

Dock permits: map the approvals before design

Separate land rights, marine permission, habitat review and construction approval.

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Waterfront ownership does not by itself settle permission to build into the water. Before design, identify the parcel boundary, the bed owner and the authority for the waterway. Ask for a written approval map that names the decision maker for each part of the work.

Canada: start with the province and waterway

British Columbia publishes a private-moorage policy for Crown land. Read that page with the site plan. Ask the province whether the proposed use is covered by the relevant authorization route. Do not apply the British Columbia route to another province. Ask the responsible authorities about navigation, fish habitat and local development controls as separate questions.

United Kingdom: identify the jurisdiction

The Marine Management Organisation publishes guidance on permission for marine work in England. Use it to identify whether the activity needs a licence or another route. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own systems. Harbour authority and landowner consent may also need review. Do not treat an online product plan as an approved marine drawing.

United States and Australia

No single approval applies across either country. For a US site, ask the relevant Army Corps district and state and local authorities which reviews apply to the actual work. For an Australian site, ask the state land and water authorities and local council about tenure, tidal works and planning. These are referral questions, not a statement that an exemption exists. Obtain the current rules from those authorities before payment for construction.

Keep an approval register

Use columns for authority, application, drawing revision, condition, responsible person and written status. Include construction windows, inspection points and removal obligations if imposed. Make the contractor's price conditional on the same approved design. Resolve conflicts between approvals before work starts.

For Ireland, New Zealand, the UAE, Switzerland, Singapore and Hong Kong, start a fresh authority map. Do not transfer another country's limits or exemptions.

Sources

- [Province of British Columbia, Land use — private moorage](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.
- [Marine Management Organisation, Get permission for marine work](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.

Frequently asked questions

Does a repair always avoid a permit?

No. Ask the authority about the exact repair scope and method before work begins.