

# ASK THE EXPERTS

*If you have a question about water related issues, riparian rights, and/or lakes and streams, etc., let us know by email or snail mail. Our experts will respond to your questions.*

*Email: [info@mi-riparian.org](mailto:info@mi-riparian.org)  
Mail: The Michigan Riparian  
304 E. Main Street, Stanton, MI 48888*

**Question**—*Do I need any type of permit before I install my dock?*

**Answer**—Generally, no. However, there are a few exceptions. Seasonal one-family docks in inland lakes in Michigan normally do not require any type of permit, either from the state or local government. However, if the proposed dock is permanent (or even a seasonal dock that is not removed during the offseason), a state permit is required. The same is true with regard to a dock used by more than one family, which is normally considered a "marina." Furthermore if a dock in an inland lake is overly long and impedes navigation, state officials can require that the dock be moved or shortened.

Most local governments (cities, villages and townships) do not require dock permits. However, there may be local ordinances that impose regulations on docks in addition to state requirements.

The regulations for docks on the Great Lakes (and even for certain lakes tied into the Great Lakes by channel) are different. In those situations, even seasonal docks may require a permit from both the state of Michigan and the United States Army Corp of Engineers. Please see my article in the Spring, 2011 issue of the Michigan Riparian Magazine.

*-Cliff Bloom, ML&SA Attorney*

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Our experts include our riparian attorney, a biologist, a limnologist, an engineer, a college professor and a state agency official. They look forward to responding to your question.



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