

Pier, Dock, or Wharf Exemption Checklist



Certain activities in navigable waters are exempt from needing a permit under [Chapter 30](#). Use this checklist to determine if your project qualifies for an exemption.

Your proposed project is eligible if it meets **all** the following conditions:

Your proposed pier, dock, or wharf is eligible for an exception if:

- The pier or wharf was initially placed by April 2012.
- The pier or wharf does NOT interfere with riparian rights of other riparian owners.
- The riparian owner was NOT NOTIFIED that the structure is detrimental to the public interest.

- **Federal and State Threatened and Endangered Species:** This exemption does not address threatened and endangered species. Applicants are required to comply with Wisconsin's Endangered Species Law (s. 29.604, Wis. Stats.) and the Federal Endangered Species Act. To determine if the project is in compliance, visit the [NHI Public Portal](#), and enter the project area to generate an Endangered Resources (ER) Preliminary Assessment. Read the ER Preliminary Assessment carefully to determine follow-up steps, if needed.

- **Local Ordinances:** Many municipalities have local pier ordinances, containing various requirements including size limits, side setback requirements, and limits on number of boats. Check with your local municipality to ensure that your pier or wharf will meet their requirements.

- **Aquatic Plants:** Removal of aquatic vegetation is limited to the amount necessary for the placement of a pier, dock or wharf under ch. NR 109, Wis. Admin. Code. Contact [DNR Aquatic Plant Manager](#) for more information.

RIPARIAN/PLACEMENT

- The pier, dock, or wharf must be in the riparian zone of interest and may be placed and maintained only by a riparian landowner and/or in lakes or flowages. (An authorized agent or contractor may do the work on behalf of the riparian owner)
 - [Determination of riparian zones](#)

- The pier, dock or wharf may extend into the water from the shoreline out to the point where the water is 3 feet at its maximum depth or to the point where there is adequate depth for mooring a boat or using a boat hoist or lift whichever is greater. A pier may also extend to the locally authorized pierhead line. The depth of water necessary for non-fixed keel sailboats shall be measured with the centerboard or dagger boards raised.

- The pier, dock, or wharf may not exceed 6 feet in width. An "L" or "T" or catwalks are allowed as part of the pier, provided no parts of the pier exceed 6 feet in width.

If the pier, dock, or wharf has a loading platform (any area wider than 6 feet in width) it must meet all the following:

- The surface area of the loading platform does not exceed 200 square feet.

- The pier, dock or wharf may not have more than 2 boat slips for the first 50 feet of riparian owner's shoreline footage and no more than one additional boat slip for each additional full 50 feet of shoreline footage.

- In addition to the boat slip limitations above, the pier, dock, or wharf may have up to 2 personal watercraft for the first 50 feet of a riparian owner's shoreline footage and one additional personal watercraft for each additional full 50 feet of shoreline footage.

- The pier, dock or wharf may not be a solid structure, or constructed on rock-filled cribs or similar size and type devices serving as a foundation.

- The pier, dock, or wharf may not totally enclose any portion of a navigable waterway.

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- The pier, dock, or wharf may not interrupt the free movement of water nor cause the formation of land by deposition of littoral drift upon the bed of the waterway.
- The pier, dock, or wharf may not be constructed or maintained with a screen or similar structure underneath or in any other manner which would trap or accumulate aquatic plants or other debris.
- The pier, dock, or wharf and any boats, boat shelters, hoists or lifts associated with it shall be located entirely within the riparian's zone of interest.
- Subject to the boat slip limitations above, the pier, dock, or wharf may have an associated seasonal boat shelter, boat hoist or boat lift that meets the requirements of NR 326, Wis. Admin. Code (see Exemption Checklist for Boat Shelters, Hoists or Lifts). If your project does not meet all these conditions, submit a permit application to the Department.