Websites You Can't Live Without!

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I get a call about someone filling in a wetland; what's the first thing to do? I turn to the internet! The reality is, with so much useful information on the 'web', I rarely go out to investigate a wetland violation, meet with a resident about wetland questions, or conduct a land management site visit without first conducting some 'cyber-research'. The list is endless, but in this article, I will share with you my favorite four sites:

Bing.com/maps - Most of you are probably familiar with this site but if not, you must check it out! Start by typing in an address in the top left box (your home address is always fun to do). Click 'search' and Bing will take you to an aerial view of the property. This is great but what's even better - click on 'birds eye' found in the top/center of the screen. Then double click your mouse to zoom in on a property. Next, notice the two arrows found in the top, right corner of the screen? Click on one of them to change orientation of the aerial photo. This is particularly useful on a wooded site where you may need to adjust the orientation to get a better look at the edge of lawn or to see streams or wetlands better.

HistoricAerials.com - This site provides historic aerial photos dating from 1938 - 2007 and topographic maps dating back to 1894! Data on this site was gathered from a variety of government sources and is constantly being updated. I use this site when trying to understand land use changes such as a wetland violation or conservation land encroachment of unknown date. Resolution varies from year to year but overall, I find this an invaluable tool for Commissions.

www.tinyurl.com/massGISoliver
Oliver is MassGIS' online data viewer. With this application you can interactively display and query nearly all of MassGIS' data (including wetlands!), download up-to-date shapefiles from the database, overlay MassGIS data onto other basemaps such as Google Terrain, and much more.

www.gobotany.newenglandwild.org
This new interactive plant identification tool created by New England Wildflower Society's was highlighted at MACC's 2013 Fall Conference. With Go Botany's "Simple Key", you can identify over 1,200 common native and naturalized New England plants. Useful tools such as plant id quiz cards, dichotomous key to all 3,500 New England Taxa, and video help topics are included.

Nothing can compare to getting outside and visiting a site with your own eyes. But the more web-detective work you do first may save you countless hours in the field.

Do you have a favorite conservation/environmental website? Email MACC with the site name and the reason why you recommend it and we'll try our best to publish it in an upcoming newsletter!