

How To Guide: New Boat Launch Facilities.

Access to the water is one of the most important components of a water trail. For safety purposes water trails should provide an access point every ten miles; however, more access points can lead to a better used water trail. Following are some guidelines for developing a new boat access point and also tips on the permitting process. For more information contact the PA Fish & Boat Commission's Technical Guidance Program at (814) 359-5150.



Developing access points along your water trail.

1. Determine Demand

The first step in providing new water access to your water trail is to determine how many access points are needed and where they should be located. This can be accomplished through an inventory of existing sites as well as a survey of users asking where improved access is needed. This information should be taken into account when determining the number, size and location of new sites.

2. Meeting Needs

Once you have determined the needs for new water trail access you must determine the best way of meeting those needs. There are several options for public or private development of boat access points. In order to be a part of the *Pennsylvania Water Trails Program*, water trails must provide public access to users.

3. Gather Information

There is a lot of information about your water trail that needs to be collected before going into the field to evaluate sites. Collecting this information ahead of time can save you a lot of work later. Following are some of the things that you should concentrate on: land adjacent to your water trail including roads, water depth and fluctuation, fish and wildlife, environmental and historical conditions and protected species.

4. Field Evaluation

Once you have collected this information it is time to get out into the field. Following are some of the things that need to be taken into account with your field evaluation: roads, obstructions, environmental hazards, easements and other uses, natural features, structures and location of safety agencies.

5. Property Control

Once a site is judged suitable for a new access point based on both the in-office and in-field evaluations action may be taken to acquire the property if it is not already secured. Generally there are several ways of gaining control of the property including purchase, lease, easement, gifts and condemnation. Many water trail project managers are able to work with public agencies including municipalities to provide boat access along their water trail.

6. Design Development

The design development process offers the opportunity to resolve any remaining issues with the development of the boat launch as well as to encompass all of the design features of the site. More information about design guidelines and considerations is provided on the back of this sheet.

7. Permitting

In Pennsylvania the following state agencies are involved in permitting for new boat access ramps the Department of Environmental Protection, Local County Conservation Districts and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. More information about permitting is provided on the back of this sheet.

8. Construction

The construction process is largely based on the type of boat access that you are developing and the source of funds for construction. The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's Technical Guidance Program is a great resource for assistance with the construction process.

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General Permit BDWW-GP-2 Small Docks and Boat Launching Ramps (PA)

In most cases the GP-2 General Permit will be needed to create a new boat access point as part of a Pennsylvania Water Trail. A complete guide to permits and other authorizations offered by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is available at their web site <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/efacts/>. Water Trail managers are encouraged to contact their regional DEP office when beginning the application process.



Following is a brief look at the permitting process in Pennsylvania for a new boat launching point:

1. Prior to Registration
 - Locate your project on a US Geological Survey map.
 - Complete the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory Search Form (Supplement 1).
 - Determine if a Federal permit is required by contacting your local U.S. Army Corp of Engineers District Office (contact information is provided by DEP).
 - Prepare an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan for your project.
2. Registration
 - Complete the general permit registration and send copies to local the local municipality and county.
 - Prepare the entire registration package which includes the general permit registration, USGS location map and PA Natural Diversity Inventory Search Form (Supplement 1).
 - Send the package to either the County Conservation District or Soils and Waterways Section as instructed in the DEP application.
3. Before & During Construction
 - The following must take place before any work can begin:
 - General Permit Registration is registered by County Conservation District or Soils and Waterways Section.
 - Erosion and Sediment Control Plan is approved by the County Conservation District.
 - Applicant must notify the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission and the County Conservation District 10 days prior to the beginning of construction.
 - Applicant assures that no other local, state, or federal permits are required.
 - Applicant has reviewed all other pre-construction requirements per the DEP permit.
 - Applicant has provided written notification to local county and municipalities.

Design Guidelines

Following is a check list of the general design guidelines that applicants must follow in order to be eligible for a GP-2 permit.

- Take historical and environmental considerations into account. The existence of wetlands, historical artifacts and protected species may preclude the development of a ramp.
- The Soil Conservation Service can provide information about vegetation that can be used to protect shorelines.
- Boat launching ramps authorized by the DEP General Permit are limited to a maximum width of 20 feet.
- Boat launching ramps shall be located to minimize stream bank excavation and wetland impacts. Boat launching ramps are limited to a maximum length of 100 feet measured from the top of the ramp to the shoreline.
- Ramps for canoes/kayaks should be 12 feet wide with an 8% slope for ADA compliance.
- If the slope of an embankment is 2:1 or greater, riprap is commonly used to sustain the bank.
- Parking spaces for vehicles transporting their crafts on the roof or within the vehicle should be a minimum of 9 x 18 feet.