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Department of Natural Resources Deep Creek Lake Natural Resources Management Area

Guidelines for Special Permits and Conservation Easement Alterations

The following guidelines are provided to assist you in preparing an application for alterations or improvements to the State owned Buffer Strip. These are general guidelines only. Special Permits are dependant upon the site limitations, public safety considerations and the need to protect the environmental integrity and health of Deep Creek Lake.

If you want to alter property subject to a Deed of Conservation Easement (Buydown), these guidelines help explain what may be allowed on your land. For additional information about allowable uses of that property, refer to the Deed of Conservation Easement.

General Conditions:

- Any alteration or improvement must:
 - Occur within the area of use of the Permit holder.
 - Allow for public access across the Buffer Strip.
 - Be non-permanent.
 - Be installed, maintained and removed with minimum disturbance to the land, trees and vegetation.
 - Be located at least 20 feet upland from the high water mark. Stairs to the dock are the exception to this guideline.
- Concrete is not permitted.
- The high water mark (HWM) is at 2462 feet above sea level and is where the water meets the shoreline when the lake is at full pool.
- Permit holders are responsible for all costs of permits and improvements.

Structures – Decks, Sheds, Gazebos and Similar Structures:

- The maximum permissible size is 120 square feet.
- Non-permanent installation is required. Structures must be easy to remove.
- A setback of at least 20 feet from the 2462 ft. lake elevation is required. Garret County setback requirements must be met on Conservation Easement property.
- Must be installed within the permittee's Conservation Easement or Buffer Strip area of use.
- Must be constructed of natural wood or manufactured materials that appear natural and are earth toned in color.
- The maximum permissible height is 12 feet.

- May not restrict the public's access across or use of the Buffer Strip.

Stairs/Walkways:

- The maximum width is 4 feet.
- Must be constructed of non-permanent materials.
- Landscape tie and stone borders are acceptable with pathways of wood chips, gravel or paving stones.
- Must follow the path of least disturbance and be located or laid out to preserve trees and brush as much as possible.
- Absolutely no cutting of trees allowed to accommodate a pathway.
- The clearing of small vegetation for pathways is limited to a maximum width of 10 feet (5 feet either side of centerline of path) and to a maximum height of 10 feet.
- Lake Management staff determines the final location of the path.
- Steps must have a handrail on one side, and a landing every tenth step, and a break in the railing may be needed to provide for public access across the pathway.
- Stairs are permitted to assist in safe access and foot travel across Buffer Strip.
- Fences are not permitted.

Lights/Electrical Improvements:

- ***Inspections are required*** for electrical installations on the State owned buffer strip. Garrett County permit and inspection requirements must be met on Conservation Easement properties.
- All electrical improvements must be installed according to National Electric Code.
- Outside receptacles and circuits must be GFI protected.
- DNR recommends that above ground wiring be encased in conduit. (Wildlife chews through exposed wires.)
- One 12-foot tall post placed at least 20 feet from HWM may be permitted as a final (terminal) post for dock access illumination.
- All lights must be mounted on 4x4 or 6x6 treated posts or be a self supporting lighting fixture.
- The number of lights is to be kept to a minimum.
- The location of lights is limited to illuminating a pathway for dock access.
- Light fixtures must be shielded and the pool of light directed to the ground.
- Lights will not point towards the lake or other residences.
- Use of solar cells should be considered first.

Landscaping – Trees and vegetation:

- Only native plant species are approved for planting on Buffer Strip.
- Cutting or clearing of vegetation is ***not permitted*** except to provide access to approved dock facilities.
- No cutting or trimming of trees and vegetation is allowed to accommodate or improve a view to the lake.
- No cutting or clearing of vegetation in excess of 120 square feet to accommodate buildings, gazebos, decks etc. is allowed.
- The cutting of vegetation for building placement is limited to plants that are 3 ft. in height or less.

- No cutting or clearing of wetland areas, except for immediately alongside catwalks that traverse marshy areas.
- Wetland areas and/or environmentally sensitive sites must be left intact and undisturbed.

Play areas, playground equipment and swings/hammocks:

- Sand areas:
 - Maximum size: 20 feet x 20 feet or 400 square feet.
 - Permitted only on slopes that are 5% or less.
 - Placement of filter cloth under sand is required.
 - Must be enclosed with treated timbers and designed to prevent sand from moving out of area.
 - Sand or any other material may not be dumped or installed below the 2462 ft. elevation for play areas or a beach.
 - Must be located at least 20 ft above the high water mark (2462 ft. elevation).
- Swings and hammocks must have freestanding frame and may not be attached to trees with bolts or other hardware.
- Non-permanent installation of recreation facilities required.

Shoreline Erosion Control:

- Consult with Lake Management staff for guidance with this application process.
- An additional application to the Maryland Department of Environment is necessary to gain approval for shoreline erosion control measures - additional fees may be required.
- Bioengineering or increasing the rooted vegetation along the shoreline is the preferred shoreline erosion control measure – e.g. Native plants, live stakes, fascines, brush mattresses, fiber coil logs, etc.
- Rip rap walls may be considered if there is evidence of significant active erosion.
- Hand stacked stone or interlocking walls are only considered under extreme erosion circumstances.
- With a permit, a permittee may relocate unsafe rocks and stumps to facilitate safe dock location and swim sites at DNR Lake Management staff discretion.

Other Improvements:

- All other requests for improvements are evaluated on a case-by-case basis with specific emphasis given to safety and environmental protection.
- Fire Rings:
 - Must be made of stone, steel, or masonry.
 - Diameter across the inside of the ring must measure 3 ft. or less.
 - Small firewood stacks are for immediate use during the vacation season. Stacks must be kept tidy, away from the shoreline and used regularly. Long-term storage of firewood is not permitted on State land.

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