

Source: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Coastal-Resources/Living-On-The-Shore/Residential-Dock-Guidelines> copy & pasted on 6/24/2021

Residential Dock Guidelines

If you are a coastal property owner in Connecticut, you have the right to access navigable waters from your property. While you own the area landward of the mean high water elevation, the submerged lands and waters waterward of mean high water are held in trust by the State of Connecticut for the public's enjoyment. Subject to regulation by the State, typically you may exercise your right to access the water (often referred to as your "littoral" or "riparian" right) by constructing a dock from your upland area into the state's public trust waters (See Figure 1).

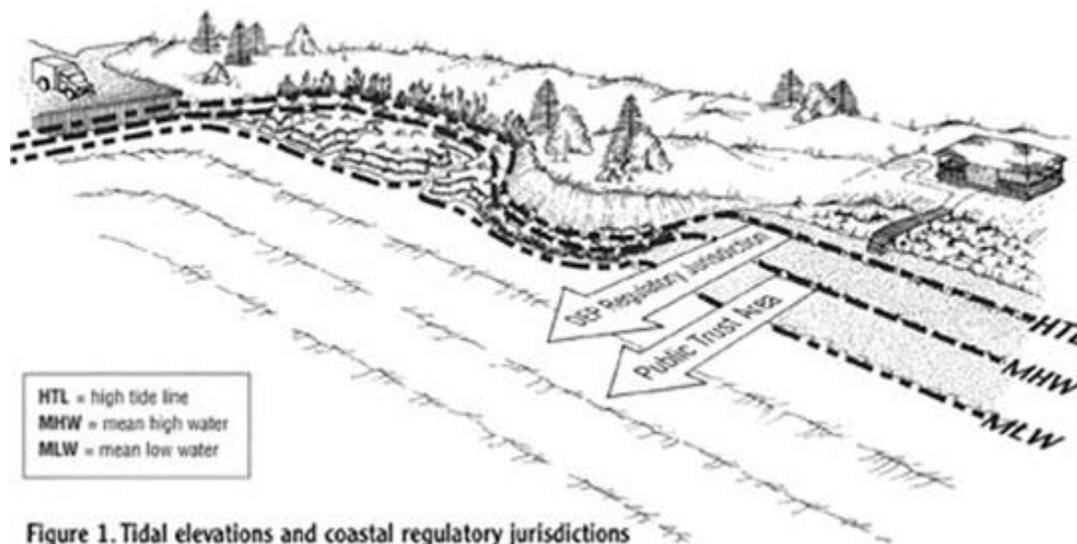


Figure 1. Tidal elevations and coastal regulatory jurisdictions

The installation of residential docks in the tidal, coastal or navigable waters of Connecticut is regulated by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Land and Water Resources Division (LWRD). The goals of the permitting program are to protect our coastal resources, promote safe navigation, and balance private rights of access with the public's right to use and enjoy public trust waters.

The placement of your private dock in public trust waters is limited to the minimum encroachment which provides "reasonable" access to the water. In most situations, reasonable access is achievable with a four-foot wide fixed pier extending to mean low water (MLW), a gangway or ramp and a 100 square foot float. While such a structure may not be ideally sized for your vessel and may not provide full tidal-cycle access, in most cases it strikes a balance between your private rights of access and the public's right to use and enjoy public trust waters.

As a littoral property owner, you are entitled to one point of access per property. Decks, gazebos and other structures which are not necessary for boating access are not permissible waterward of the coastal jurisdiction line (CJL). The sharing of docks by adjacent waterfront property owners is encouraged. If multiple owners choose to share a dock, and legally relinquish individual littoral rights, the dock can often be somewhat larger than that typically authorized for a single property.

Creation of additional rights-of-way or easements does not create new littoral rights, therefore, docks on easements are not generally permissible. In cases where a number of upland property owners, such as a homeowners association, purchase a waterfront parcel, a standard sized residential dock is generally permissible.

Please be aware that it may not be possible for you to have a dock just like your neighbor's. If your neighbor's dock was authorized many years ago, it was reviewed under a different set of standards than those used by LWRD today. The definition of a minimized dock is continuously refined to reflect our increased knowledge of development pressures and the impact of docks on our coastal resources. By minimizing dock size, the cumulative environmental impacts of all permitted structures is reduced. In some rare cases, unacceptable adverse impacts to coastal resources or navigation may preclude construction of any dock structure.

Planning for Your Dock

Design Considerations

Structural Configuration

Docks must be designed to minimize encroachment into public trust waters. Accordingly, fixed piers generally should not exceed four feet in width and should extend only to mean low water. Afloat, connected to the fixed pier by a gangway or ramp, generally should not exceed 100 square feet in area (See Figure 2).