

Before You Build a Pond: 10 Important Questions and Answers

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Landowners frequently call the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) offices with questions regarding pond construction. The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide people with a few things to think about before they start to build a pond. Often times, landowners can save money and trouble if they ask appropriate questions.

1. Why do you want a pond?

This may be the most important question to ask. It will affect or determine the size, cost, depth, quality of pond construction and many other factors. There are many uses for ponds, including recreation, irrigation, livestock watering and wildlife. Knowing the major uses of the pond will affect aquatic plants and animals and many other factors.

2. Where do you want to build it?

Some people think that they can build a pond anywhere they want. There are specific conditions that are needed. Generally, developing a natural spring formed in a fine-textured soil with a high percentage of clay is most desirable. Here are some important questions to ask yourself:

- Do you have a wet area or a seep that you would like to improve into a pond?
- Are you intending to dam up a continually flowing stream? In most cases, these ponds will not be permitted.
- What type of pond are you considering building (embankment or excavated)?
- Have you checked with local permitting agencies, like the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers, to ensure that you are not affecting a wetland?

3. Are you aware of all the regulatory issues involved with constructing a pond?

Many people spend a great deal of time trying to get a pond permitted that likely won't get regulatory approval. Please refer to bulletin [#2376](#), "Laws and Regulation Requirements to Consider Before You Build a Pond" for a list of essential regulations that you need to be aware of.

4. Will your pond have an inlet or an outlet?

This can have a major impact on what you can legally do from a maintenance perspective. For example, herbicides generally can not be used in a pond if the pond feeds into a stream that runs off the landowner's property.

5. Does your town have specific permits that you need to obtain?

Some towns also need to issue a permit for pond construction. Check with your town for more information.

6. What is the water source for your pond?

If there is a wet depression, intermittent stream or other area that you want to develop, you may want to consider what land use is going on above the area. Is there a large cattle or dairy operation or other land use upslope from the pond that could affect the quality of the water in the pond? If so, another location may be better.

7. Do you want to swim in the water?

If swimming is one of your main uses for your pond, you may want to construct the sides of the pond less steeply than if your goal is to provide wildlife habitat. Also, you may want to lay filter fabric above a clay bottom before building your sand beach to prevent clay from moving into your sand beach.

8. Have you contacted your insurance agent to be sure your pond will not constitute a nuisance hazard?

Sometimes pools, ponds and other potentially dangerous water sources will cause insurance companies to increase your liability rates. It is a good idea to check before you start your construction.

9. Are you aware of the cost involved?

At the minimum, you can expect to pay between \$2,000 and \$25,000 for your pond. Many things, including site preparation, location, size and depth, will influence the final cost of your pond.

10. Are you going to look for cost share on the construction costs?

If you plan on using your pond for irrigation or as a livestock watering source, it is possible that some cost share may be available to you from a Consolidated Farm Services Agency program. However, budget cuts are making funds difficult to obtain. If your pond will be used only for recreation (swimming, wildlife, etc.), cost-sharing will probably not be available to you.

Maine Department of Environmental Protection Regional Offices

Augusta	207-287-2111	State House Station Augusta, ME 04333-0017
Presque Isle	207-764-0477	1235 Central Dr. Presque Isle, ME 04769
Portland	207-822-6300	312 Canco Rd. Portland, ME 04103
Bangor	207-941-4570	106 Hogan Rd. Bangor, ME 04401

For more information, contact your [county Extension office](#).

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