

# POND CONSTRUCTION

## INFORMATION FOR PERMIT APPLICANTS



Property owners consider building a pond for many reasons: for fish rearing, as a swimming area, as a source of water for livestock or irrigation, or as an aesthetic feature. Depending on the proposed location, adjacent water features and size, a permit may be required from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) prior to starting pond construction. The local unit of government may also have ordinances or regulations regarding pond construction.

The DEQ permitting process ensures that potential negative impacts to wetlands, lakes, streams and other natural features are avoided and minimized as much as possible when constructing a pond. Design considerations to avoid adverse environmental impacts should include placing any spoils outside of wetlands or floodplains; locating the pond away from wetlands, lakes, and streams; and not connecting the pond to existing lakes or streams.

This Fact Sheet answers the following questions:

**Do I need a permit to construct or excavate a pond on my property?**

**What information should I consider when designing a pond?**

**What services does DEQ provide to help?**

**How do I apply for a permit to construct a pond?**



**Michigan  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality**

Water Resources Division

[www.mi.gov/wrd](http://www.mi.gov/wrd)

Do I need a permit to construct or excavate a pond on my property?

A DEQ permit will be needed for pond creation or excavation if it is constructed:

- Within 500 feet of a lake, river or stream.
- Connected to a lake, river, or stream.
- Within a regulated wetland.
- Within a regulated 100-year floodplain.
- Will have a surface area of 5 acres or greater.

Note: Due to the detrimental effects of damming up existing streams to create ponds, this practice is strongly discouraged and would require additional review by DEQ.

What information should I consider when designing a pond?

Consider the following when designing a pond:

- Incorporate elements that will avoid and minimize environmental impacts.
- To obtain the maximum benefit of a pond, it needs to be designed and constructed with the intended purpose or purposes in mind. More information on designing ponds is available in the DEQ publication titled “**Building a Pond in Michigan.**”

What services does the DEQ provide to help?

The following DEQ services are available and detailed on the Wetlands Protection Program and Joint Permit Application web sites:

- **Pre-Application Meeting** is an official request to meet with DEQ staff to discuss a project and determine if a permit will be necessary.
- **Wetland Identification Program** offers wetland delineation services that includes a site visit to identify wetland boundaries and regulatory status.

How do I apply for a permit to construct a pond?

Applicants should use the DEQ Joint Permit Application when applying to construct a pond:

- Permit applications should be submitted through the MiWaters online permit application system.
- Information on the permit application process and how to submit an application in MiWaters is available at [www.mi.gov/jointpermit](http://www.mi.gov/jointpermit).