

Residential Docks, Structures, & Watercraft

Lake Minnetonka



Lake Minnetonka is a great natural resource. The Lake Minnetonka Conservation District (LMCD) manages lake use to preserve the Lake, promote safety, and enhance the experience of all Lake enthusiasts. A summary of the regulations regarding docks, structures and watercraft is provided as a guide for residents, realtors, and installers. Following these standards will minimize the impact to the lake and shoreline, while promoting positive neighbor relations. Please view the complete LMCD codes or contact the LMCD for information about unique situations.

Permits/Licenses

Annual permits/licenses are generally not required for single family residential properties. However, there are some situations where a permit or license is required as listed below:

- License to store five or more watercraft, under certain circumstances allowed by code. Examples include residential properties with or sharing 226 feet or more of 929.4 OHW shoreline, homeowner associations, shared docks, etc.
- Permit for installation of permanent docks, installed using machine driven pilings.
- Permit for dock extension during declared Low Water Conditions.
- Nonconforming use permit for docks/moorings in existence since 05/03/1978.

Variances

A variance from the code may be requested by a property owner if a practical difficulty exists such as conflicting dock use areas or shallow water. Variances should be registered with the County property records since they are conditions on the property. In many situations, property owners work with each other to adjust side setbacks and avoid the need for variances. (LMCD code 1.07)

Location (Authorized Dock Use Area)

Docks, structures, and watercraft must be located within an authorized Dock Use Area, determined by setbacks from the extended side property lines and length into the lake. The *Dock Use Area Illustration* provides an example of a typical dock use area. A neighboring property owner may allow the dock and watercraft to encroach into the side setbacks. As indicated below, some uses are grandfathered if the property/site has not been replatted, subdivided, combined or otherwise changed since a certain date. For unusual lots or shoreline, contact the LMCD to determine the Dock Use Area.

Dock Length

Shoreline	Feet
Equal to shoreline	Up to 100 ft
40 to 60 ft and in existence on 02/05/1970	60 ft
40 ft or less	First reach to 4 ft water depth or 60 ft

Side Setbacks

Condition	Feet
Dock length 0-50 ft	10 ft
Dock length 50-100 ft	15 ft
Shoreline 50 ft or less; if in existence on 2/02/1970	5 ft
Slip opens into adjacent property (side opening)	Depth of slip; min. 20 ft
Canopy fabric exceeding 30 inches vertically	20 ft

Finding the Lines

929.4 Ft Ordinary High Water Line (OHW)

The 929.4 OHW may be different from the shoreline depending on the water level in the lake. When a site survey is required, the 929.4 OHW measurement should be specifically requested. This is the basis of dock and storage requirements. The Lake water level can be found at www.minnehahacreek.org.

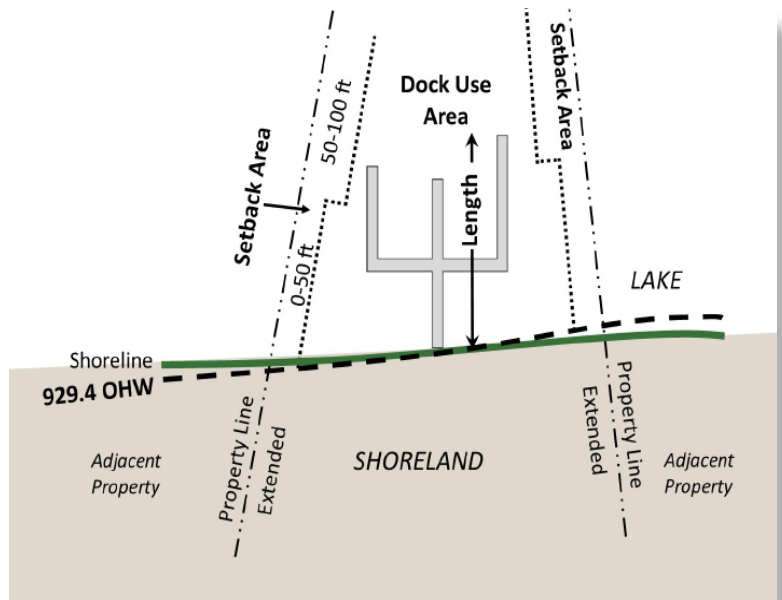
Extended Side Property Lines

First, be sure you own or have rights to the shoreline. When needed, a property survey will indicate the side property lines. If a survey is not available, property markers/stakes may exist and can be used to determine the side property line. The extended side property line is when the side property line on land is extended into the lake. This is important in determining the required setbacks from adjacent properties. In cases where the property is curved or unusual, the LMCD will help determine the extended side property lines.

Watercraft Types and Density

The number of watercraft (called restricted) that can be stored at a property is based on the measurement of the shoreline at the 929.4 OHW. This includes personal watercraft, runabouts, cruisers, pontoons, fishing boats and similar. The following watercraft (unrestricted) are not included in watercraft density calculations if not stored on the water or lift:

- 16 ft or less in length without a motor
- 16 ft or less with a motor 10 hp or less (manufacturer specs and regardless if operational)
- 20 ft or less without a motor and propelled solely by human power. Ex. Canoe, kayak



Dock Use Area Illustration- Not to Scale

Watercraft Density Calculations

The number of watercraft that can be stored at a property site is determined as follows:

- 1) 1 per 50 ft of continuous shoreline regardless of ownership (1:50 ft Rule)
- 2) 2 if the site was in existence on 08/30/1978 regardless of ownership (more if allowed by the 1:50 ft Rule)
- 3) Any property may have up to 4 if all the following conditions are met:
 - i) single family residence, legally subdivided and adjoined to shoreline property,
 - ii) exclusive dockage use by site's owner,
 - iii) all restricted watercraft owned by and registered to persons living on site.
- 4) 5 or more by obtaining a license



Boat Lifts

Boat lifts may be used as long as they fit within the authorized dock use area and meet any existing variances. An overhead, fabric cover that is an integral part of a boat lift is not a canopy if the vertical height of the fabric cover does not exceed 30 inches.

Docks, Decks, and Platforms

Docks, decks, and platforms may exceed 8 feet in length or width, but not both. Ex. 8 ft x 12 ft, but not 9 ft by 12 ft. Docks moved between lakes or waterbodies must be dried out for 21 days to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Permits are required. Visit the MN DNR website for more information.

Additional Resources

- **Land Use.** Cities may have additional regulations for docks, land uses, structures, storage, rental properties, business operations, and similar.
- **Shoreline Improvements & Dredging.** Minnehaha Creek Watershed District regulates shoreline stabilization, shoreland landscaping, wetlands, and dredging. www.minnehahacreek.org
- **Aquatic Plant Management.** MN Department Natural Resources regulates and permits mechanical or chemical aquatic plant management. www.dnr.state.mn.us/apm
- **Master Water Stewards.** Freshwater Society certifies citizens equipped to help optimize your shoreline to improve the health of the water. www.freshwater.org

More Information

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This information is provided as a guide. For specific project requirements, please refer to LMCD Code Ch.2.01, 2.02 and other sections, available on the LMCD website.