

Dock & Float Application Process for Chapter 91 & 10A Float Permitting in Gloucester, Massachusetts

Local Contact Information

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The city offices contributing to the information in this brochure are here to help you understand the regulations and properly complete the application process.

When in doubt ask, we will help guide you.

The Site and Location

Your project may need a professional. A professional can assist with:

- Accurate map of property lines
- Professional determination of wetland boundary
- Scaled drawing of proposed project showing property lines, dock, pier, float, related vegetation)
- Locus (a map denoting where the site is in the area)
- Dock, pier, float orientation
- North / South indicator on the map

You should consider what effects your project may have on natural resources and ensure that you have an upland area (land above resource area), for winter storage of your float.

A minimum of three (3) site visits are needed:

- One before any permits.
- One 72 hours before any site work
- One after work is completed

Pictures must be taken of the site before any work is done on the site and pictures must be taken after work is completed. All pictures must be submitted to the Gloucester Conservation Commission.

Construction and Design

During your design process you may want to talk to others who have docks and floats. Also, it is helpful to talk to local builders who have built docks and floats in Gloucester. These people are great resources (how wide a dock/ pier needs to be to walk comfortably on; what they like and dislike about the final project). Remember environmental protection and technology improve all the time, so what worked for

a neighbor may have changed since.

Things to think about:

- Contact points
- Grounding
- Site
- Oiling Material
- Anchoring
- Board spacing of decking over land and water
- Height of pier/dock over land and water
- Orientation (ideally north to south)
- If utilities needed ie: lights, fresh water, electricity

Most of these issues are discussed during the first site visit. This information must be on a drawn plan with a minimum of two views:

- Overhead (top view)
- Cross Section (side view)

Repairs, Maintenance and Renewal

You can do maintenance and repairs to your piers easily and legally. However, you must check with the city to ensure you are conforming to current codes. Renewing your permits is also easily accomplished.

A collaborative publication of the Gloucester
Conservation Commission, Harbormaster, &
Shellfish Constable

Overview

This handout is meant as a basic informative start for building or altering residential docks, floats, and piers in the City of Gloucester. The application and permitting of a dock and/or float is necessary. The level of permitting depends on the project, size and location.

What permits do I need to obtain before I build my dock or pier?

You will need a Chapter 91 License or 10A Permit through the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Harbormaster's Office. You will need a permit from the Conservation Commission. In addition, you will need review by the Shellfish Warden and the Planning Board (for piers only, not floats).

Why is it important to have a dock and/or float properly permitted?

It is a requirement of Massachusetts General Law (Wetlands Protection Act)
Docks and Piers can impact shellfish beds
Docks and Piers can obstruct safe navigation
Some building materials and construction processes are more environmentally safe than others.

Do I need a professional to apply for the permitting?

No, in most cases you can do the permitting on your own. However, some parts may need a professional depending on what type of permit you are applying for.

How long are the permits good for?

10A float permit is for one season. It may be renewed annually.

Chapter 91 dock and pier permits can be 5; 10; 15;

30 years, depending on which one is applied for. A Conservation Commission permit is valid for three years. It is possible to extend a Conservation Permit.

Permitting & Applicable Regulations

Easements & Deeded Rights of Way

Do you own and/or have the right of way to legally build on the site? Do others?

For Chapter 91 Permits: Docks and Piers

Permit from Gloucester Conservation Commission & review letter from the state DEP
Written Approval from Shellfish Constable
Written Approval from Harbormaster
Permit from City Council (Lowland's)
Letter from Planning Board
Chapter 91 (State) permit
Permit From Inspectional Services (Building Inspector's) Department

Once permits are received, all original documents must be stamped and recorded at the Registry of Deeds (Salem, MA.) prior to starting any work.

For 10A Float permits

Letter from Shellfish Constable
Permit from Conservation Commission

The Harbormaster and Safe Navigation

Before starting, it is a good idea to stop by the Harbormaster's office during office hours and inquire about specifics to your location and project.

Criteria for safe navigation:

- Boat traffic (is my project going to hinder other boat navigation)
- Is my project located in a restricted area
- Is my project located near a Federal area or navigation channel
- Right to access areas (refer to Harbormaster/Waterways)
- Does my project meet setback requirements located in the Gloucester Harbor Line 2004 and the Federal Line

In addition, a Chapter 91 permit requires comments from Gloucester Waterway's Board

Environmental Resource Concerns

Your project may have impacts on soils, vegetation, fish, shellfish, tide water, and navigation. The first site visit will deal with these issues and should be done with three people; the Shellfish Constable, Conservation Agent, and the Harbormaster

Environmental concerns for designing a residential pier, dock, and/or float with minimal area impact are:

- Shellfish Flats
- Eel grass beds or other submerged aquatic vegetation
- Effects of prop washing
- Type of material that will contact the ground
- Types of run-off
- Potential pollutants

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) In Areas of Critical Environmental Concern no changes can be made. A few of these areas in Gloucester are: Walker Creek, Essex River, Farm Creek, Mable Lanes Creek, Spaulding Creek, Essex Bay. No new permits are issued for A.C.E.C. areas. For pre-existing permits see repair, maintenance, renew section of this pamphlet.

Conservation Commission and Mitigation

Mitigation can lessen the impact to the environment. By adding a pier, and/or dock, and/or float to the site, the site will have some environmental impacts to the areas natural resources. To "offset" these changes, you will have to perform some act or service that will help the environment. A few examples are planting eel grass; assist with an environmental education program; monitor aquatic life; improve another appropriate environmental area. The Gloucester Conservation Commission must approve your mitigation plan.

Planning Board

The Planning Board provides a written recommendation to the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) when you apply for a Chapter 91 permit. The Board reviews the application in two ways—Would the project be detrimental to the public rights in tidelands and Great Ponds, and does the project serve a proper public purpose (with the exception of water-dependent use projects entirely on private tidelands).