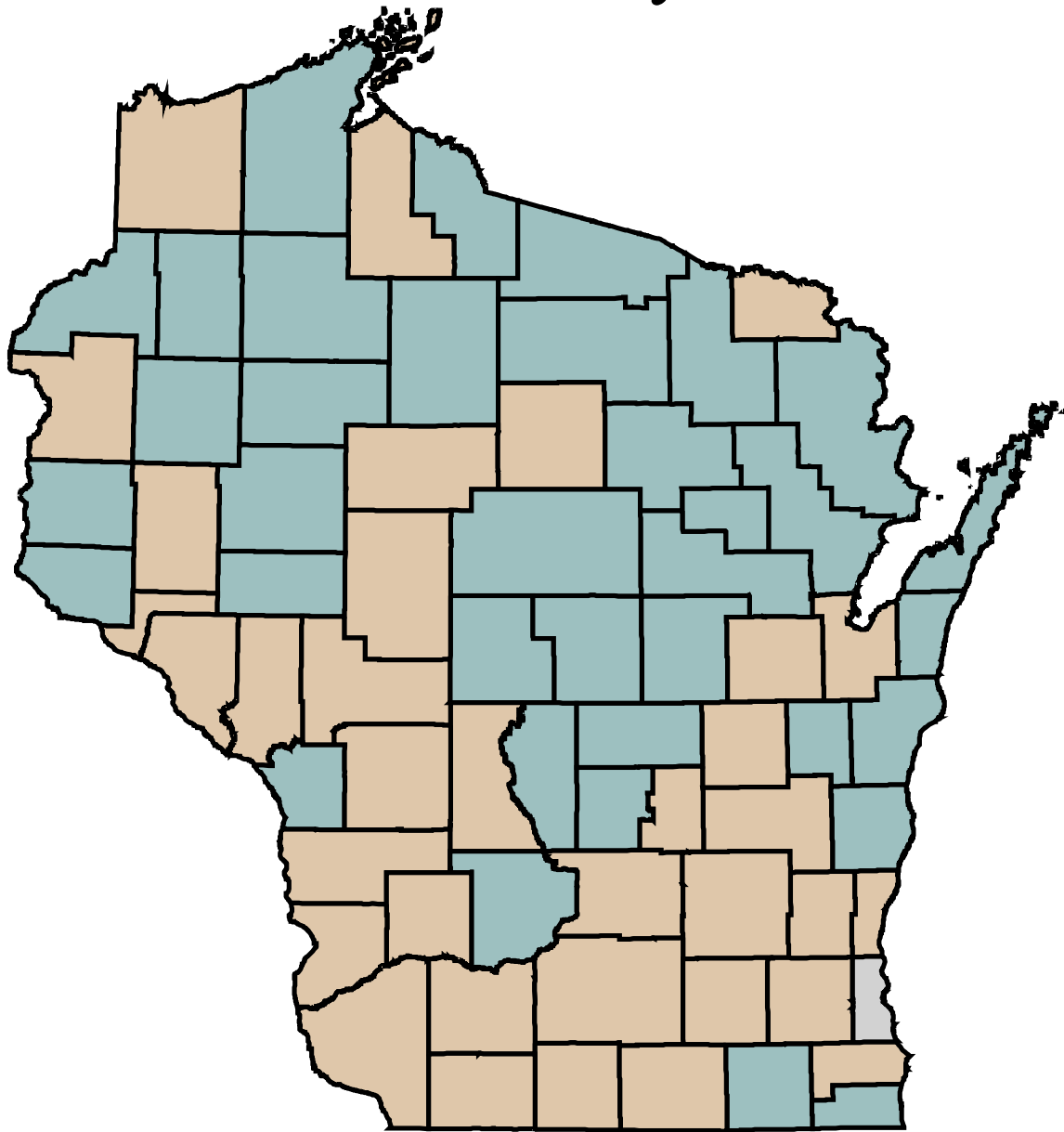


# Shoreland Walkway Standards



County is not regulated under NR 115.



County does not have special provisions for walkways beyond conventional erosion prevention standards.



County has adopted special provisions for walkways, such as width, landing size, and/or construction restrictions.

For more information, contact Carmen Wagner,  
WI DNR, Shoreland Zoning Specialist, 608-267-7694.



May 22, 2000

Bureau of Watershed Management

# ***Shoreland Walkway Issue Summary***

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## ***MANAGEMENT RATIONALE***

Providing guidelines for walkways and paths is a critical component in the preservation of shoreline buffer functions. It may not seem important at first, but regulating traffic corridors, whether pedestrian or vehicular, provides the opportunity to:

- manage the amount of impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff on a site,
- minimize disruption of habitat corridors for wildlife,
- limit erosion during and after construction, and
- diminish visual intrusions into the shoreline buffer area.

## ***MINIMUM STATEWIDE STANDARDS***

Stairways, elevated walkways and lifts, which are essential to access the shoreline may be allowed in the 75 foot shoreline structure setback. Chapter NR 115, Wis. Admin. Code, does not specifically exempt these structures; however, the DNR has taken the position through program guidance that these structures are permissible when essential for riparian access. Counties have drafted ordinances which clearly outline when these structures are permitted, and how they are to be constructed. Some counties also have provisions governing the construction of paths or trails in the shoreline buffer area.

## ***RELATED RESEARCH***

The related research under Shoreline Vegetation Protection in Chapter 10 applies since shoreland walkways limit the ability of the shoreline buffer to perform its vital functions in protecting lakes and streams.

## ***MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES - STAIRS, ELEVATED WALKWAYS AND LIFTS***

These structures are permitted within the shoreline setback only when the structures are necessary to access the shoreline because of steep slopes or wet, unstable soils. The site selected for the structure must also be chosen with care to minimize land disturbance, avoid environmentally sensitive areas and provide an inconspicuous setting for the structure. Generally counties also require there be no other suitable locations for water access available on the property.

Beyond siting the structure, it is common for counties to place dimensional standards on the stairway or elevated walkway, including standards for width, landings and railings. Most counties prohibit roofs, canopies and permanent furniture.

Nearly all of the ordinances state that walkways shall be constructed to effectively control erosion. This concept is explicitly extended to stairs by a number of counties that state that stairs must be elevated, not excavated.

Several counties also require the structures to “blend into the shoreline”. This may consist of using natural or earth-toned building materials, preserving the natural vegetation or installing native plant material as a screen.

### ***MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES - PATHS***

Several counties have established standards for paths or trails to limit their impacts on water quality and natural scenic beauty. A common requirement is paths must be constructed of permeable material to allow infiltration of water, limiting the amount of runoff generated on a site. Many counties also limit the width of paths.

### ***CONSIDERATIONS***

- Consider requirements for path dimensions and materials to limit stormwater runoff.
- Consider developing dimensional standards for width, landings and railings.
- Consider whether to require the use of natural or earth-tone building materials for walkways and stairs so they are not visually intrusive.
- Determine whether to require that all stairways be elevated, thus avoiding the increased land disturbance and erosion from excavated stairways.

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Abbreviations used in the following table are:

Construct. = Construction  
CUP = Conditional use permit  
Elev. = Elevated  
Environ. = Environmentally  
Inconspic. = Inconspicuous  
Max. = Maximum  
Min. = Minimum  
Nat. = Natural  
Req. = Require  
s.f. = Square feet  
VAC = Viewing Access Corridor  
WL = White Lake

# Shoreland Walkway Standards

<i>County</i>	<i>Walkways</i>
Adams	Stairs/walk essential to access. Max. 4' wide. Rails/landings (max. 40 s.f.) for safety. Inconspicuous. Stair on footings.
Ashland	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Barron	Construct or surface paths/steps to control erosion & look natural. Steps max. 3' above ground level. Max. 4' x 4' landing.
Bayfield	Permitted if necessary for access because steep slopes or wet, unstable soils. Max. 4' wide. On footings or piles.
Brown	Any path or road w/i 35' buffer shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion. Stairs exempt if for access.
Buffalo	Any path or road w/i 35' buffer shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Burnett	For access only. Max. 4' wide. Railings & landings (max. 40 s.f.) ok for safety. No roofs/canopies. Inconspicuous color.
Calumet	Exempt from setback if essential for access. Max. 4' wide. Landings max. 40 s.f. Minimize soil & vegetation disturbance.
Chippewa	Max. 4' wide. Landings max 64 s.f. Necessary for access due to steep slopes or wet, unstable soil. Req. footings or piles. Visually inconspicuous.
Clark	Any path or road w/i 35' buffer shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Columbia	Any path or road w/i 35' buffer shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Crawford	Any path or road w/i 35' buffer shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Dane	Any path or road w/i 35' strip shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Dodge	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Door	Stairs & elev. walk if essential to shore access w/ no roof, canopies, or solid railings & max. 4' wide. Landings max. 32 s.f.
Douglas	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Dunn	Any path or road w/i 35' buffer shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Eau Claire	Max. 48" wide. Stair landings max. 40 s.f. & must be separated by min. 10' horizontally. No benches, roofs, tables, etc.
Florence	Any path or road w/i 35' buffer shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Fond du Lac	Any path or road w/i 35' strip shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Forest	Max. 4' wide. Paths must be of permeable surfacing. Walks & stairs for access only & must be screened, no roofs, railing if req. for safety.
Grant	Any path or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Green	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Green Lake	Any path or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Iowa	Any path or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Iron	Stairs/walk essential to access. Avoid environ. sensitive areas. Max. 4' wide. Rails/landings for safety. Inconspicuous.
Jackson	Paths w/i protection area must be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.

<b><i>County</i></b>	<b><i>Walkways</i></b>
Jefferson	Any path or road w/i the strip shall be constructed & surfaced to effectively control erosion.
Juneau	Construct & surface any path or road to effectively control erosion when created for purpose of clear cutting w/i 35' area.
Kenosha	Max. 10' wide. Design & construct to result in minimal disruption & removal of shoreland cover & impairment of nat. beauty.
Kewaunee	Necessary for access. Max. 42" wide. Railing & landings (max. 25 s.f.) for safety. Elevate, not excavate. Inconspicuous.
La Crosse	1 stairway or lift, unless stairs existing. Visually inconspicuous. Max. 4' wide. Landings max. 40 s.f. for safety.
Lafayette	Any paths or roads w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced as to be effective in controlling erosion.
Langlade	In VAC unless site conditions prevent. Max. 4' wide. Screened from view & natural colors. Railings only if essential for safety.
Lincoln	Any paths or roads w/i strip shall be constructed & surfaced as to be effective in controlling erosion.
Manitowoc	Walks & stairs essential to access locate to minimize earth moving, max. 42" wide & open railings max. 42" tall for safety.
Marathon	1 walkway of non-erodible materials (not on steep slopes) or 1 elevated walkway max. 4' wide.
Marinette	Req. permit. Essential to access. Max. 4' wide & 40 s.f. landings. Visually inconspic. & avoid environ. sensitive areas.
Marquette	Stairs, walks & lifts for access. Stairs & railing to be <4' wide & landings max. 40 s.f. CUP for benches, roofs, etc.
Menominee	Essential to access. Max. 4' wide. Steps on slopes >10%. 1 landing max. 80 s.f. Not above grade. Surface water permeable
Monroe	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Oconto	Cannot be a paved surface.
Oneida	CUP if steep, rocky, saturated or unstable soils. Max. 4' wide. Landings for safety. Inconspic. site & natural materials.
Outagamie	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Ozaukee	Any path or road w/i 35' strip shall be constructed & surfaced as to effectively control erosion.
Pepin	Any path or road w/i 35' strip shall be constructed & surfaced as to effectively control erosion.
Pierce	Essential to access shore. Max. 4' wide & landings max. 32 s.f. No canopies, roofs or closed railings.
Polk	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Portage	Walks allowed w/i shore setback to access bldg. Max. 60" wide. Elevate stairs, not excavate. No attached seats, tables.
Price	Max. 5' wide. Blend into shore. Avoid sensitive areas. Don't remove stabilizing veget. & screen w/ native non-invas. veget.
Racine	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Richland	Any path or road w/i 35' strip shall be constructed & surfaced as to effectively control erosion.
Rock	Any path or road w/i 35' strip shall be constructed & surfaced as to effectively control erosion.
Rusk	Exempt from setback if necessary for access. Area of landings & landward pier max. 128 s.f. Single landing max. 36 s.f.
St. Croix	Any path or road w/i 35' area construct & surface so as to effectively control erosion. In. SC, max. 3' wide stairs.

<b><i>County</i></b>	<b><i>Walkways</i></b>
Sauk	Essential to access. Max. 4' wide. Lift platform max. 40 s.f. Landings for safety & max. 32 s.f. No roofs or canopies.
Sawyer	Max. 4' wide. Visually inconspicuous. Railings & landings for safety. Max. landing 4' x 4'. Decks prohibited.
Shawano	Construct & surface path or road w/ 35' area to control erosion. On WL, ped. access to shore in VAC.
Sheboygan	Access essential. Minimize earth disturbance & vegetation removal. Max. 4' wide. Open railings for safety. No roofs.
Taylor	Any path or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced so as to effectively control erosion.
Trempealeau	Any path or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced so as to effectively control erosion.
Vernon	Any path or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced so as to effectively control erosion.
Vilas	1 unpaved path to shore or w/i 35' OHWM. Max. 6' wide. Natural materials & screen from view. Access stairs max. 4' wide.
Walworth	Max. 48" wide. Construct to minimize removal & disruption of nat. ground cover & minimize impairment of nat. beauty. Paths & trails max. 10' wide.
Washburn	1 path in VAC. Max. 4' wide. Blend w/ nat. ground cover. Min. construct. Elevated only if needed due to soil, slope, etc.
Washington	Any path, passage or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced so as to effectively control erosion.
Waukesha	Any path or road w/i 35' area shall be constructed & surfaced so as to effectively control erosion.
Waupaca	Confined to VAC. May be elevated if (1) essential due to slopes or soil, (2)min. construct. for access, (3)max. 4' wide.
Waushara	Access essential. Max. 60" wide. No attached benches, tables, etc. No roof or canopy. Landing for safety & max. 40 s.f.
Winnebago	Not addressed in county's shoreland zoning ordinance.
Wood	Max. 60" wide. Attached benches, seats, tables etc. prohibited. Elevate stairs, not excavate. Visually inconspicuous.

# ***Shoreland Walkway Ordinance Language***

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## ***BURNETT COUNTY***

**4.4 (1) (d) STAIRS AND WALKWAYS:** Stairways and elevated walkways are a permitted use exempt from the shoreline setback requirements provided:

- (1) The structure is necessary to access the shoreline because of steep slopes or wet, unstable soils.
- (2) The structure shall be located so as to minimize earth disturbing activities and shoreline vegetation removal during construction and to be visually inconspicuous as viewed from the adjacent waterway and public thoroughfares.
- (3) The structure shall be no more than four (4) feet wide.
- (4) Structures shall be inconspicuously colored.
- (5) Railings are permitted only where required by safety concerns.
- (6) Canopies and roofs on such structures are prohibited.
- (7) Stairways shall be supported on piles or footings. Other construction methods such as steps excavated into the slope may be permitted and will require plan and site review.
- (8) One landing for stairways or docks are permitted only where required by safety concerns and shall not exceed 40 square feet in area.
- (9) All structures, stairways, and landings will be reviewed and approved by the county zoning administrator and may require review by the county land conservationist and will meet approved best management practices.

## ***DOOR COUNTY***

**3.07 (3) Exemptions.** The following structures are permitted within the required setback from navigable water, provided they do not violate any other provision of this ordinance.

\* \* \*

(c) Stairways, elevated walkways, and lifts which are essential to access the shoreline, provided such items contain no canopies, roofs, or closed railings and do not

exceed 4 feet in width. Landings shall be allowed, provided such landings shall not exceed 32 square feet in area.

## ***EAU CLAIRE COUNTY***

18.19.070 C. Removable piers and docks, open stairways, boat tracks, boat shelters, bridges and walkways are exempt from setback requirements. Steps, landings, and walkways shall not exceed 48 inches in width. Landings on a stairway cannot exceed 40 square feet in area and must be separated a minimum of 10 feet horizontally. Canopies, roofs, benches, seats, and tables are prohibited.

## ***FOREST COUNTY***

### **5.21.2 Paths**

Any path or passage within the 35-foot strip shall be constructed to a minimum necessary no greater than four feet in width and be of a permeable surface so as to effectively control erosion.

## ***KEWAUNEE COUNTY***

### **5.25 STAIRWAYS, WALKWAYS, PIERS AND WHARVES**

(1) Stairways and walkways and that portion of piers and wharves landward of the ordinary high water mark are exempted from the shoreland setback requirements provided that the structure is necessary to access the shoreline because of steep slopes, or wet, unstable soils;

(2) Further, the structure shall be located so as to minimize earth disturbing activities and shoreland vegetation removal during construction and to be visually inconspicuous and screened by vegetation as viewed from the adjacent waterway and public thoroughfares;

(3) The structures shall be no more than 42 inches wide; open railings are permitted only where required by safety concerning; canopies, roofs, and closed railings/walls on such structures are prohibited;

(4) Stairways shall be supported on piles or footings rather than being excavated from erodible soils on steep slopes or a bluff face; and

(5) Landings for stairways or docks are permitted only where required by safety concerns and shall not exceed 25 square feet in area.



(6) Stairways attached to the principal building and extending less than 6 feet from the wall shall be exempt from the ordinary highwater mark setback requirements

## ***MENOMINEE COUNTY***

### **22.51 Exceptions To Water Setback Requirements.**

\* \* \*

- C. Pedestrian walkways essential to access the shore because of steep slopes, slippery or wet soil conditions, provided that:
1. The walkway does not exceed four (4) feet in width,
  2. The slope does not exceed ten percent (10 %). Slopes greater than ten percent (10%) shall require steps,
  3. One (1) level landing area with a maximum of eighty (80) square feet may be incorporated into the walkway,
  4. The walkway and/or land area shall not extend above the surrounding grade.
  5. Permanent (cannot be easily removed by two people): canopies, roofs, benches, seats and tables are not permitted.
  6. The surface shall be water permeable. (i.e. gravel, paving brick or patio block with sand joints) Solid surfaces such as concrete or blacktop are not permitted.

## ***PRICE COUNTY***

### **5.4 STAIRWAYS, WALKWAYS AND LIFTS**

The Zoning Administrator may permit a stairway, walkway or lift in the shoreland setback area only when it is essential to provide pedestrian access to a legally permitted pier, boat hoist or boathouse because of steep slopes, rocky or wet, unstable soils, and when the following conditions are met:

- a. There are no other locations or facilities on the property which allow adequate access to a pier, boat hoist or boathouse. Only one stairway or lift is allowed, not both, except when there is an existing stairway and the lift will be mounted.
- b. Such structures shall be placed on the most visually inconspicuous route to the shoreline and avoid environmentally sensitive areas.
- c. Vegetation which stabilizes slopes or screens structural development from view shall not be removed.
- d. Structures shall be painted so as to blend into the natural features of the shoreline and screened by native, non-invasive vegetation so as to be inconspicuous when viewed against the shoreline.

- e. Canopies, roofs and sides are prohibited. Open railings may be provided where required for safety.
- f. A maximum width of five (5) feet (outside dimensions) is allowed for stairways, walkways and lifts.
- g. Landings are allowed where required for safety purposes and shall not exceed 40 square feet. Attached benches, seats, tables, etc. are prohibited.
- h. Stairways, walkways and lifts shall be supported on piles or footings. Any fillings, grading or excavation that is proposed must meet the requirements of section 7 of this ordinance.

# *Shoreland Walkway Resources*

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## ***PRESENTATIONS***

**Keeping Our Shores, Shoreland Best Management Practices.** (March 1996) Video introduces and explains activities called best management practices, or BMPs, that shoreland owners can use to protect the water quality in their lake or river. Uses actors and guest experts to stress easy and inexpensive BMPs that property owners can adopt to make a difference in water quality. Highlights the importance of shoreline filter strips, proper septic maintenance, and appropriate lawn care practices to protect water quality, ensure safe recreational use, and maintain property values. Available for \$15.00 from University of Minnesota – Extension, (800) 876-8636.

**The Living Shore.** (17 min., 1998). Video explains the importance of leaving a natural “buffer zone” between lakes and lake owners’ dwellings. It also provides information on selecting and planting shoreline plants. It is available from Wisconsin Association of Lakes, (800) 542-5253 for \$15.00 plus \$2.00 shipping. It also available at many public libraries.

## ***EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS***

**Developing Shoreland Landscapes and Construction Activities.** (4 pp., March 1996). Fact sheet describes issues to consider when landscaping a shoreland lot. Available from Minnesota Extension Service at 109 Washburn Hall, 2305 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Duluth, MN, 55812-7512 or phoning (218) 726-7512.

**Land Disturbance Management and Impervious Surface Area Standards.** (2 pp., February 1999). Fact sheet explains how land disturbance and impervious surfaces impact shoreland buffer functions and water quality. Available from Wisconsin Association of Lakes, (800) 542-5253 or UWEX, Stevens Point at (715) 346-2116. Ask for fact sheet #7 of the Shoreland Management and Lake Classification Series.

**Minimizing Runoff from Shoreland Property: Shoreland Best Management Practices.** (4 pp., March 1996). Fact sheet describes Best Management Practices (BMPs) that can be used on shoreland properties to protect and preserve surface water quality as well as preserve the natural characteristics of a property. Available from Minnesota Extension Service at 109 Washburn Hall, 2305 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Duluth, MN, 55812-7512 or phoning (218) 726-7512.