

DOCKS, BOAT HOISTS, AND SWIM RAFTS

ON INLAND LAKES AND STREAMS



Michigan law requires that a permit be applied for and received from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) before conducting certain activities in inland lakes and streams. These activities include dredging, filling, constructing or placing a structure on bottomlands, constructing or reconfiguring a marina, interfering with the natural flow of water, or connecting a ditch or similar waterway to an inland lake or stream.

Docks, boat hoists, and swim rafts are common projects that may require permits from the DEQ, and should be installed to minimize impacts to navigation, use of the water, and the environment. The DEQ permitting process ensures that potential negative impacts to wetlands, lakes, streams, and other natural features, as well as impacts to use by the public and other property owners, are avoided and minimized as much as possible. The applicant must show the project will not adversely affect the public trust, riparian rights, or the environment.

This Fact Sheet answers the following questions:

Do I need a permit to install a dock or boat hoist?

Do I need a permit to install a swim raft?

How do I apply for a permit for a dock or a boat hoist?

Can my dock or boat hoist permit application be expedited?



**Michigan
Department of
Environmental
Quality**

Water Resources Division

www.Michigan.gov/WRD

Do I need a permit to install a dock or boat hoist?

A permit is required to install a permanent dock or boat hoist in inland lakes or streams. A permit is not required for a seasonal dock or boat hoist that is placed in an inland lake or stream and removed at the end of the boating season, if the structure is for private, non-commercial recreational use, and placement does not unreasonably interfere with the use of the water by others or interfere with water flow. Public or commercial structures require a permit. Boardwalks in wetlands landward of the shoreline also require a permit.

Do I need a permit to install a swim raft?

Swim rafts are usually seasonal structures, put in at the beginning of the boating season and removed at the end of the season. Seasonal structures do not need a permit in inland lakes and streams, as long as they are for private non-commercial recreational use, and do not unreasonably interfere with the use of the water by others or interfere with water flow.

How do I apply for a permit for a dock or a boat hoist?

Applicants should use the DEQ Joint Permit Application:

- Permit applications should be submitted through the MiWaters online permit application system.
- Information on the permit application process and how to submit an application in MiWaters is available at www.Michigan.gov/JointPermit.

Can my dock or boat hoist permit application be expedited?

Docks and boat hoists needing a permit can be reviewed through an expedited permit process if certain criteria are met, including:

- One permanent dock or two permanent boat hoists per single family residential property.
- The structure does not have roofs or sides.
- The structure cannot interfere with water flow or navigation.
- The structure is placed in the center of the property, or at least 1.5 times the dock length from any property lines.
- The structure is placed in or is a reasonable length to boatable water, or at a length from the shoreline that is not greater than the length of similar structures in the area, whichever is the minimum necessary.
- For docks, the dock does not exceed a width of four feet and is a linear single pier with no perpendicular extensions. For boat hoists, the boat hoist does not occupy more than 400 square feet, including a walkway 2 feet wide or less.