

NRPA Permit By Rule Section 1

INTRODUCTION

A "permit by rule" or "PBR", when approved by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), is an approval for an activity that requires a permit under the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA). Only those activities described in this chapter may proceed under the PBR process. A PBR activity will not significantly affect the environment if carried out in accordance with this chapter, and generally has less of an impact on the environment than an activity requiring an individual permit. A PBR satisfies the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA) permit requirement and Water Quality Certification requirement.

If a proposed activity is not described in this chapter, or will not be conducted in accordance with the standards of this chapter, the applicant must obtain an individual permit prior to beginning the activity.

A. Location of Activity

The location of an activity may affect whether an activity qualifies for PBR, and whether review by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is required.

- (1) Type of resource.** For some types of activities, the availability of a PBR is affected by the type of natural resource in or adjacent to which the activity is proposed. For example, an applicant proposing an activity consisting of "Movement of rocks or vegetation" may receive a PBR only if the activity will take place in a great pond, river, stream or brook. Limitations concerning the location of activities are addressed in the "Applicability" provision in each section of this chapter.
- (2) Essential habitat.** Essential habitats include areas critical to the survival of threatened and endangered species such as the bald eagle, least tern, roseate tern, and piping plover. If the activity is located in essential habitat, such as near an eagle nesting site, a PBR is only available if the applicant obtains written approval from the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W). This approval from IF&W must be submitted to the DEP with the PBR notification form, and the applicant must follow any conditions stated in the IF&W approval.

NOTE: Maps showing areas of essential habitat are available from the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife regional headquarters, municipal offices, the Land Use Regulation Commission (for unorganized territories) and DEP regional offices. If the activity is located in essential habitat, IF&W must be contacted to request and obtain a "certification of review and approval". <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/environmental-review/index.html>

B. Notification

The applicant must file notice of the activity with the DEP prior to beginning work on the activity. The notification must be on a form provided by the DEP and must include any submissions required in this chapter. The applicant must keep a copy to serve as the permit.

The notification form and required attachments must be sent to the DEP via email to DEP.PBRNotification@maine.gov. By signing the notification form, the applicant is representing that the activity will meet the applicability requirements and standards of the rule. In addition, by signing the notification form the applicant represents that the applicant has sufficient title, right, or interest in the property where the proposed activity is to take place.



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C. Effective Period

- (1) Beginning of period. The PBR becomes effective 14 calendar days after the DEP receives the notification form, unless the DEP approves or denies the PBR prior to that date. If the DEP does not speak with or write to the applicant within this 14 day period regarding the PBR notification, the applicant may proceed to carry out the activity.

There are three exceptions regarding the effective date of an approved PBR:

(a) Activities listed in Section 10 (Stream crossings) occurring in association with forest management are exempt from the 14 day waiting period.

(b) Activities listed in Section 10 (Stream crossings) performed or supervised by individuals currently certified in erosion control practices by the DEP are exempt from the 14 day waiting period. To be certified in erosion control practices, an individual must successfully complete all course requirements of the Voluntary Contractor Certification Program administered by the DEP's Nonpoint Source Training and Resource Center.

(c) Activities that are part of a larger project requiring a permit under the Site Location of Development or the Storm Water Management Acts may not proceed until any required permit under those laws is obtained.

NOTE: Activities that are part of a larger project may require other permits from the DEP also. These other laws may prohibit the start of construction of any part of the project unless a permit under that law is obtained. In these cases, while not a violation of this rule, starting work on a PBR approved activity would be a violation of those other applicable laws

- (2) End of period. The PBR is generally effective for 2 years from the date of approval, except that a PBR for "Replacement of structures" under Section 4 is effective for 3 years.

NOTE: Activities that qualify under this chapter may need to meet other local, state and federal requirements. Examples -- (1) If an activity extends below the low water line of a lake, coastal wetland or international boundary water, the applicant should contact the Bureau of Parks and Lands (287-3061) concerning possible lease or easement requirements, or (2) If an activity will involve work below the mean high water line in navigable waters of the United States, the applicant should contact the Army Corps of Engineer



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D. Discretionary Authority

Notwithstanding compliance with the PBR applicability requirements and standards set forth in this chapter, the DEP may require an individual permit application to be filed in any case where credible evidence indicates that the activity:

- (1) May violate the standards of this rule or the NRPA (38 M.R.S.A. Section 480-D);
- (2) Could lead to significant environmental impacts, including cumulative impacts; or
- (3) Could adversely impact a resource of special concern.

If an individual permit is required pursuant to this subsection, the DEP shall notify the applicant in writing within the 14 calendar day waiting period described in sub-section (C) above. When the DEP notifies an applicant that an individual permit is required, no work may be conducted unless and until the individual permit is obtained.

E. Violations

A violation of law occurs when a person, or his or her agent, performs or causes to be performed any activity subject to the NRPA without first obtaining a permit from the DEP, or acts contrary to the provisions of a permit. The person, his or her agent, or both, may be held responsible for the violation. Commonly, the "person" is the landowner, and the "agent" is the contractor carrying out the activity. A violation occurs when:

- (1) An activity occurs that is not allowed under PBR, whether or not a PBR notification form has been filed with and/or approved by the DEP;
- (2) An activity occurs that is allowed under PBR, but a PBR for the activity has not become effective prior to the beginning of the activity; or
- (3) An activity occurs that is allowed under PBR and a PBR for the activity is in effect, but the standards specified in this chapter are not met.

See the "applicability" provision under each activity for rules concerning what activities are allowed under PBR. A PBR is only valid for the person listed on the notification form, or for his or her agent.

Each day that a violation occurs or continues is considered a separate offense. Violations are subject to criminal penalties and civil penalties of not less than \$100 nor more than \$10,000 for each day of that violation ([38 M.R.S.A. Section 349](#)).

NOTE: A local Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) may take enforcement action for a violation of the Natural Resources Protection Act if he or she is authorized to represent a municipality in District Court, and he or she has been certified as familiar with court procedures, [30-A M.R.S.A. Section 4452\(7\)](#).



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