VEGETATION REMOVAL

IN 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. Vegetation removal (i.e., pulling vegetation out by its roots and disturbing bottom sediments) in inland lakes and streams is also regulated, and needs a permit in many cases.

Because shoreline vegetation provides protection against erosion and pollution and provides habitat for fish and wildlife, vegetation removal should be avoided and minimized as much as possible. The DEQ permitting process ensures that potential negative impacts are avoided and minimized, and that 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 pull or remove vegetation?

Do I need a permit for raking?

Do I need a permit to remove fallen trees?

How do I apply for a permit?

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

Water Resources Division

www.Michigan.gov/WRD

Do I need a permit to pull or remove vegetation?

A permit is not required for vegetation removal by the riparian owner in inland lakes and streams if:

- The plants are an aquatic nuisance as defined in state law,
- The removal is accomplished by hand-pulling without using a powered or mechanized tool, and
- All of the plant fragments are removed from the water and disposed of on upland.

The DEQ recommends that vegetation removal be minimized, as shoreline vegetation provides protection against erosion and pollution. Vegetation removal also negatively impacts recreational fishing, reptiles and amphibians, and other wildlife.

A permit is required for larger-scale removal of plants, removal using powered or mechanized tools, placing materials on the lake bottom for vegetation control, or removing vegetation in wetlands. Removal of vegetation assisted by a suction tool (Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting) requires a permit. Chemical control of aquatic plants requires an Aquatic Nuisance Control permit from the DEQ.

Do I need a permit for raking?

A permit is not required to rake lake bottom by a riparian owner as long as the raked areas are predominately composed of sand or pebbles and are unvegetated before raking, and the raking is performed without a powered or mechanized tool.

Do I need a permit to remove fallen trees?

If the tree is embedded in the lake or stream such that bottom sediments or the banks of the inland lake or stream will be disturbed during the removal of a fallen tree, a permit is required. Because fallen trees provide important fish and wildlife habitat, the DEQ recommends that as much of the tree remain in place as possible and that the embedded pieces of the tree be cut off to avoid disturbing the lake or river bottom and banks.

How do I apply for a permit?

Applicants should use the DEQ Joint Permit Application:

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

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