

# PIER PLANNER

Piers are a popular focus for boating and waterfront recreation. It seems like a simple topic but if you have been involved in a dispute over "pier rights" with your neighbor or have seen shorelines overrun with such construction, you will understand the need for these guidelines. Generally, seasonal piers and wharves must meet the same standards as permanent ones. For more information contact your DNR Area Water Management Specialist.

## Permits

Generally, piers for use by an individual waterfront property owner will not require a DNR permit if they comply with these guidelines (exceptions are noted). Permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are required for piers on the Great Lakes and other specified federal waters (phone 612- 290-5375).

## Who may place and use piers

Only a riparian (waterfront) property owner may place a pier or wharf. Owners are responsible for any required permits and maintenance after construction.

Piers are private property of the riparian. However, someone wading the shoreline may "portage" around a pier by the shortest route practicable on private property.

## Location and number of piers

Piers, wharves and moored watercraft must be confined to the owner's riparian zone. Methods for describing zones where the dividing lines between adjacent owners may not be obvious are described in figure 1 inside.

A pier or wharf may not obstruct navigation. Where near shore waters are deep enough, construct a wharf parallel to the shoreline rather than extending a pier perpendicular to it. A pier may not encircle or isolate part of a waterway.

Pier or wharf placement and use may not damage public interests in waterways (spawning areas, important vegetation, waterfowl or loon nesting areas, natural shoreline beauty, etc.).

The number of berths and moorings (total of all watercraft at piers, lifts, shelters, buoys, etc.) is limited to 2 for the first 50 ft. of frontage and 1 for each additional 50 ft. of shoreline that you own. You will need special permits if this number is exceeded.\* Other factors noted here may limit construction to a lesser number.

## Length and width of piers

Unless limited by other requirements, a pier may extend waterward the greater distance of: 1) a boat length, 2) the distance to the 3 ft. water depth contour or 3) the distance to a deeper contour if required by the draft of craft using the pier. See figure 2 inside.

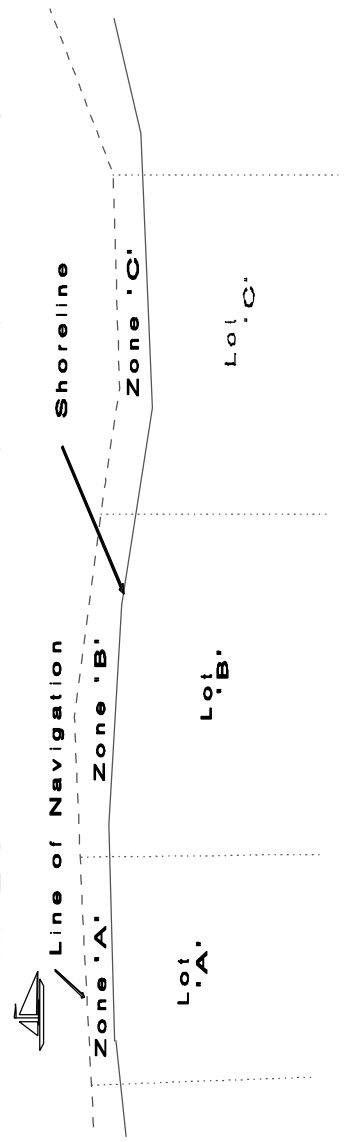
A pier may extend out to a DNR approved municipal pierhead line.

Six ft. is the maximum width for piers and wharves to allow safe loading of gear and passengers without a special permit.\*

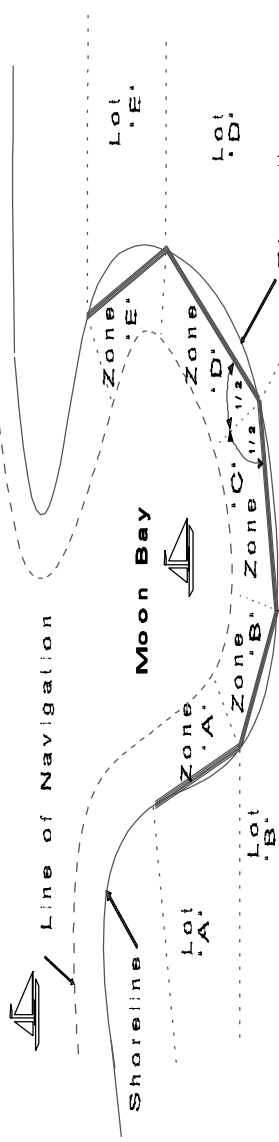
Finger piers ("T"s or "L"s) may be used to provide mooring slips or stabilize a pier. Larger decks or platforms are prohibited.

Publication WZ-017 (3/96 revision)

Figure 1  
**RIPARIAN ZONES**  
 ... BY EXTENSION OF LOT LINES



... BY COTERMINOUS RIPARIAN RIGHTS LINES

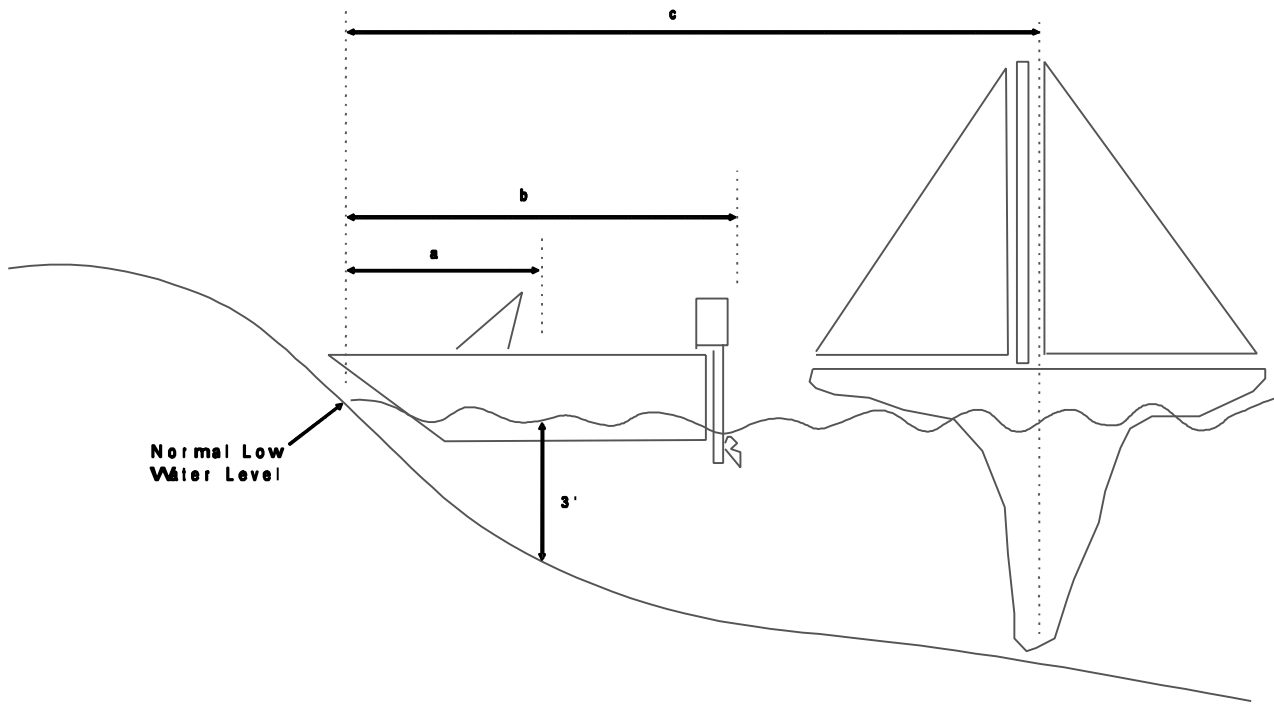


- Step 1: Extend lot lines to the shoreline
- Step 2: Connect the points found in step 1
- Step 3: Bisect angles formed by the connections in step 2 and extend to the line of navigation

# PIER LENGTH

...is limited to the "LINE OF NAVIGATION" which is the greater of:

- a: Distance to 3' water depth
- b: The length of boat to be moored
- c: Depth required by boat to be moored



## Construction

A pier or wharf must be floating or placed on piles or posts. Floating piers are best on flowages or other waters where water levels may vary.

Polystyrene floats must be coated or contained to resist gas, oil and abrasion. Metal drums must be free of any product residue and corrosion resistant.

Solid docks on fill and piers on rock-filled timber cribs, pile clusters or similar foundations require a DNR permit.\*

A pier or wharf may not obstruct the free flow of water or include any features which trap or accumulate aquatic plants or sediment.

## Accessories

Roofs, canopies, decks, water slides and other construction not essential for mooring watercraft are prohibited.

A single bench of open construction not to exceed 6' in length and boarding ladders required for safety may be allowed.

## **OTHER NEAR SHORE CONSTRUCTION**

### **Boat lifts and shelters**

Boat shelters may have a roof or canopy but may not have sides or walls. Shelters do not require a DNR permit if removed from waters between December 1 and April 1 annually but must comply with standards in NR 326.

A permanent boat shelter requires a DNR permit and must meet standards in NR 326. An information sheet describing the standards is available.\*

### **Boathouses**

Boathouses differ from boat shelters by having sides or walls.

On land...boathouses are exclusively for watercraft storage and are regulated by local ordinances. Contact the municipal building inspector or zoning administrator.

Over water...boathouse construction is prohibited waterward of the ordinary highwater mark (OHWM\*). Boathouses constructed over water prior to 1979 are allowed to remain but their repair and maintenance are restricted.\*

### **Decks**

Decks over the water are not allowed. In unincorporated areas decks and all other structures (except piers and boathouses) are generally prohibited on lands within 75 ft. of the OHWM.

### **Swimming Rafts**

You may place a swimming raft of modest size (10'X10' suggested) and properly anchored within 200 ft. of shore without a DNR permit. The raft must be confined to your riparian zone and may not interfere with public rights in the waterway. Keep it as close to shore as possible.

### **Mooring Buoys**

Generally, you may place a standard mooring buoy in your riparian zone within 150 ft. of the OHWM without a permit from DNR. Local ordinances may require permits. Consult your local Conservation Warden.