

## Why Protect the Shorelands and Wetlands?

This district is created to maintain safe and healthful conditions, to prevent water pollution, to protect fish spawning grounds and wildlife habitat, to preserve shore cover and natural beauty and to control building and development in wetlands whenever possible. When development is permitted in wetlands, the development should occur in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts upon the wetland.

### Areas to be Regulated:

- within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of navigable lakes, ponds or flowages
- within 300 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of navigable rivers or streams, or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater

Determination of navigability and ordinary high-water mark location shall initially be made by the Zoning Administrator. When questions arise, the Zoning Administrator shall contact the appropriate office of the Department of Natural Resources for a final determination.



### Columbia County Planning & Zoning

112 E. Edgewater Street  
Portage, WI 53901  
(608) 742-9660  
Office Hours:  
Monday—Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
[planning.zoning@columbiacountywi.gov](mailto:planning.zoning@columbiacountywi.gov)  
[www.co.columbia.wi.us/columbiacounty/planningzoning](http://www.co.columbia.wi.us/columbiacounty/planningzoning)

*This handout summarizes requirements for Shoreland & Wetland Zoning Permits but it is not all inclusive. Please contact Department Staff with specific questions regarding your project.*



Also see:

- Mitigation Quick Facts
- Impervious Surface Quick Facts

**Columbia County, Wisconsin**

112 E. Edgewater Street \* Portage, WI

# Shoreland Setbacks

A setback of 75 feet from the ordinary high-water mark of any navigable waters to the nearest part of a building or structure is required.

The setback requirement may be reduced for a new principal structure only if the principal structure on the adjacent lots encroach the setback. See Section 12.525.03 for details on this allowance.

## Guidelines for Structures

### Boathouses:

- The interior of a boathouse must be open. Lofts are not allowed.
- The boathouse must be constructed above and to the landward side of the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM). The OHWM can be determined by the county, subject to DNR verification if necessary. Construction on or over the bed of navigable waters is prohibited by state law.
- The boathouse must maintain applicable minimum setbacks.
- A boathouse must be designed solely for the purpose of storing boat and related equipment. Human habitation or non-boating related storage is prohibited.
- If a boathouse is flat-roofed, it may have a railing around the outer edge. Translucent or transparent panels are prohibited.
- A boathouse cannot exceed 600 square feet in area and cannot exceed 24 feet in width, or 30% of the width of the lot as measured at the waters edge, whichever is less.
- All exterior surfaces of a boathouse shall be earth tone in color.
- Sidewalls of a boathouse cannot exceed 10 feet in height.
- The roof pitch of a boathouse cannot exceed 4/12.
- Permit applications for boathouses must contain both a site plan illustrating structure location and setback compliance, and an elevation clearly illustrating compliance with sidewall and roof pitch requirements.
- No more than one boathouse is allowed per lot.
- Concrete aprons and boat launch pads are not allowed.
- The boathouse shall be located within the viewing access corridor.



### Open Sided & Screened Structures:

- Examples are Gazebos, Decks and Patios.
- The base of the structure cannot be higher than 24 inches above preconstruction grade.
- The part of the structure nearest to the water must be at least 35 feet landward from the ordinary high water mark.
- The floor area of all structures within the shoreland setback cannot exceed 200 square feet. (within 75 feet of the OHWM).
- The structure cannot have sides unless they are screened.
- The structure must be earth tone in color.
- The county must approve a plan that will be implemented by the property owner to preserve or establish a vegetative buffer zone that covers at least 70% of the half of the shoreland setback area that is nearest to the water.
- An enforceable affidavit acknowledging the limitations on vegetation must be filed with the Register of Deeds before a permit can be issued.

### Stairs/Walkways:

- Walkways, stairs or lifts are allowed if slopes greater than 12% are present, or if deemed necessary by the Zoning Administrator.
- Walkways, stairs or lifts must be located within the access and viewing corridor.
- Walkways, stairs or lifts cannot exceed 60 inches wide.

### Retaining Walls:

- Retaining walls built within 75 feet of the OHWM must obtain a variance through the Board of Adjustment. You must demonstrate that there is an extreme erosion problem that cannot be remedied by other means such as re-sloping and re-vegetating the area.

### Filling/Grading/Dredging:

- A shoreland/wetland zoning permit is required for filling or grading of any area within 300 feet of the OHWM of a navigable waterway if it has surface drainage toward the waterway and if:
  - Filling/Grading on Slopes more than 20%.
  - Filling/Grading over 1,000 square feet on slopes between 12%-20%.
  - Filling/Grading over 2,000 square feet on slopes less than 12%.
- A conditional use permit is required for any of the above situations if filing or grading exceeds 10,000 square feet unless it is designed and constructed to Soil Conservation Service technical standards.
- A shoreland/wetland permit is also required if construction or dredging is to occur on an artificial body of water that is within 300 feet of the OHWM of a navigable waterway or where the purpose of construction/dredging is the connection with a navigable waterway.

## Fees

Primary Structure	\$610.00
Addition/Alteration	\$260.00
Accessory Structure/Deck	\$160.00
Impervious Surface Calculation Fee	add \$200.00

(Fee waived if impervious surface survey completed by a licensed architect, engineer or surveyor is attached to the application)

## Additional Notes:

- A permit from the Department of Natural Resources may be required if any part of the structure or related construction extends to the water's edge, such as a ramp or riprap along the shore.
- It is the intent of these standards to minimize the impact of such structures on the scenic quality of the shorelands of navigable waters in Columbia County. You are strongly encouraged to seek review of your plans well in advance of the planned construction date so that we may insure that the plans and proposed site comply with the above standards.
- Impervious surface calculations must be either turned in with the application or the additional fee of \$200 for Department Staff to calculate this is required. See Impervious Surface and Mitigation Brochures for more information.