



Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Resource Protection - Waterways Program
**BRP WW 24 Chapter 91 General License Certification
Fact Sheet**

1. What is the purpose of these certifications?

The General License Certification (GLC) provides owners of small docks and piers with a streamlined, simplified, and less expensive process for licensing their structures.

Chapter 91 of the Massachusetts General Laws requires licensing of all non-commercial, residential, water-dependent, small-scale docks, piers, and similar structures within tidelands, Great Ponds, and navigable rivers. The state legislature amended MGL Chapter 91 with a new Section 18C that allowed MassDEP to create a General License for these structures.

2. Who must apply?

Any owner of proposed structures, previously unauthorized structures, and previously licensed structures applying for renewal, that meet the eligibility criteria in MassDEP's Waterways Regulations (see 310 CMR 9.29(2)). Projects meeting the eligibility requirements that had a previous license, simplified license, amnesty license or interim approval, should request a Certification instead of a renewal, before the license or interim approval expires.

All owners of proposed structures that meet the eligibility requirements for a General License MUST apply for a General License Certification rather than any other Chapter 91 permitting options.

NOTE: Great Ponds - A great pond is defined as any pond or lake that contained 10 or more acres in its natural state. Ponds or lakes presently larger than 10 acres are presumed to be great ponds, unless the applicant provides unequivocal evidence to the contrary. Ponds 10 or more acres in their natural state, but which are now smaller, are still considered great ponds. Go to MassDEP's [Great Ponds list](#) to determine if your property is on a Great Pond. **If your property or structure is NOT on the Great Ponds list, you do NOT need a Chapter 91 License.**

3. What other requirements should be considered when applying for these certifications?

General License Certifications must meet the eligibility requirement outlined on Pages 1 and 2 of the Instructions, and satisfy the required local approvals noted on page 7 of the Instructions.

4. What are the application fees for these certifications?

For all General License Certifications, the fee is \$75.00. In addition to the fee, Chapter 91 licenses are subject to Tidewater Displacement fees and Commonwealth Tidelands Occupation fees for coastal structures and Commonwealth Occupation fees for some inland structures. Applicants can use MassDEP's fee calculators for [Inland](#) and [Coastal](#) Structures or contact Waterways staff for assistance.

5. How long are these certifications in effect?

The General License for projects located in coastal tidelands has a term of 30 years from April 13, 2015. The General License for projects located in Great Ponds and navigable rivers and streams has a term of 15 years from April 13, 2015. The length of term for an individual Certification will vary depending on the date the Certification is affirmed by MassDEP. The term of the affirmed Certification shall expire on the same date as the General License, unless MassDEP specifies in its affirmation that a shorter term is necessary to protect the public interest.

6. How can I avoid the most common mistakes made in applying for these certifications?

Complete the Certification Completion Checklist in the Instructions to ensure that all requirements are met.

7. What are the regulations that apply to these certifications and where can I get copies?

These regulations include, but are not limited to:

- a. [M.G.L. c. 91](#), The Public Waterfront Act.
- b. [M.G.L. c. 91 s. 18c](#), Noncommercial small-scale docks, piers and similar structures accessory to residential use; issuance of general license; applicability of other laws to projects subject to general license.



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- c. [310 CMR 9.00](#), Waterways.
- d. 310 CMR 9.29, General License Certification.
- e. [310 CMR 4.00](#), Timely Action and Fee Provisions.
- f. [310 CMR 10.00](#), Wetlands Protection Act Regulations.

These may be purchased online, in person, or by mail at the [Massachusetts State Bookstore](#).

Related Information:

[Chapter 91 General Licenses by Registries of Deeds](#)

This listing identifies each of the General Licenses by the Registry for the county or district for which they were issued, and lists the Book and Page Number for each General License (information which is required on the General License Certification Form).

Fee Calculators: [Coastal](#)  and [Inland](#) 

These calculators may be used to determine the fees for either Coastal or Inland General License Certifications (see Question 4 above). If you cannot use the calculators, or need other assistance, contact the MassDEP Waterways staff at 617-292-5929 or by email at: DEP.Waterways@massmail.state.ma.us.