

Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Private Temporary or Seasonal Docks and Boat Lifts

Why Shorelines are Important

Our shorelines provide habitat for many aquatic species, including fish, and the nearshore area is where many of the organisms lay their eggs, feed and seek protection from predators. Aquatic vegetation, rocks, and woody debris provide important habitat for fish and other aquatic species, and they protect our shorelines from ice and wave erosion. Trees, shrubs, and grasses provide habitat for wildlife, and protect shorelines and stream banks from ice, waves, and other erosional forces as well. Vegetation also acts as a filter for surface runoff.

When a shoreline is altered it can negatively affect aquatic habitat, potentially altering the ability for some species to survive. When you build / install your seasonal or temporary dock or boat lift you can help protect aquatic habitat in your lake or river by choosing low impact materials, designs, and locations for these structures. To reduce potential impacts to shorelines, consider using one of these low impact dock and boat lift options:

- floating docks
- post-supported or wheeled docks
- cantilevered docks
- post or wheel supported boat lifts

These types of designs are preferred over permanent structures such as rock filled crib docks, metal sheeting, or concrete structures because they don't cover benthic (bottom) habitat, or alter shoreline water movements. Temporary structures, because they are removed at the end of the open water season, are less likely to be damaged by ice movement during ice break-up in the spring. The document titled "The Dock Primer" by Fisheries and Oceans Canada provides further fish friendly information on dock designs (<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/337921.pdf>).

Most shorelines, which include the bed, bank and boundary of the water body in Saskatchewan, are Crown lands and are protected under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act*, 2010 (EMPA). (See the Water Security Agency Information Sheet titled "Shoreline Development" for more information.) Under EMPA any person planning work in or near a water body or watercourse, must contact the Water Security Agency to:

- alter the bed, bank or boundary of a water body or watercourse,
- remove or add material to the bed, bank or boundary of a water body or watercourse, or
- remove vegetation from the bed, bank or boundary of a water body or watercourse.

A permit from the Water Security Agency (WSA) is required for the construction or removal of a permanent dock (e.g., a crib dock), or boat lift (i.e. a structure that will be left in the water body after freeze-up); or for the construction of a structure that is attached, though permanent anchoring systems, driven post/piles, or other permanent anchoring systems to the bed, bank or boundary of a water body.

Also be aware that work proposed within municipal lands requires consent from the appropriate authority such as the Rural Municipality, Village or District. This includes, but is not limited to, work proposed on land designated as Municipal Reserve, Public Reserve, Environmental Reserves or municipal road allowance. Works proposed within Crown lands, such as Provincial Parks may require consent or a permit, please contact the Crown land administrator for more information.

Best Management Practices to Protect Aquatic Habitat When Building your Dock or Boat Lift

- A dock / boat lift must not block public access along the bed, bank or boundary (also known as beach or foreshore) of the water body.
- A dock / boat lift must not excessively obstruct navigation, or enclose or isolate any part of the water body.
- All docks must be oriented at right angles (i.e., 90°) to the general trend of the shoreline.
- In-water activities must not occur during local fish spawning and nursery periods since it could disturb spawning behavior, smother eggs with sediment, and kill young fish.
- A dock / boat lift must not block the free flow of water, or have any features such as steel sheeting, concrete or any other skirting that trap or accumulate aquatic plants or sediment.
- A dock must not enclose or isolate any part of a water body or watercourse.

If you are installing a temporary/ seasonal: floating dock, post dock, or a cantilever dock, or a post or wheel supported lift and you can meet all of the following conditions, then you do not need to apply to the WSA for an Aquatic Habitat Protection Permit:

- The configuration of the bank or bed of the water body or watercourse shall not be altered: sand, gravel, rock or other material from within the bank shall not be removed or added.
 - To create a more stable footing for the dock or boat lift, a few rocks, or woody debris may be moved (by hand) outside of the footprint of your dock or boat lift, but they must be relocated to a nearby area, at a similar depth from which they were originally taken. These materials must not be removed from the water body or watercourse.
- Your project must not involve in-water excavation or dredging, and should avoid covering aquatic vegetation.
- All in-water work must be performed by hand.
- Operate machinery only on land and in a manner that minimizes disturbance to the banks of the watercourse.
- Your temporary dock or boat lift shall not have a solid bottom (e.g., metal or pre-cast concrete pad) to support the dock or boat lift.
- Temporary boat docks or boat lifts shall be removed prior to freeze-up each year.
- Storage of docks and boat lifts must occur on the owner's property, or property where storage of the dock or boat lift has been deemed to be acceptable by the land owner.
- Any disturbance of the shoreline or lake bottom that occurs during dock placement, installation or removal will be minimal.
- All debris encountered during the dock or boat lift installation must be removed and disposed of appropriately so that they cannot re-enter any watercourse. This includes materials such as garbage, tires, or other debris.

Protect Water Quality

- Use acceptable construction materials for docks and boat lifts such as aluminum, untreated wood, or wood that has only been treated with compounds that are safe for use in water.
 - Preservative materials no longer acceptable for use in water include creosote, pentachloro-phenol (PCP) and other organic wood preservatives banned in Canada.
 - The use of old railroads ties, oil drums and other materials that may leach chemicals into the water body must not be used.

You must apply for an Aquatic Habitat Protection Permit from WSA if you are planning any one the following:

- The installation or removal of a permanent dock such as a crib dock, concrete, or sheet metal dock etc.
- The installation of a community boat dock or marina.
- The removal of aquatic vegetation.
- Creating an access trail to the boat dock which will require the removal of riparian vegetation.
- Any alteration of the bed, bank or boundary of a shoreline.
- Dredging of the bed of the water body or watercourse.

Please ensure all persons working on the dock or boat lift are aware of the requirements of this Dock/Boat Lift Checklist and that you have obtained copies of all other required permits (Municipal, District, Village, etc.) before installing the dock or boat lift. The project proponent (the person owning the project) must also respect all municipal, provincial, and federal legislation (e.g., Fisheries and Oceans Canada) that applies to the work being carried out. Please contact WSA if you have further questions, or if your project cannot meet the requirements of this Temporary Dock Checklist.

Contact Information:

Water Security Agency, Aquatic Habitat Protection
420-2365 Albert Street
Regina, SK S4P 4K1
306.787-0726
<https://www.wsask.ca/Water-Programs/Aquatic-Habitat-Protection/>

Also Contact: Municipal authority or Provincial Park for your shoreline area as some have bylaws about dock placement within water bodies. The Ministry of Environment may require a Crown Land Disposition if your dock is located within Crown Resource Land visit <http://www.environment.gov.sk.ca/permits/> then click on Crown Land Disposition – Lease or Permit.

Definitions:

Bed: That portion of the water body typically (but not always) covered by water

Bank: The rising ground bordering a water body that serves to confine the water to a channel or bed

Boundary: The line or elevation contour surrounding a water body or watercourse where the aquatic vegetation and terrestrial plant species known to tolerate water saturated soils change entirely to terrestrial vegetation tolerating little or no soil saturation and includes a minimum surrounding area of five metres measured outward from the top of the bank.