



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Shoreline violations on the rise along Great Lakes

DETROIT- The Detroit District is seeing a rising trend this summer in unpermitted shoreline structures and grading along the Great Lakes. The district is encouraging waterfront property owners to understand the laws and regulations related to shoreline construction and discharge activities before they are undertaken.

“Permits are required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for structures and activities such as mechanized vegetation removal, path construction, and grading,” said Don Reinke, chief of the Detroit District’s Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement Branch. “If shoreline property owners contact our office, we can advise them on the process.”

Detroit District has general permits in place for activities that result in minimal affects, such as piers, hoists, sand paths, and grooming of unvegetated areas, added Reinke.

Per Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, work in navigable waters of the United States, including discharges of dredged and/or fill material, requires prior authorization from the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps’ regulatory jurisdiction in navigable waters extends to a point on the shore known as the ordinary high water mark (OHWM). Per Corps regulations, the OHWM is the line on the shore established by fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, presence of litter or debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas.

The Great Lakes are very dynamic bodies of water and changing water elevations, storm events, ice scour, and human actions leave physical marks on the shoreline that cannot be conclusively attributed to effect of ordinary high waters. As such, the Corps uses the intersection of established elevation contours on the shoreline as OHWMs on the Great Lakes.

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For example, in Lakes Huron and Michigan, the OHWM is the line on the shore coincident with the 581.5 feet (International Great Lakes Datum, 1985) elevation contour. Work water ward of the 581.5 foot elevation contour requires Corps authorization.

On many Great Lakes properties, the OHWM intersects shore protection such as a sheet steel bulkhead or riprap. Work waterward of the bulkhead or riprap falls under the Corps regulatory jurisdiction.

For more information on the Corps' regulatory mission, please visit: <http://www.lre.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory-Program-and-Permits/> or call Don Reinke at 313-226-6812.

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Detroit District has general permits in place for activities that result in minimal affects, such as piers, hoists, sand paths, and grooming of unvegetated areas. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo)

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