

Town of Farmington Earth Removal Regulations

Section 1: Authority

Chapter 155-E of the New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated stipulates that, with some exceptions, all earth excavations in the State are subject to regulation from the local municipality in which the operation occurs. Pursuant to the authority vested in the Planning Board by the voters of the Town of Farmington and RSA 155-E, the Planning Board adopts the following regulations to govern the excavation of earth materials in the Town of Farmington.

Section II: Purpose and Scope

The goals of this regulation are to: provide for reasonable opportunities for excavation; minimize safety hazards which can be created by open excavations; ensure that the public health and welfare will be safeguarded; protect natural resources and the environment; and maintain the aesthetic features of the Town. For the purpose of achieving these goals, no earth materials in the Town shall be removed except in conformance with these regulations.

Section III: Definitions

- A. **Abutter** means: (1) Any person whose property is located in New Hampshire and adjoins or is directly across the street or stream from the land under consideration. (2) For the purposes of receiving testimony only, and not for purposes of notification, the term “abutter” shall include any person who is able to demonstrate that his land will be directly affected by the proposal under consideration. (3) In the case of an abutting property being under a condominium or other collective form of ownership, the term “abutter” means the officers of the collective or association, as defined in RSA 356-B: 3, XXIII. B. (4) For the purposes of notification and receiving testimony, abutter means all affected towns and the regional planning commission(s) in the case of a development having regional impact, as determined by the Board.
- B. **Applicant** means the owner of the property to be excavated or the owner’s agent, so designated in writing as part of the excavation application.
- C. **Agricultural Excavation** means excavation of earth by the owner of the land to be used on the owner’s land exclusively for agricultural use.
- D. **Agricultural Use** means land used for agriculture, farming, dairying, pasturage, apiculture, horticulture, floriculture, silviculture and animal and poultry husbandry.
- E. **Board** means the Planning Board of the Town of Farmington.

- F. **Commercial Excavation** means excavation of earth intended for commerce, this may also include excavation that is strictly conducted for the purpose of alteration, renovation, improvement or construction to the property on which the excavation takes place. Any material leaving the property for whatever reason is considered to be a commercial operation.
- G. **Contiguous** means land whose perimeter can be circumscribed without interruption in common ownership except for roads or other easements, in a single town, except in the case of stationary manufacturing plants, whose perimeter is not defined by town boundaries.
- H. **Dimension Stone** means rock that is cut, shaped or selected for use in blocks, slabs, sheets, or other construction units of specified shapes or sizes and is used for external or interior parts of buildings, foundations, curbing, paving, flagging, bridges, revetments, or for other architectural or engineering purposes. Dimension stone includes quarry blocks from which sections of dimension stone are to be produced. Dimension stone does not include earth as defined below.
- I. **Earth** means sand, gravel, rock, soil, or construction aggregate produced by quarrying, crushing or any other mining activity or such other naturally occurring unconsolidated materials that normally mask the bedrock.
- J. **Excavation** means land area which is used, or has been used for the commercial taking of earth, including all slopes.
- K. **Excavation Area** means the area within an excavation site where excavation has occurred or is eligible to occur under the provisions of RSA 155-E. This is also known as the pit area.
- L. **Excavation Site** means any area of contiguous land in common ownership upon which excavation takes place.
- M. **Existing Excavation** means any excavation, as described in RSA 155-E:2, I., which lawfully existed as of August 24, 1979, from which earth material of sufficient weight or volume to be commercially useful has been removed during the 2-year period before August 24, 1979, and had submitted the report as required by RSA 155-E:2, I, (d).
- N. **Expansion:**
- (a) of existing excavations means excavation beyond the limits of the Town and the area which on August 24, 1979 had been contiguous to and in common ownership with the excavation site and has been appraised and inventoried for tax purposes as part of the same tract as the excavation site.

- (b) of stationary manufacturing plants means to any contiguous lands that were in common ownership with the site of the plant on August 4, 1989 whether or not state and local permits were granted before August 4, 1989.
- O. **Incidental Excavation** means excavation of earth which has been granted an exception from an excavation permit by the regulator.
- P. **Minor Topographical Adjustment** means a one time removal of earth from the site of less than 500 cubic yards that is exclusively necessary to change the physical configuration of the land for a specified use or situation.
- Q. **Normal Landscaping** means the on-site alteration and contouring of the land exclusively devoted to improving the functional utility and planting of the grounds.
- R. **Reclamation** means the restoring of an excavation site to a standard at least equal to those outlined in Section X of these regulations.
- S. **Stationary Manufacturing and/or Processing Plants** means facilities which are placed on a site for the purposes of sorting, washing, screening, crushing, classifying, drying or processing excavated earth materials.

Section IV: Projects Requiring a Permit

- A. Those that commenced operations since August 24, 1979 without first obtaining a permit, unless specifically exempted by Section V below.
- B. Any excavation proposing to begin operation after the effective date of these regulations.
- C. Those that have lawfully operated prior to August 24, 1979 and wish to expand the excavation area.

Section V: Projects Exempt From a Permit

- A. The following projects do not require a permit, but are nevertheless subject to Sections IX, X, and XI of these regulations. In the event of a question regarding compliance, the Board may require the owner/operator to come before the Board and submit such information as may be necessary to demonstrate compliance with said standards.
 - 1) Existing Excavations, provided that:
 - a) at the time operation began, it was in compliance with any local ordinances that may have been in effect;
 - b) the owner or operator of such an excavation area shall have filed an excavation report per RSA 155-E:2, I (d) with the Board no later

than August 4, 1991. Any existing excavation that failed to file this report shall no longer be considered to be grandfathered and must obtain a permit from the Board before continuing excavation of the site.

B. The following projects do not require a permit, but are nevertheless subject to Sections IX, X, and XI of these regulations. Compliance with these standards is mandatory in order to retain the non-permit status. Loss of such non-permit status can occur only after the Board has given written notice that the excavation is not in compliance and the owner has failed to bring it into compliance within 30 days of receipt of such notice.

- 1) Excavations from a site which on August 4, 1989 was contiguous to or was contiguous land in common ownership with stationary manufacturing and processing plants which were in operation as of August 24, 1979 and which use earth obtained from such excavation site.
- 2) Excavations from a site which on August 4, 1989 was contiguous to, or contiguous land in common ownership with stationary manufacturing and processing plants for which local or state permits have been granted since August 24, 1979 and before August 4, 1989, which used earth obtained from such site.
- 3) An excavation performed exclusively for the lawful construction, reconstruction, or maintenance of a Class I, II, III, IV, V highway by a unit of government. A copy of the pit agreement executed between the pit owner and the governmental unit shall be filed with the Board; in addition, the provisions of Section VII of this regulation are to be complied with.

C. The following projects are deemed to be an exception from a permit and are subject to regulation by the Board:

- 1) Excavation of earth that is a direct consequence and is exclusively incidental to the lawful construction or alteration of a building or structure, a parking lot or way including a driveway on a portion of the premises when total earth removal quantity is more than 500 cubic yards. This excavation cannot be started, however, until all required state and local permits have been issued.
- 2) Excavation that is incidental to agricultural or silvicultural activities, normal landscaping or minor topographical adjustment when total earth removal quantity is more than 500 cubic yards. In the event that the project will result in the removal of more than 500 cubic yards of earth, the Board shall determine what is incidental.
- 3) Excavation from a granite quarry for the purpose of producing dimension stone (the town cannot regulate dimension stone quarries), if such excavation requires a permit under RSA 12-E (Mining and Reclamation).

A person owning land abutting a site which was taken by eminent domain or by any other governmental taking upon which construction is taking place may stockpile earth taken from the construction site and may remove the earth at a later date after written notification to the Board.

Section VI: Abandoned Excavations

- A. Any excavation, except for those associated with stationary manufacturing plants, for which the affected area has not been brought into complete compliance with the reclamation standards of this regulation shall be considered abandoned if:
- 1) No material of sufficient weight or volume to be commercially useful has been removed from the site during any 2-year period either before, on, or after August 4, 1989. The time period may be extended if, prior to the end of the time period, the Board approves a reclamation timetable, and a bond or other surety is posted in a form and amount prescribed by the Board sufficient to cover the costs of reclaiming the entire site.
 - 2) The excavation is in use, but has not been brought into compliance with the incremental reclamation standards of this regulation, a bond has not been posted, or the Board has not approved a reclamation timetable.
 - 3) The owner or operator of the excavation has neither secured a permit pursuant to these regulations nor filed an excavation report with the Planning Board within the prescribed period.
- B. In the event the Board determines that any abandoned excavation presents a hazard to the public health, safety or welfare, the owner may be required, following a public hearing, to comply with the timetable and bonding requirements outlined above, or to complete reclamation within a reasonable period of time. Should reclamation not be completed, the Board may request the Town to authorize reclamation at the Town's expense. The Town's costs shall constitute an assessment against the owner, and shall create a lien against the property. Such assessment and lien may be enforced and collected in the same manner as provided for real estate taxes.
- C. If the board determines that a danger to public health or safety exists from any excavation which ceased commercially useful operation prior to August 24, 1977, for which the affected areas has not been brought into compliance with the minimum and express reclamation standards, the board shall state so in writing and the provisions of paragraph B, above shall apply.

Section VII: Prohibited Projects

The regulator shall not grant a permit under the following conditions:

- A. For excavations within 50 feet of the boundary line of a disapproving abutter or within 10 feet of an approving abutter unless approval is requested by said abutter.
- B. Where existing visual barriers would be removed, except to provide access to the excavation.
- C. Where the issuance of the permit would be unduly hazardous or injurious to the public welfare, the Board shall give particular consideration to such factors as noise, traffic, dust, fumes, or danger from operation.
- D. Where the excavation would substantially damage a known aquifer, as designated by the United States Geological Survey.
- E. When the excavation cannot receive necessary approvals from state or federal agencies, such as Alteration of Terrain or Wetlands permits.
- F. Where the excavation is not permitted by zoning or other applicable ordinances, provided, however, that reasonable opportunities for excavation exist in town, as described in RSA 155-E: 4, III.
- G. Where the project cannot comply with the requirements of Sections IX, X, and XI of these regulations.

Section VIII: Criteria For Non-conforming Expansions

Expansion of existing excavations located in an area in which excavations are no longer permitted by local zoning that was in effect on August 4, 1989 may be restricted or modified with conditions by the Board, if after notice to the owner and a public hearing, the Board finds that the expansion will have a substantially different and adverse impact on the neighborhood. Impacts will vary depending upon the particular neighborhood, nevertheless, the following criteria will be taken into consideration:

- The excavation will not cause a diminution in area property values or unreasonably change the character of the neighborhood.
- The excavation will not create any nuisance or create health or safety hazards.
- The excavation will not unreasonably accelerate the deterioration of highways or create safety hazards in the use thereof.

Section IX: Operational Standards

- A. For excavations not requiring a permit, the following standards apply. For those excavations requiring a permit, these standards are considered to be the minimum; more stringent standards such as are consistent with the purpose of these regulations may be applied, as deemed necessary by the Board.

1. No excavation shall be permitted closer than 150 feet to an existing dwelling or to a site for which a building permit has been issued at the time the excavation permit is granted.
2. No excavation shall be permitted below road level within 50 feet of the right-of-way of any public highway as defined in RSA 229:1 unless such excavation is for the purpose of said highway.
3. Vegetation shall be maintained or provided within the peripheral areas of items 1 and 2 of this section.
4. No fuels, lubricants or other toxic or polluting chemicals shall be stored onsite unless in compliance with State laws or rules pertaining to the storage of such materials
5. Where temporary slopes will exceed a 1:1 grade, a fence or other suitable barricade shall be erected to warn of danger and/or to limit access to the site.
6. Appropriate drainage shall be provided to prevent the accumulation of freestanding water for prolonged periods.
7. Excavation practices that result in continued siltation of surface waters or any degradation of water quality of any public or private water supplies are prohibited.
8. No excavation shall be permitted within 75 feet of any great pond, navigable river, or any other standing body of water 10 acres or more in area, or within 25 feet of any other stream, river or brook which normally flows throughout the year, or any naturally-occurring standing body of water less than 10 acres, prime wetland as designated in accordance with RSA 482-A: 15, I, or any other wetland greater than 5 acres in area as defined by the Wetlands Board.
9. Nothing herein contained shall be construed to forbid the creation of a lake or pond; provided that adequate provision has been made for the runoff of water in such manner as will not injure any roads, highways, or abutting property. All ponds must have a slope no less than 3:1.

B. Processing

1. No processing machinery shall be erected or maintained on the lot within less than 300 feet of any property line, and such machinery shall be removed from the lot upon expiration of the permit.
2. No material shall be stock piled or located outside the permit area.

Sections X: Site Reclamation Standards

- A. For excavations not requiring a permit, the following standards apply. For excavations requiring a permit, these standards are considered to be the minimum; more stringent standards such as are consistent with the purpose of these regulations may be applied, as deemed necessary by the Board.
- B. Within 12 months following the expiration date of a permit issued under these regulations, or the completion of any excavation, whichever occurs first, the excavated area shall be reclaimed in accordance with the following standards:
1. Areas visible from a public way, from which trees have been removed, shall be replanted with tree seedlings, set out in accordance with acceptable horticultural practices.
 2. On any sites visible from the public way, the Planning Board may require planting of trees or other vegetation as screening.
 3. Except for exposed rock ledge, all disturbed areas shall be spread with topsoil or other soil capable of maintaining permanent vegetation, and shall be planted with seedlings or grass suitable to prevent erosion.
 4. All earth and vegetative debris resulting from the excavation shall be removed or otherwise lawfully disposed of.
 5. All graded areas covered with soil per paragraphs 2 and 4 shall be seeded. The seedlings shall be maintained and nurtured until a permanent vegetative crop is established.
 6. All slopes, except for exposed ledge, shall be graded to natural repose for the type of soil of which they are composed so as to control erosion or at a ratio of horizontal to vertical proposed by the owner and approved by the Board. Changes of slope shall not be abrupt, but shall blend with the surrounding terrain.
 7. All finish grade elevations shall maintain a minimum six (6) foot separation above the seasonal high water-table, except for when a pond is created.
 8. Any standing bodies of water created by the excavation that are judged to constitute a hazard to health and safety shall be eliminated.
 9. The topography of the land shall be left so that water draining from the site leaves the property at the original, natural drainage points and in the original and natural proportions of flow.
 10. For excavation projects requiring a permit from the Department of Environmental Services, the provisions of RSA 485-A: 17 shall supersede this regulation. Copies of all such permits shall be filed with the Board.

Section XI: Incremental Reclamation

Except for excavation sites of operating stationary manufacturing plants, any excavated area of 5 contiguous acres or more which is depleted of commercial earth materials, excluding bedrock, or any excavation from which earth materials of sufficient weight or volume to be commercially useful have not been removed for a 2-year period, shall be reclaimed in accordance with Section X of these regulations within 12 months following such depletion or non-use, regardless of whether other excavation is occurring on adjacent land in contiguous ownership. A reclamation plan, including a reclamation timetable for the depleted areas within the reclamation site, shall be submitted to the Board for approval.

Section XII: Performance Guarantee

- A. Prior to the granting of any permit, or to the removal of topsoil or other overburden material from a new area within an existing excavation site, the applicant shall submit to the Selectmen a performance bond with sufficient surety as determined by the Planning Board. The purposes of the bond are to guarantee reclamation of the area, compliance with the permit, and any inspections. Off-site improvements for potential damage of Town roads or facilities caused by the transportation of earth materials shall be discussed at this stage.
- B. The surety may be in the form of a performance bond, property escrow, irrevocable letter of credit, or any other form approved by the Board. The surety may be phased to coincide with the phasing work, in an amount sufficient to guarantee reclamation of the applicable section, to be released as sections are completed. Prior to a new section being opened, new securities shall be posted. The surety shall not be released until the Board is satisfied that all conditions of the site reclamation plan have been complied with.

Section XIII: Waivers

Due to the diverse nature of excavation operations, the Board may, upon application and following a duly-noticed hearing, grant an exception in writing, of the standards contained in Sections IX, X, and XI of this regulation for good cause shown.

The written decision shall state specifically what standards, if any, are being relaxed and may include any reasonable alternative conditions or standards. The regulator's decision on any request for such exception may be appealed in accordance with RSA 155-E:9.

Section XIV: Application Procedures

Prior to the Board rendering a decision for an excavation permit, a public hearing shall be held, with due notification of all abutters and the public. The procedure for holding these public hearings is as follows:

A. Filing of the Application

1. Applications for excavation permits shall be filed with the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting.
2. The application will be reviewed with the applicant at the meeting, and will be accepted by the Board only if it is found to meet all submission requirements for a completed application. Should the application not be accepted as complete, another meeting must be scheduled for submission.

B. Board Action on Application

1. Following a vote to accept the application as complete, the Board will schedule a public hearing to be held within 30 days.
2. Within 20 days of the close of the hearing on the application, or any continuation thereof, the Board shall make a decision. Notice of this decision shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and placed on file in the Town offices within 72 hours.
3. The applicant shall receive a written copy of the minutes along with the decision. In the event the application is disapproved, the reasons for the disapproval shall be given.

C. Notices Required for Public Hearing

1. All abutters and the Conservation Commission Chairman will be notified by certified mail, not less than 10 days prior to the meeting at which the application will be submitted for acceptance. Names and addresses of abutters must be taken from Town records not more than 5 days before filing the application.
2. Public notice will appear in a newspaper of general circulation and in at least three public places not less than 10 days prior to the meeting.
3. The notice must include the location and general description of the proposal as well as the date, time, and place of the meeting.

D. Fees

1. A filing fee of \$50 (subject to change without notice) plus postage, shall be paid upon submission of an application. Failure to pay such cost shall constitute grounds for the Board to not accept the application.
2. A permit fee of \$50 shall be paid upon the issuance of a permit.
3. Additional reasonable fees shall be charged should the Board require the advice of an engineer or other expert to review plans or inspect the site to determine permit compliance.

Section XV: Application Submission Items

The applicant shall submit at least 4 copies of the application and the Excavation and a Reclamation Plan to the Planning Board. The applicant shall send one copy to the Conservation Commission. The plans shall be at a scale appropriate for the land area involved.

Such application shall be signed and dated by the applicant and shall contain at the least the following information:

- I. The name and address of the owner of the land to be excavated, the person who will actually do the excavating and all abutters to the premises on which the excavation is proposed;
- II. A sketch and description of the location and boundaries of the proposed excavation, the number of acres to be involved in the project and the municipalities and counties in which the project lies;
- III. A sketch and description of the access and visual barriers to public highways to be utilized in the proposed excavation;
- IV. The breadth, depth and slope of the proposed excavation and the estimated duration of the project;
- V. The elevation of the highest annual average groundwater table within or next to the proposed excavation;
- VI. A plan for the reclamation of the area affected by the excavation at least in compliance with the requirements stated in B. Reclamation Plan, below. Such plan shall address the effects of the proposed excavation on soil, surface water and groundwater, vegetation, overburden, topography, and fill material, and may address future land use consistent with the approved master plan, and shall include a timetable for reclamation of fully depleted areas with the excavation site during said project;

- VII. Specific actions to be taken by the applicant on the excavation site relative to fuel and chemical handling and storage, dust control, traffic, noise control and abatement, and comprehensive site safety of unauthorized persons; and
- VIII. Such other information or special investigative studies as the regulator may reasonably deem necessary.

A. Excavation Plan

The excavation plan shall address specific actions to be taken on the site relative to fuel and chemical handling and storage, dust control, traffic, noise control and abatement, and comprehensive site safety of unauthorized persons. The plan shall show or be accompanied by the following items.

- 1. Name and address of the owner, the excavator (if different) and all abutters.
- 2. Name, address, and signature of the person preparing the plan, date, bar scale and north arrow.
- 3. Acknowledgment block for Conservation Commission Chairman, and other Town Department Heads as deemed appropriate by the Code Enforcement Officer.
- 4. Approval line for Planning Board Chairman signature.
- 5. Zoning district boundaries of the proposed area and within 200 feet of the boundary of the project.
- 6. Sketch and description of the location and boundaries of the proposed and any existing excavations; the area in square feet and acre.
- 7. The location of existing buildings, structures, septic systems, and wells within 200 feet of the boundary.
- 8. Public streets, driveways, intersections, rights-of-way, and all easements within 200 feet; road network to be affected; intended transportation routes to be used.
- 9. Topography at contour levels of five feet or less.
- 10. All surface drainage patterns including wetlands and standing water.
- 11. Sketch and description of existing and proposed access roads, including width and surface materials.
- 12. The breadth, depth and slope of the proposed excavation and the estimated duration of the project.

13. The elevation of the highest annual average ground water table within or next to the proposed excavation.
14. A State Certified Soil Scientist shall evaluate test pits that extend to either the seasonal high water table, ledge, or a minimum of six feet below the maximum proposed excavation depth, including location and soils data. Boring logs may be submitted separately.
15. Proposed fencing, buffers or other visual barriers, including height and materials.
16. All measures to control erosion, sedimentation, water pollution, air pollution, and any hazards to human safety.
17. Plans for storm water management.
18. Plans for equipment maintenance.
19. Methods to prevent materials from the site from being tracked onto public roadways.
20. Copies of all necessary state and federal permits.

B. Reclamation Plan

The reclamation plan shall address the effects of the proposed excavation on soil, surface and groundwater, vegetation, overburden, topography, and fill material, and should address future land use consistent with the Master Plan. The plan shall show or be accompanied by the following items:

1. Name, address, and signature of the person preparing the plan; date, bar scale and north arrow.
2. All boundaries of the area proposed for reclamation and the land within 200 feet of the boundary of this site.
3. Final topography of the area proposed for reclamation, at contour intervals of five feet or less.
4. Final surface drainage pattern, including the location and physical characteristics of all artificial and/or modified drainage facilities.
5. Timetable as to fully depleted sites within the excavated area.
6. Schedules of final reclamation activities including seeding mixtures, cover vegetation, fertilizer types, and application rates.

C. Other Information

The Board reserves the right, per RSA 155-E: 3,VII to request any other information it deems necessary to make an informed decision, or to have plans reviewed by an outside agency. According to the authority vested in the Board by RSA 155-E:11, III, any reasonable expenses incurred for such information or reviews shall be charged to the applicant. Failure to pay such costs constitutes valid grounds for the Board to deny the application.

Section XVI: Administration and Enforcement**A. Permits**

1. Permits shall be issued only to the owner or his agent and shall not be transferable without the prior written consent of the Board. A copy of the permit shall be prominently displayed at the site or the principal access to the site.
2. A permit shall be valid for 1 year and the expiration date shall be specified. A permit is automatically withdrawn if no substantial work is done on the site for a period of 1 year from the date of the issuance of the permit.
3. Failure to file for a permit shall be considered a violation and operators who fail to file will be issued an order to cease and desist.
4. The Board may include in the permit any such reasonable conditions as are consistent with the purpose of these regulations.
5. The Board will establish a schedule by which all permitted sites are inspected on a regular basis.

B. Amendments

Permit holders wishing to alter the size or location of the excavation, the rate of removal or the plan for reclamation shall submit a new application, following the same procedures as those required for the original excavation permit.

C. Inspections

The Board or its designee may make periodic inspections of all excavation sites to determine if the operations are in conformance with these regulations and the approved plans.

D. Suspensions and Revocations

The Board may suspend or revoke a permit;

- 1) if the Board determines that any provision of the permit has been violated,

- 2) if a material misstatement was made in the application upon which a permit was granted, or
- 3) if any unsafe or hazardous conditions exist as determined by a site inspection.

Such suspension or revocation shall be subject to a motion for rehearing thereon and an appeal in accordance with these regulations.

E. Appeals

Any person affected by the Board's decision to approve or disapprove an application by any amendment thereto or any suspension or revocation of a permit, may appeal to the Board for a rehearing on such decision or any matter determined thereby. The motion for rehearing shall be filed within ten (10) days of such decision and shall fully specify every ground upon which it is alleged that the decision or order complained of is unlawful or unreasonable. The Board shall either grant or deny the request for rehearing within ten (10) days, and if the request is granted, a rehearing shall be scheduled within thirty (30) days. Any person affected by the Board's decision on a motion or rehearing may appeal in accordance with RSA 677:4-15.

F. Penalties

Fines, penalties and remedies for violations of this regulation shall be the same as for violations of RSA 676:15, 676:17, 676:17-a and 676:17-b. Whoever violates any provision of this regulation, a permit or a valid order issued hereunder shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Section XVII: Separability

The invalidity of any provision, sentence, paragraph, etc. of this regulation shall not affect the validity of any other provision, sentence, paragraph, etc.

Section XVIII: Effective Date

These regulations take effect as adopted and as amended by the Planning Board at public hearing on November 1, 2011.