantly in response to wind, waves, tides, and other factors. Consequently, coastal properties are at risk from storm damage, erosion, and flooding. Inappropriate construction techniques can do further harm by worsening erosion, preventing native vegetation from capturing and holding sand in place, and inadequately protecting structures from storm damage and flooding.

4 HOW DO WE PROTECT THE BARRIER BEACH?

Managing the barrier beach to ensure that it continues to protect the mainland while also supporting residents and visitors is a complex task involving regulations under both the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Newburyport Wetlands Protection Ordinance. These state and local laws help protect Plum Island by (1) restricting activities that can have adverse effects on the ability of the barrier beach to perform its natural functions, and (2) guiding homeowners toward activities that will safeguard their properties.

Replacing or putting up a new fence?

Fences can help to delineate and beautify a property or contain a pet. On Plum Island, fences can serve these purposes while still allowing for the free movement of sand and growth of vegetation necessary to protect the stability of the island. New fences must receive approval from the Conservation Commission.



What to Do:

- **Consult the Conservation Commission website for guidelines on fencing.** www.cityofnewburyport.com/conservation-commission
- **Contact the Newburyport Conservation Commission** to request approval for the new fence.
- **Email** Conservation@cityofnewburyport.com

Thinking about renovating or adding a new addition?

All construction on Plum Island requires either a building permit or approval from the Conservation Commission or both. In addition, all new structures, additions and “substantial improvements” must be elevated at least two feet above the ground surface or FEMA base flood elevation, whichever is higher.



What to Do:

- **Contact the Newburyport Planning Office/Zoning Administrator** to find out what building/zoning permits are necessary.
Planning@cityofnewburyport.com
- **Contact the Conservation Commission** to find out what kind of permit or approval is necessary.
- **Email** Conservation@cityofnewburyport.com

Doing some landscaping to spruce up your yard?

Many beautiful plants are native to Plum Island and will thrive on your property. Non-native or invasive species are prohibited. Patios, decks and walkways can enhance your outdoor spaces; however such landscaping projects require review and approval from the Conservation Commission.



What to Do:

- **Contact the Newburyport Planning Office/Zoning Administrator** to find out what building/zoning permits are necessary.
Planning@cityofnewburyport.com
- **Go to the Conservation Commission website** to find a list of native plants and guidelines for landscaping on Plum Island. www.cityof-newburyport.com/conservation-commission

Resurfacing your driveway?

When it's time to resurface your driveway, please be aware that new asphalt, concrete or other solid surfaces, including pavers, are not permitted. Pea gravel, shells, or other loose, pervious material is preferable and encouraged to allow the Plum Island ecosystem to continue to function as nature intended.



What to Do:

- **Contact the Newburyport Building Commissioner's office** to find out what building and/or zoning permits are necessary.
- **Contact the Conservation Commission** to find out what kind of permit or approval is necessary.
- **Email** Conservation@cityofnewburyport.com