

Waterway Home

About Us

Permit Intake & Contacts
Why We Regulate

Permits from A to Z

Application Directory
Activity Index
Permit Process

Activity Groups

Construction
Crossings
Habitat
Recreation
Shoreline
Water Levels

Related Programs

Agricultural Runoff
Dam Safety
Floodplain
Shoreland
Stormwater
Wastewater
Wetlands

Waterway & Wetland Permits: Piers, Docks and Wharves

[Landowners](#) || [Contractors](#) || [Municipalities](#) || [Agriculturalists](#) || [Public Involvement](#) || [County Contacts](#)

Most Existing Piers & Wharves are Grandfathered

Piers are a popular focus for boating and waterfront recreation. What pier owners need to know is that they can continue to place their existing piers on the water, the same as they've been doing for years.

All **existing piers and wharves*** are exempt from needing state approval and can be placed in lakes and rivers the same as they always have under [a new law signed April 2, 2012](#)

**Piers or wharves first placed in the water before April 2012*



DNR Photo

- The majority of existing piers already meet size limits or will not need a permit or state review.
 - Newly Constructed Piers* that DO NOT meet the [Pier Planner](#) [PDF 809KB], and the [Piers Exemption Checklist](#) [PDF 64KB] will need to apply for a Individual Permit with state review.
- *Piers or wharves first placed in the water AFTER April 2012*

We also have an [interactive decision tool](#) to help you determine if you will need to get a permit or simply do nothing.

Decision Tool: Do I Need A Permit?

Still have Questions?

Visit our [Pier FAQ](#) to see answers to the most commonly asked questions about piers.

What's My Pier Size?

How to measure your pier

[VIDEO, Length 2:37].

Why Regulate Piers?

[Large Piers impact fish and aquatic life.](#)

Large piers can interfere with boating and swimming.

Lakes and rivers belong to everyone under the [Public Trust Doctrine](#). Waterfront owners have a reasonable right to a pier, but it is not an unlimited right and not above the public's interest in public waters.

Don't have Flash player? Visit our text version of the ["Do I Need A Permit"](#) pier decision matrix instead. In addition, here are the current Piers permitting and exemption application materials:

Piers Permit Application Materials

Piers Permit Additional Materials

[How do I save and open the permit materials in ZIP format?](#)

- [Individual Permit Application: Piers](#) [ZIP 648KB]

Don't forget to include sample drawings with your application!

Piers Sample Drawing and Grids:

- [Piers Permit Sample Drawing](#) [PDF 164KB]
- [Piers Permit Blank Grids](#) [PDF 164KB]

Additional Materials:

- [Pier Planner](#) [PDF 809KB]
- [Piers Exemption Checklist](#) [PDF 64KB]
- [Exemption Determination Request Form](#) [#3500-107, PDF 64KB]

Please send your completed application materials to the permit intake address based on the county where your project is located on our [Permit Intake & Contacts page](#).

Contact Us

For more information on piers, please email us at DNRpiers@wisconsin.gov.

Laws

Applicable statutes and codes include [Section 30.12, Wis. Stats.](#) [[exit DNR](#)] [[PDF 627KB](#)] and [Chapter NR 326, Wis. Adm. Code](#) [[exit DNR](#)] [[PDF 29KB](#)].

Local permits and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulations may also apply. We advise you to contact your [local zoning office](#) and your [regional U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office](#) [[exit DNR](#)].

Last Revised: Friday April 06 2012



[Feedback](#)
[Employment](#)
[Legal Notices](#)
[Privacy Notice](#)
[Acceptable Use Policy](#)

[News](#)
[Topics](#)
[Hotlines](#)
[Site Requirements](#)



Customer and General Information
1-888-WDNRINFO
(1-888-936-7463)
Hours: 7 a.m. - 10 p.m.



101 S. Webster Street . PO Box 7921 . Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921 . 608-266-2621