



Summary of MRCCA Rules

This summary focuses on those rule provisions most likely to affect property owners. For a more thorough description of the rules, please see MR Chapter 6106 and the Statement of Need and Reasonableness.

Background on Local Control

Property owners have been subject to MRCCA regulations since the MRCCA was established by Executive Order in the 1970s. Since that time, MRCCA regulations have been implemented through local plans and zoning ordinances. The 2016 rules have updated the regulations guiding development in the MRCCA, which are implemented through local plans and zoning ordinances. The DNR and Metropolitan Council both review local plans and ordinances for consistency with MRCCA regulations, with the DNR having final approval authority.

Districts (part 6106.0100)

Resources are protected through the use of six districts that reflect the character and development along the river and recognize planned future development. Dimensional standards, specifically building height and setbacks from the river and bluffline (the top of an 18% slopes), are regulated by district. All other provisions apply to all districts.

To view the district boundaries, visit [Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Program Districts](#).

Dimensional Standards (part 6106.0120)

The setback provisions are intended to keep buildings and other development activity away from sensitive shoreline areas and areas prone to soil erosion and slope failure. Sediment is a pollutant and it also carries nutrients and other pollutants into the river, which reduces water clarity and water quality. The height provisions are designated to preserve the natural views within the corridor.

To determine allowable heights and setbacks for your property:

1. Find out what district your property is in using the link above.
2. View the dimensional standards applying to your zone by referencing the chart below.
3. Verify the dimensional standards in your community's local ordinance.



Table 1: Dimensional Standards

	CA-ROS	CA-RN	CA-RTC	CA-SR	CA-UM	CA-UC
Height	35'	35'	48'*	Underlying zoning	65'*	Underlying zoning
River Setback	200'	100'	75'	NA	50'	Underlying zoning
Bluff Setback	100'	40'	40'	40'	40'	40'

*Greater height may be allowed with a local Conditional Use Permit.

All MRCCA standards are administered through local zoning ordinances. Local dimensional standards may differ from those identified above.

Expansion of Nonconforming Structures (part 6106.0080, Subp. 3)

Legal nonconforming structures are structures that were lawfully permitted when they were built. However, when zoning standards change, these lawfully established structures that do not conform to the new standards become legally nonconforming or “grandfathered.” The 2016 rules clarify that local governments may allow the lateral expansion of legally nonconforming principal structures, as long as they do not expand further into required setbacks from the bluffline and from the river.

Vegetation & Land Alteration Standards (part 6106.0150)

Vegetation stabilizes soil and helps to slow, absorb, and filter stormwater before it runs into the river. Land alteration in areas near water and on steep slopes increases the risk of soil erosion and the movement of sediment into water. Retaining and/or restoring deep-rooted vegetation along the river’s edge and on steep slopes, and preventing erosion during development, are important strategies for protecting water quality, as well as the unique natural character and animal habitat along the corridor.

Vegetation and land alteration standards in the 2016 rules do not vary by district, but will affect your property if you plan any future changes to your property.

Permit Requirements for Vegetation Removal and Land Alteration

Under the 2016 rules, homeowners now need to obtain a permit from the local government for intensive vegetation clearing and some land alteration activities in sensitive areas (primarily along the river’s edge and on bluffs) that exceed certain thresholds. The purpose of requiring a permit is to connect property owners with a qualified person who can guide these activities to minimize negative impacts to water quality, slope stability, and habitat.

When and in which areas would a permit be required for vegetation removal?

The rules regulate vegetation only in the following areas:

- Shore impact zone - 50% of the required structure setback from the river
- Areas within 50 feet of a wetland or natural drainage way
- Bluff impact zone - areas on and within 20 feet of slopes averaging 18% or greater
- Areas of native plant communities anywhere in the MRCCA
- Other areas of significant vegetation stands identified in local government plans

In these areas, a permit would not be required for *selective vegetation removal*, only for *intensive vegetation clearing*. *Selective vegetation removal* is the removal of isolated individual trees or shrubs that are not in a contiguous patch, strip, row, or block and that does not substantially reduce the tree canopy or understory cover. *Intensive vegetation clearing* is the removal of all or a majority of the trees or shrubs in a contiguous patch, strip, row, or block. For example, no permit would be required for the removal of a single tree or shrub, or for any of the following activities if they involve *selective vegetation removal*:

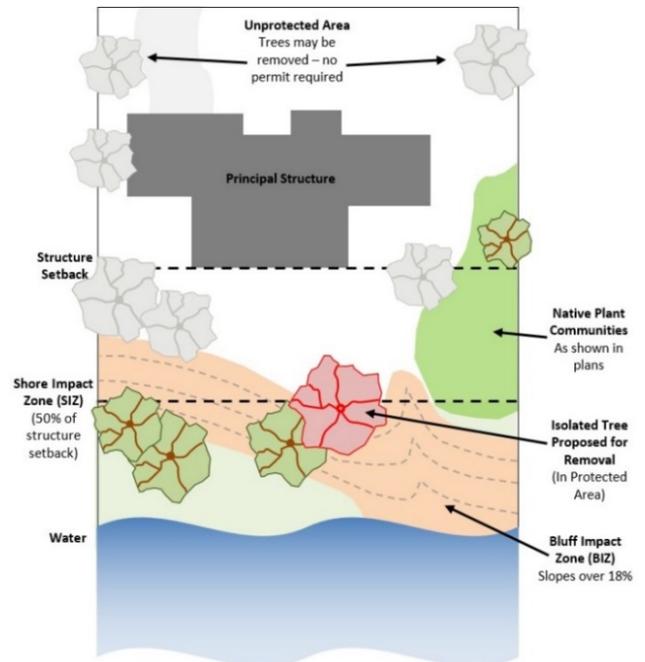
- Maintenance of existing lawns, landscaping, and gardens
- Removal of vegetation that is dead, diseased, dying, or hazardous
- Removal to prevent the spread of diseases or insect pests
- Removal of invasive non-native species

If any of these activities involves *intensive vegetation clearing*, then a local government permit would be required. In these cases, the permit would carry conditions. For example, the intensive clearing of native plant communities would require replacement with vegetation similar to the habitat, slope stabilization, and stormwater retention values of the removed native plant communities. Another example would require the planting of deep-rooted vegetation on any highly erodible soils or slopes that are disturbed. Local governments would also require a restoration plan for violations.

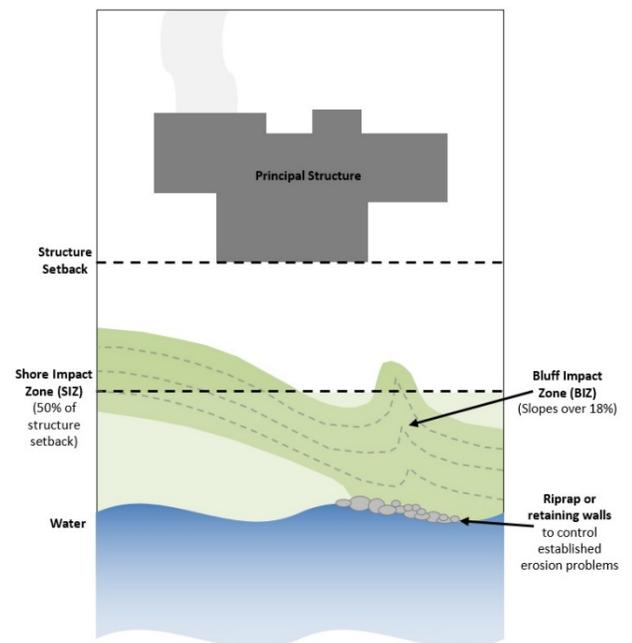
When and in which areas would a permit be required for land alteration?

A permit would be required for any activity that disturbs more than 10 cubic yards or 1,000 square feet of soil within the shore impact zone or within 50 feet of a public water, wetland, or natural drainage way, whichever is greater.

Land alteration is prohibited in the bluff impact zone, except for erosion control projects and repair and maintenance of existing structures. Exceptions would be guided through a local permit, and would be required to use temporary and permanent erosion and



The 2016 rules only regulate vegetation in the SIZ, BIZ, and areas of native plant communities. Vegetation outside these areas (shown in grey) is not regulated under the rules. Isolated trees may be removed in protected areas without a permit.



Permits for land alterations are required in the SIZ, BIZ, and for riprap, retaining walls, or other erosion control structures.

sediment control measures sufficient to retain sediment onsite. Local governments have the authority to attach conditions to the permit to minimize environmental impacts.

What if I need riprap or retaining walls?

The construction or replacement of riprap, retaining walls, or other erosion control structures are allowed by local government permit within:

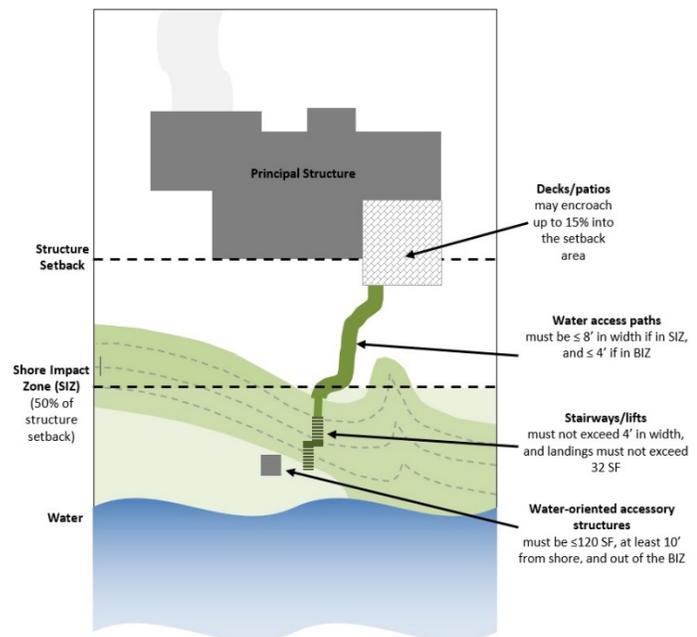
- The shore impact zone or within 50 feet of a public water, wetland, or natural drainage way, whichever is greater
- The bluff impact zone

Riprap, retaining walls or other erosion control structures would only be allowed to correct an established erosion problem as determined by the local government. Size of structures is limited to that needed to control the erosion problem. The construction of structures below the ordinary high water level always require a DNR permit or approval.

River Access on Riparian Lots (part 6106.0140)

The MRCCA rules regulate access paths, stairways, water-oriented structures, patios and decks in the following ways:

- Driveways or parking areas must meet structure setbacks and cannot be placed in the shore or bluff impact zones.
- No impervious surfaces are allowed within the shore or bluff impact zones except for:
 - Access paths no greater than eight feet wide in the shore impact zone and four feet in the bluff impact zone.
 - Stairways and lifts no greater than four feet wide - landings may be up to 32 square feet.
- Decks and patios may encroach into bluff and river setbacks up to 15% of the required structure setback, provided they don't extend into the bluff impact zone.
- One water-oriented accessory structure is allowed for every 300 feet of river frontage. Lots less than 300 feet may have one structure. The water-oriented accessory structure is limited to a 12 foot height, 120 square foot area, and must be at least 10 feet from the water's edge. These structures are not allowed in the bluff impact zone.



Specifications for facilities on residential lots.