

Rock Lake, Lake Mills, WI

Waterfront Landowner Reference Guide

Rock Lake is one of our community's greatest natural assets. Fishing, swimming, boating, and enjoying the scenic beauty are all dependent on clean water and healthy shorelands. Wisconsin's zoning standards, implemented through regulations and permits, help protect these valuable resources by ensuring sustainable development. These zoning standards apply to the 75-foot strip of shoreland adjacent to the water's edge. The land within 35 feet is designated as the shoreland buffer where there are extensive restrictions. This document will guide you in making the right decisions to protect and maintain the natural beauty and health of this incredible community asset.



Rules governing Rock Lake and its shoreland are shared by multiple entities. Where you live determines who sets the rules on your shoreland. If you live in the City (generally the east side of the lake) the City determines the rules (see [City of Lake Mills](#) on page 2). Town residents (generally the West side) must follow the County regulations (see [Town of Lake Mills](#) on page 3). On both the north and south ends of the lake there is some overlap in jurisdiction. Activities on the water itself are ruled by the Town of Lake Mills and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The first step is understanding that the waterfront land you own is subject to shoreland zoning regulations and permits. You are required to follow these regulations and obtain the appropriate permits. As you begin thinking about what shoreland work you want to do, contact the City or County depending on where you live. They will help you understand the governing regulations. When you contact them, have an idea of the work you want to perform and be aware that detailed drawings may be necessary for zoning and permit determinations. Contacting them in your planning phase can save you time, money and potential remediation.

Keyword Definitions are on page 4

Additional information can be found at rocklake.org/shoreguide

City of Lake Mills

This information is an overview only. It does not include all rules. Additional restrictions apply.

Contact the City at [\(920\) 648-2344](tel:9206482344)

before commencing **any work within 75 feet of any water.**

Laws can be found under the "City Code" tab at ci.lake-mills.wi.us.

DNR aquatic plant permit information can be found here: dnr.wi.gov/lakes/plants/forms.

Aquatic Plant Control & Removal NOT in a Sensitive Area:

You may manually remove plant materials that have floated in and accumulated along the shore and rake rooted plants within your viewing corridor. The area raked cannot change from year to year, and the raked plants must be removed from the water's edge.

Caution: if you remove native aquatic plants through raking, harmful invasive species might move in. A DNR permit is required for any chemical use, or mechanical plant control.

Aquatic Plant Control & Removal in a Sensitive Area e.g. Millpond, Marsh Lake:

No permit is required to manually remove plant materials that have floated in and accumulated along the shore. A DNR permit is required for raking rooted plants, chemical use, or mechanical plant control.

Aquatic Plant Control & Removal by Boat: If you use a motorized boat, establish a set path to open water to minimize disturbance of aquatic plants. It is considered mechanical plant control if a boat is used to deliberately cut down aquatic plants outside this pathway, or motor back and forth with the *intention* of cutting plants with the propeller.

Boathouses: A permit is required and existing lawfully constructed boathouses may not be enlarged without a new permit.

Buoys: Lakeshore owners may place a mooring buoy without a permit only with the intent of securing a boat. They must be within 150 feet of the OHWM, extend 18 inches above the waterline, be white in color with a blue band clearly visible above the waterline and be spherical or ovate in shape. The buoy cannot interfere with public navigation rights or rights of neighbors.

Riprap: Riprap placement, replacement, or repair may be eligible for a permit exemption, but only if requirements and limitations are met. In some instances, riprap is prohibited.

Seawalls: New seawalls are generally not approved. Seawall replacement requires a permit, and eligibility criteria are detailed. Go to dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways for information on riprap and seawall permits.

Shoreland Buffer Changes: A permit is required for most vegetative removal. If plantings, trees, or shrubs are removed then mitigation and restoration may be required. Routine pruning may be performed without a permit but cannot jeopardize health & viability. Invasive species removal is allowed. Use of **native** trees, shrubs, grasses & flowers is encouraged. Contact the City before making changes. Permits for an alternative cutting plan allowing greater cutting may be allowed.

Stairways, Structures, Paths: A permit is required if within 35 feet of the OHWM and must be located within the Vision & Access Corridor and effectively control erosion.

Swimming rafts: Riparian owners may place rafts within their exclusive riparian zone. A permit is not required if standards are met. For example, <150 feet from shore, anchored and <100 square feet in size, placed on or after April 1st and removed by November 1st. Additional restrictions apply.

Vision & Access Corridor: The shoreline must be planted with a groundcover from the OHWM to ten feet inland. **Native** groundcovers are encouraged. Beyond this ten-foot buffer, you are allowed to remove plantings and prune trees/shrubs.

Town of Lake Mills

This information is an overview only and does not include all rules. Additional restrictions apply.

Contact Jefferson County at (920) 674-7130 (Zoning)

before commencing **any work within 75 feet of any water.**

Search “shoreland” at jeffersoncountywi.gov for zoning ordinances.

If you require a variance, contact the Town of Lake Mills at townoflakemillsclerk@gmail.com or (920) 648-5867. DNR aquatic plant permit information can be found here: dnr.wi.gov/lakes/plants/forms.

Aquatic Plant Control & Removal NOT in a

Sensitive Area: You may manually remove plant materials that have floated in and accumulated along the shore and rake rooted plants within your viewing corridor. The area raked cannot change from year to year, and the raked plants must be removed from the water’s edge.

Caution: if you remove native aquatic plants through raking, harmful invasive species might move in. A DNR permit is required for any chemical use, or mechanical plant control.

Aquatic Plant Control & Removal in a Sensitive

Area e.g. Schultz Bay, Korth Bay: No permit is required to manually remove plant materials that have floated in and accumulated along the shore. A DNR permit is required for raking rooted plants, chemical use, and mechanical plant control. Boats cannot motor back and forth with the *intention* of cutting plants.

Boathouses: A permit is required and boathouses are prohibited below the OHWM and can be designed for boat storage only.

Buoys: Lakeshore owners may place a mooring buoy without a permit only with the intent of securing a boat. They must be within 150 feet of the OHWM, extend 18 inches above the waterline, be white in color with a blue band clearly visible above the waterline and be spherical or ovate in shape. It cannot interfere with public navigation or neighbor’s rights. See townoflakemills.org/ordinances.

Decks, Gazebos, Patios, Screen Houses: A permit is required. These structures *may* be exempt from requirements to be set back 75 feet from the OHWM. Size, distance from water, and construction requirements apply.

Riprap: Riprap placement, replacement, or repair may be eligible for a permit exemption, but only if requirements and limitations are met. In some instances, riprap is prohibited.

Seawalls: New seawalls are generally not approved. Seawall replacement requires a permit, and eligibility criteria are detailed. Go to dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways for information on riprap and seawall permits.

Shoreland/Vegetative Buffer Changes: You must contact Jefferson County before you begin work. With the proper permits, the County has allowed owners to remove invasive species and damaged or diseased trees. You will be required to replant **native** trees/shrubs/flowers/grasses in their place. Please call to get the appropriate permits. For details see the Jefferson County website and rocklake.org/shoreguide.

Swimming Rafts & Inflatables: Riparian owners may place rafts and inflatables within their exclusive riparian zone. A permit is not required if standards are met such as one raft or one inflatable, not both (unless the inflatable is removed daily), securely anchor to the lakebed without fill or cribs, rafts cannot exceed 100 square feet and inflatables cannot exceed 200 square feet. Additional restrictions apply. See townoflakemills.org/ordinances.

Vision & Access Corridor: Vegetation may be removed but adding fill or grading is prohibited without a permit. Owners are encouraged to control erosion with **native** plantings.

Walkways, stairways or rail systems: A permit is required. They must be located within the Vision & Access Corridor, be a maximum of 60 inches wide, minimize erosion and storm water runoff and vegetation must be established and maintained to stabilize disturbed land.

Definitions

Ordinary High-Water Mark (OHWM):

The point on the bank or shore where the presence and action of surface water is so continuous as to leave a distinctive mark such as erosion, destruction/prevention of land plants, or a predominance of aquatic plants.

Riparian owner:

One who owns land along a river, stream, or other watercourse e.g. Rock Lake.

Riprap:

Clean field stone or quarry stone that meets specific size requirements.

Sensitive Area Designation:

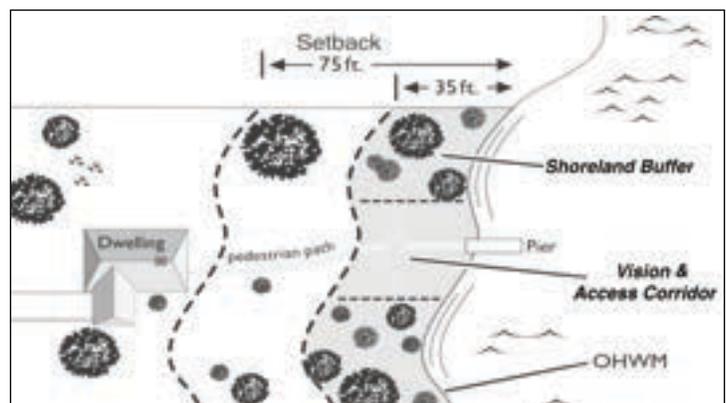
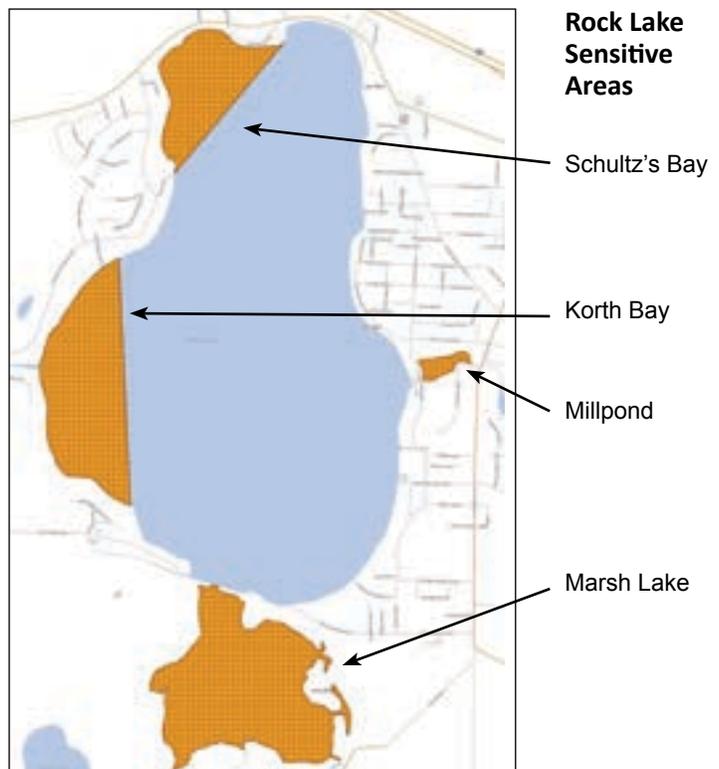
Designation as a Sensitive Area provides additional protection. On Rock Lake, Sensitive Areas include properties along Korth Bay, Schultz's Bay, the Millpond, and Marsh Lake. To determine if your property is in a Sensitive Area, contact the Wisconsin DNR Lake Coordinator for Jefferson County or Jefferson County's Land & Water Conservation Department.

Shoreland buffer/Vegetative buffer:

A strip of plants, shrubs and trees which extends from the OHWM inland for 35 feet. A shoreland buffer is not required within the Vision and Access Corridor. Otherwise, this buffer extends the entire length of your shoreline.

Vision and Access Corridor:

This is a strip of land where an unobstructed view of the water is allowed. If your shoreline is less than 100 feet in width, then the Vision and Access Corridor can be no more than 30% (city) or 35% (county/town) of your lot width with a minimum of 10 feet (county/town). If your shoreline is 100 feet or more in width, your Vision and Access Corridor cannot exceed 30 feet (city) or 35% of your lot width with a maximum viewing corridor of 200 feet (county/town). Boathouses, pathways, stairs or other structures must fall within this Vision and Access Corridor.



Provided by the **Rock Lake Improvement Association** Fall 2022