

## Chapter NR 115

WISCONSIN'S SHORELAND MANAGEMENT  
PROGRAM

NR 115.01 Purpose	NR 115.05 Shoreland regulation standards and criteria
NR 115.02 Applicability	NR 115.06 Department duties
NR 115.03 Definitions	
NR 115.04 Severability	

**Note:** Chapter NR 115 as it existed on July 31, 1980 was repealed and a new chapter NR 115 was created effective August 1, 1980.

**NR 115.01 Purpose.** (1) Section 59.971, Stats., requires counties to adopt zoning and subdivision regulations for the protection of all shorelands in unincorporated areas by January 1, 1968, and provides that if the department of natural resources determines, after notice and hearing, that a county has not adopted a shoreland ordinance by January 1, 1968, or that a county has adopted an ordinance which fails to meet reasonable minimum standards in accomplishing the shoreland protection objectives found in s. 114.26, [144.26] Stats., the department is to adopt a shoreland ordinance to be administered by that county.

(2) Section 114.26, [144.26] Stats., provides that shoreland subdivision and zoning regulations shall: "further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions; prevent and control water pollution; protect spawning grounds, fish and aquatic life; control building sites, placement of structure and land uses and reserve shore cover and natural beauty."

(3) It is the responsibility of the department of natural resources, in the discharge of its mandate under ss. 59.971 and 144.26, Stats., to require adherence to specific standards and criteria for navigable water protection regulations and their administration. Section 144.26, Stats., provides that: "Such standards and criteria shall give particular attention to safe and healthful conditions for the enjoyment of aquatic recreation; the demands of water traffic, boating and water sports; the capability of the water resource; requirements necessary to assure proper operation of septic tank disposal fields near navigable waters; building setbacks from the water; preservation of shore growth and cover; conservancy uses for low lying lands; shoreland layout for residential and commercial development; suggested regulations and suggestions for the effective administration and enforcement of such regulations."

**History:** Cr. Register, July, 1980, No. 295, eff. 8-1-80.

**NR 115.02 Applicability.** The provisions of this chapter are applicable to county regulation of the use and development of unincorporated shoreland areas. Unless specifically exempted by law, all cities, villages, towns, counties and, when s. 13.48 (13), Stats., applies, state agencies are required to comply with, and obtain all necessary permits under, local shoreland ordinances. The construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair of state highways and bridges, carried out under the direction and supervision of the Wisconsin department of transporta-

tion, are not subject to local shoreland zoning ordinances, if s. 30.12(4) (a), Stats., applies.

**History:** Cr. Register, July, 1980, No. 295, eff. 8-1-80; am. Register, October, 1980, No. 298, eff. 11-1-80.

**NR 115.03 Definitions.** For the purpose of this chapter:

(1) "Boathouse" means a permanent structure used for the storage of watercraft and associated materials and includes all structures which are totally enclosed, have roofs or walls or any combination of these structural parts.

(2) "County zoning agency" means that committee or commission created or designated by the county board under s. 59.97(2) (a), Stats., to act in all matters pertaining to county planning and zoning.

(3) "Department" means the department of natural resources.

(4) "Flood plain" means the land which has been or may be hereafter covered by flood water during the regional flood. The flood plain includes the floodway and the flood fringe as those terms are defined in chapter NR 116, Wis. Adm. Code.

(5) "Navigable waters" means Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, all natural inland lakes within Wisconsin and all streams, ponds, sloughs, flowages and other waters within the territorial limits of this state, including the Wisconsin portion of boundary waters, which are navigable under the laws of this state. Under s. 144.26(2) (d), Stats., notwithstanding any other provision of law or administrative rule promulgated thereunder, shoreland ordinances required under s. 59.971, Stats., and this chapter do not apply to lands adjacent to farm drainage ditches if:

(a) Such lands are not adjacent to a natural navigable stream or river;

(b) Those parts of such drainage ditches adjacent to such lands were nonnavigable streams before ditching or had no previous stream history; and

(c) Such lands are maintained in nonstructural agricultural use.

**Note:** In *Muench v. Public Service Commission*, 261 Wis. 492 (1952), the Wisconsin Supreme Court held that a stream is navigable in fact if it is capable of floating any boat, skiff, or canoe, of the shallowest draft used for recreational purposes. In *DeGayner and Co., Inc. v. Department of Natural Resources*, 70 Wis. 2d 936 (1975), the court also held that a stream need not be navigable in its normal or natural condition to be navigable in fact. The *DeGayner* opinion indicates that it is proper to consider artificial conditions, such as beaver dams, where such conditions have existed long enough to make a stream useful as a highway for recreation or commerce, and to consider ordinarily recurring seasonal fluctuations, such as spring floods, in determining the navigability of a stream.

(6) "Ordinary high-water mark" means the point on the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of surface water is so continuous as to leave a distinctive mark such as by erosion, destruction or prevention of terrestrial vegetation, predominance of aquatic vegetation, or other easily recognized characteristic. Where the bank or shore at any particular place is of such character that it is difficult or impossible to ascertain where the point of ordinary high-water mark is, recourse may be had to the opposite bank of a stream or to other places on the shore of a lake or flowage to determine whether a given stage of water is above or below the ordinary high-water mark.