

Greenwich Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Agency



URBANE PLANNING

by Robert A. Jonas, AICP



"Preparing" a site for development.

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What is the Greenwich IWWA?

- The Greenwich Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency (IWWA) was established by local ordinance in accordance with State Statutes on October 9, 1973 to ensure the protection, regulation and proper use of the Town's fresh water wetlands and watercourses.

Who Comprises the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency?

- The Agency consists of seven members and three alternates, all volunteers serving four-year terms. Greenwich residents are appointed to the Agency by the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) upon nomination by the Board of Selectmen.
- Paid Staff members are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Regulations, which includes technical evaluation of proposed projects and regular inspections of active projects to ensure compliance.

What Role Do the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency Regulations Play?

- The ultimate purpose of the IWWA Regulations is to protect the citizens of Greenwich and Connecticut from adverse impacts caused by random or destructive use of wetland and watercourse areas.
- The Regulations require the Agency to protect, preserve, and maintain the Town's wetlands and watercourses, which in turn guides the Agency's decisions about how property owners may conduct site activities.

What Role Do the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency Regulations Play (cont' d)?

- The Regulations protect the Town's fresh water supplies by providing an orderly process to balance the need for economic growth and use of land with the need to protect the environment.

What Role Do the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency Regulations Play (cont' d)?

Specific adverse impacts that the Regulations require the Agency to prevent through its decisions include:

- Pollution and diminished water quality.
- Damage from erosion or siltation.
- Loss of aquatic organisms, wildlife and vegetation, and the destruction of their natural habitats.
- Flooding.

What Are Wetlands/ Watercourses?

- “Wetlands” are lands, including submerged land, which consists of any of the soil types designated as poorly drained, very poorly drained, alluvial, and floodplain.
- “Watercourses” are rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, ponds, marshes, swamps, bogs and all other bodies of water, natural or artificial, vernal or intermittent, public or private, which are contained within, flow through or border upon the Town. *





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What Are the Values of Wetlands?

- Environmental Quality: Wetlands are critical to maintaining water quality and stream flows. They produce oxygen, filter pollutants, remove silts and sediments, absorb organic and inorganic chemicals, and recycle and reuse these nutrients.
- Socio-Economic Benefits: Wetlands and watercourses provide benefits by controlling erosion and receiving ground and surface water discharges. Without the hydrologic functions of wetlands, bridges, roads and buildings across Connecticut would be threatened. Wetlands also provide open space and areas for active and passive recreation.
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat: Wetlands and watercourses provide habitats for many species of fish and wildlife, including several endangered plants and animals. Freshwater fishes are dependent on wetlands and watercourses. Many species of waterfowl utilize wetlands as nesting, feeding and breeding areas. Numerous other wildlife such as muskrats, skunks, rabbits, reptiles and amphibians also rely on wetlands for their feeding and breeding grounds.





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What Role Does the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency Play?

- Because the altered landscapes created by development may permanently affect wetlands and watercourses, land use must be regulated. The IWWA, therefore, reviews and evaluates proposed site plans and directs development so as to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for negative impacts on these critical resources.



What is a Regulated Activity?

- “A ‘regulated activity’ is any operation within or use of a wetland or watercourse involving removal or deposition of material, or any obstruction, construction, alteration or pollution of such wetlands or watercourses. Furthermore, any clearing, grubbing, filling, grading, paving, excavating, constructing, depositing, or removing of material and discharging of storm water on the land within the upland review areas is a regulated activity.” (*)



How Do I Know If I Have Wetlands On My Property?

Some wetlands or watercourses may be obvious by sight, however, others may not be.

- Determine if your project is subject to Agency regulation by checking the Greenwich Land Records for a Wetlands Declaration, reviewing the records in the IWWA office, reading the Regulations, or asking a Staff member.
- A soil scientist may be required to field-locate wetland areas.



Wetland?



3 days earlier during storm



Backyard 2 weeks after storm



Wetland?



Soils Report says so

SOIL LEGEND:

UPLAND:

- 50 SUTTON FINE SANDY LOAM
- 73 CHARLTON-CHATFIELD COMPLEX
- 308 UDORTHENTS, SMOOTHED

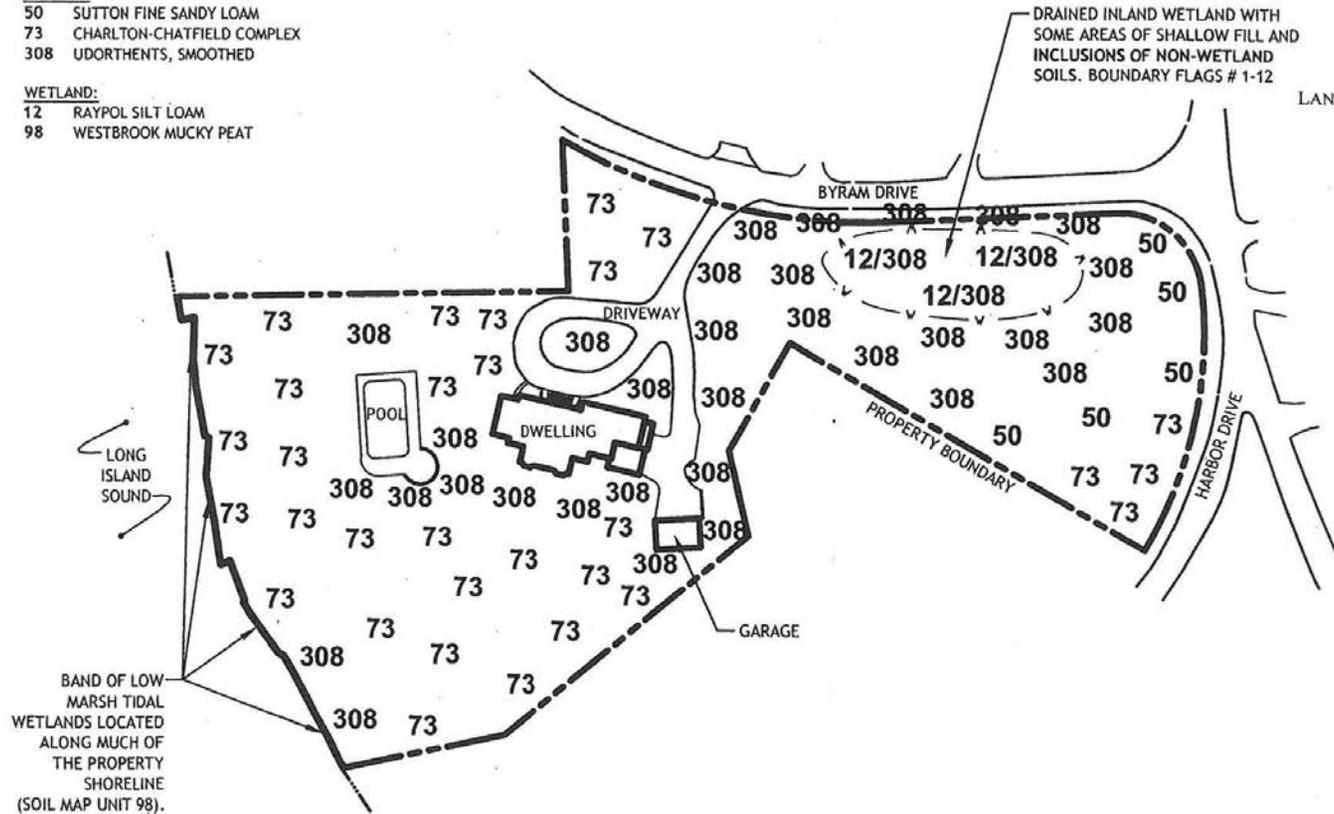
WETLAND:

- 12 RAYPOL SILT LOAM
- 98 WESTBROOK MUCKY PEAT

**WILLIAM KENNY
ASSOCIATES LLC**

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NOTES:

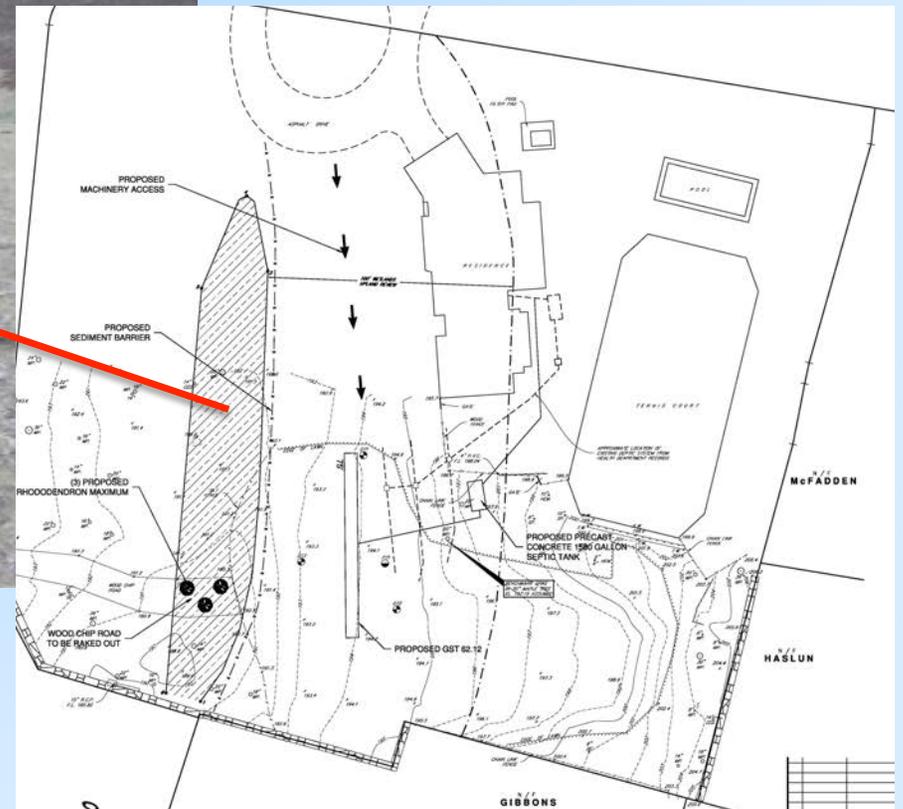
- INFORMATION SHOWN ON THIS DRAWING, INCLUDING THE WETLAND

WETLAND & WATERCOURSE MAP

Wetland?



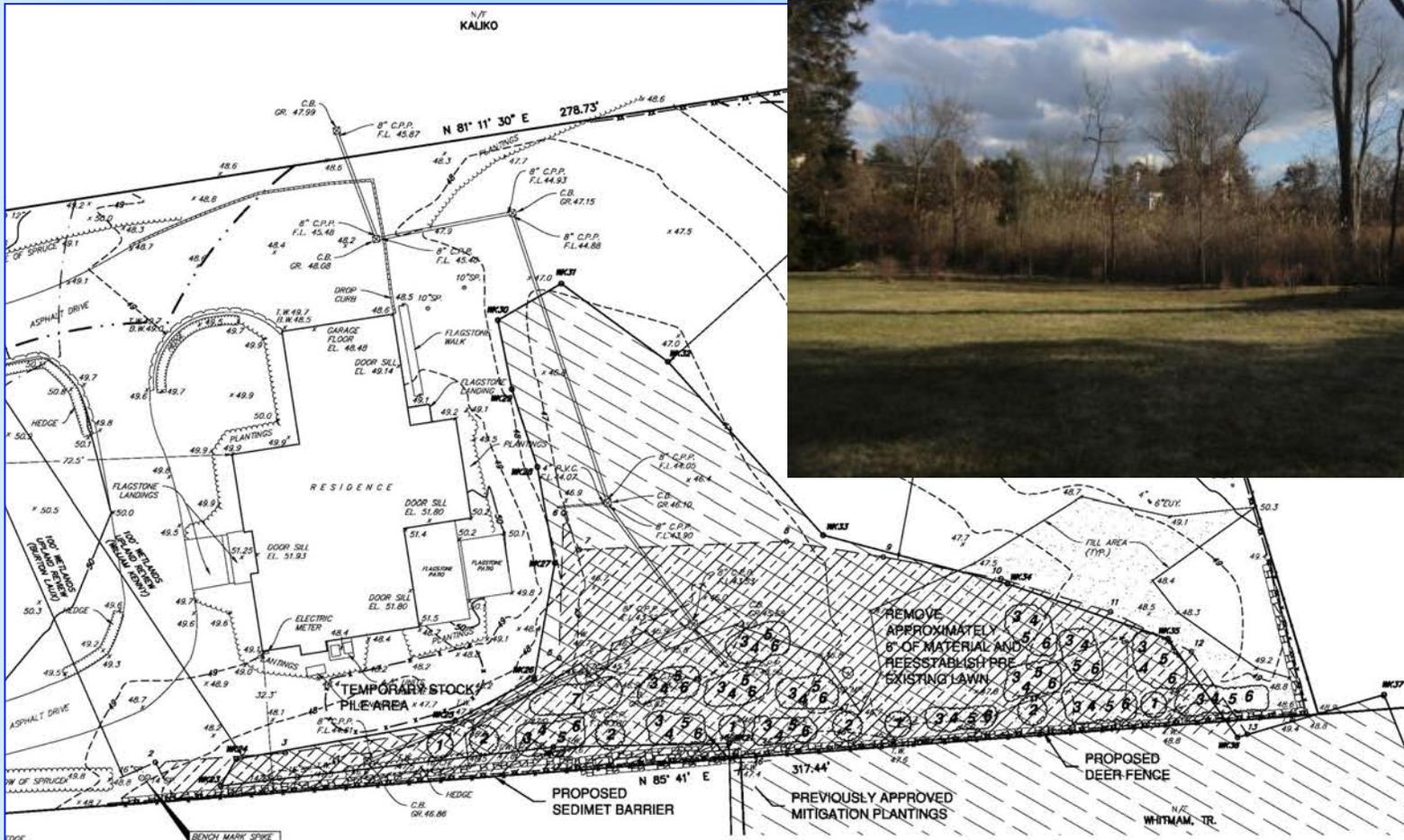
Yep! Permit for septic repair



Wetland?



Yes again. Restoration



What Types of Activities Require an IWWA Permit?

In general, whenever an activity involves clearing or construction on a property containing wetlands or watercourses, Agency or Staff review and approval is required. For example: residential additions/construction; pond dredging; septic installation or modification; new or modified driveways; wells; and tennis court or pool installations all may require Agency permits, if there are wetlands or watercourses on the subject property or adjacent parcels.



What If I Live On a Tidal Wetland?

- Unlike inland wetlands which are defined by soil type, tidal wetlands are defined in the Tidal Wetlands Act by their current or former tidal connection, their elevation relative to extreme high water, and their capacity to support certain wetland vegetation.
- Tidal wetlands are regulated exclusively by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP).



What is the Significance of a Wetland Buffer?

Wetland buffer areas, upland areas adjacent to a wetland or watercourse, are significant for several reasons:

- Buffer areas filter sediment and excess nutrients from surface runoff before this material enters the wetland;
- The vegetation of buffer areas reduces the potential of erosion by stabilizing the soil with its root systems and lessening the impact of rainfall and runoff;
- Buffer areas are essential protection for species in the wetland and those species preferring the upland/wetland border; and,
- Buffer areas keep human activity from directly affecting the wetland.



What Makes an Effective Wetland Buffer?

- The most effective buffer for wetland areas, water quality and wildlife protection is a diverse, multi-layered, undisturbed native vegetation community.
- The buffer should be wide enough to slow and reduce surface water runoff and provide wildlife habitat.



Can I Add Plantings To The Wetlands On My Property?

Vegetation can be very beneficial to wetlands and wetland/watercourse buffer areas. However, the following should be considered when adding vegetation to wetland or buffer areas:

- The IWWA should always be consulted prior to planting in a wetland area;
- Plantings should be native to the State of Connecticut and should be appropriate for wetland areas.

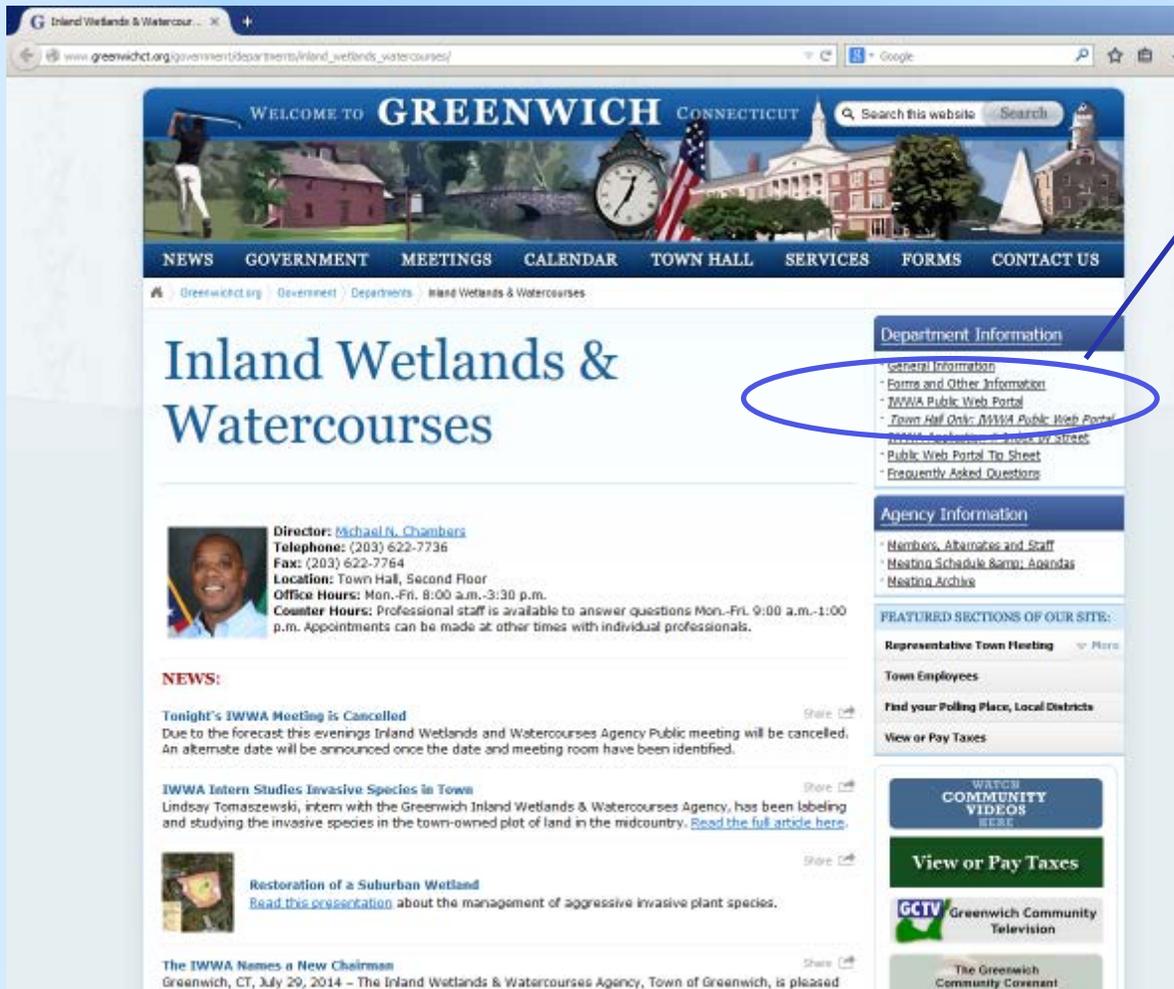


Why Should We Protect Our Wetlands?

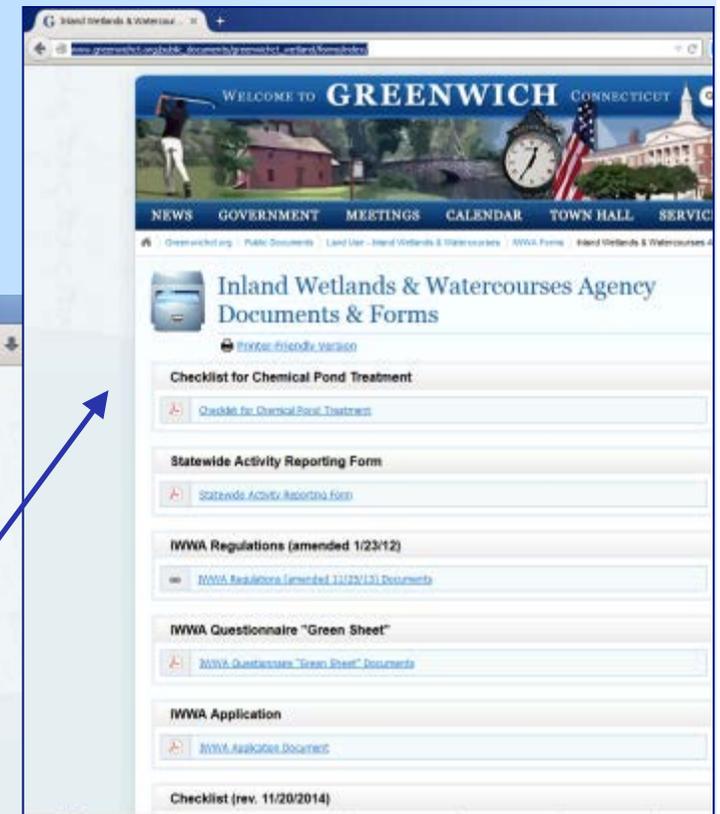
- Many inland wetlands and watercourses have been destroyed or are in danger of destruction because of unregulated use through deposition, filling or removal of material, the diversion or obstruction of water flow, the building of structures and other uses, all of which have despoiled, polluted and even eliminated wetlands and watercourses. Such unregulated activity has had a significant, adverse impact on the environment affecting the ecological, scenic, historic and recreational values and benefits for all citizens.
- The preservation and protection of the wetlands and watercourses from random, unnecessary and unregulated uses, disturbance or destruction is in the public interest and is essential to the health, welfare and safety of the citizens of Greenwich.



IWWA Website



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Agency. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for NEWS, GOVERNMENT, MEETINGS, CALENDAR, TOWN HALL, SERVICES, FORMS, and CONTACT US. Below this is a large banner image with the text "WELCOME TO GREENWICH CONNECTICUT" and a search bar. The main heading is "Inland Wetlands & Watercourses". To the right of the heading is a "Department Information" sidebar with a blue header and a list of links: General Information, Forms and Other Information, IWWA Public Web Portal, Town Hall Only: IWWA Public Web Portal, Public Web Portal To Sheet, and Frequently Asked Questions. Below this is an "Agency Information" sidebar with links for Members, Alternates and Staff, Meeting Schedule & Agenda, and Meeting Archive. The main content area features a "NEWS:" section with three articles: "Tonight's IWWA Meeting is Cancelled", "IWWA Intern Studies Invasive Species in Town", and "Restoration of a Suburban Wetland". At the bottom, there is a section titled "The IWWA Names a New Chairman".



The screenshot shows a sub-page titled "Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Agency Documents & Forms". It features a list of documents and forms, each with a small icon and a link. The items listed are: Checklist for Chemical Pond Treatment, Statewide Activity Reporting Form, IWWA Regulations (amended 1/23/12), IWWA Questionnaire "Green Sheet", IWWA Application, and Checklist (rev. 11/20/2014). A blue arrow points from the "Forms and Other Information" link in the sidebar of the first screenshot to this page.

Greenwich Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Agency

**Professional Staff assistance is available at
the IWWA office counter, on the 2nd floor of
Greenwich Town Hall
Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 1:00.**

Tel: (203) 622-7736

For additional information or forms, please visit our website:

<http://www.greenwichct.org/InlandsWetlands/InlandsWetlands.asp>