



OCCOQUAN RESERVOIR SHORELINE EASEMENT

POLICY FAQs

Helpful information for living on the Occoquan Reservoir Fairfax County • Prince William County

The Occoquan Reservoir, with a capacity of greater than 8 billion gallons, is part of a drinking water supply for more than 2 million Northern Virginians. Its shoreline is over 50 miles long. Fairfax Water has an easement along the shoreline for water supply purposes (herein the “Easement”). The Occoquan Reservoir Shoreline Easement Policy establishes restrictions within this Easement area. This guide helps explain frequently-asked questions (FAQs) related to Fairfax Water’s Shoreline Easement Policy.

What is the Fairfax Water Shoreline Easement?

The Easement is the land adjacent to the water’s edge which serves as a buffer around the perimeter of the Occoquan Reservoir. This Easement buffer varies in height above the normal water surface elevation for each shoreline property as set forth in the recorded Easement for a particular property. The area of land within the Easement must be left in its natural state.

Why does Fairfax Water have a Shoreline Easement?

Fairfax Water’s Shoreline Easement was created to allow for flooding of the lands and protection of the public drinking water source by preserving the natural plants and trees around the reservoir. This vegetation provides an important buffer that protects water quality.



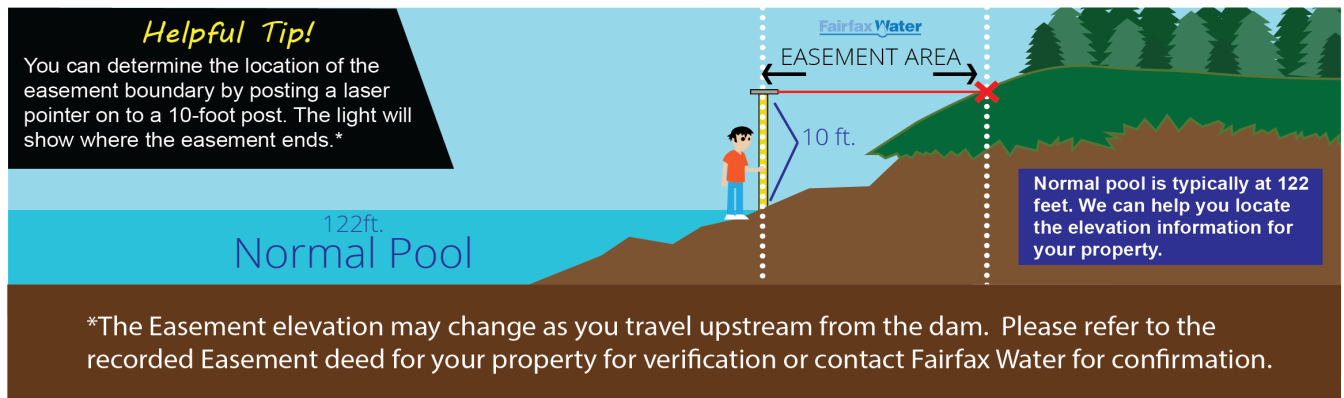
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Where can I find the extent of the Fairfax Water Easement on my property?

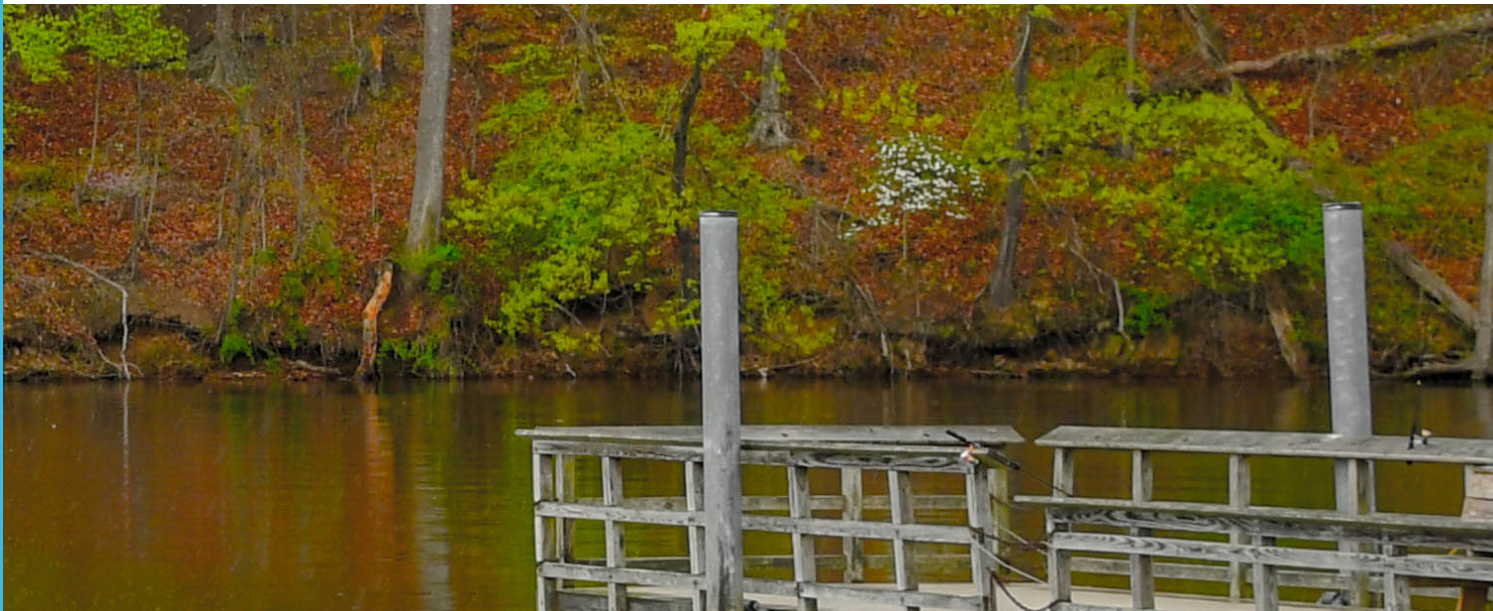
The Fairfax Water Easement should be defined on your property plat. Most land survey companies can mark the Easement location on your property.

As a rule of thumb, Fairfax Water's Easement extends at least to the 130 ft. contour elevation, or roughly 10 feet vertically above the normal pool elevation when water is spilling over the dam.



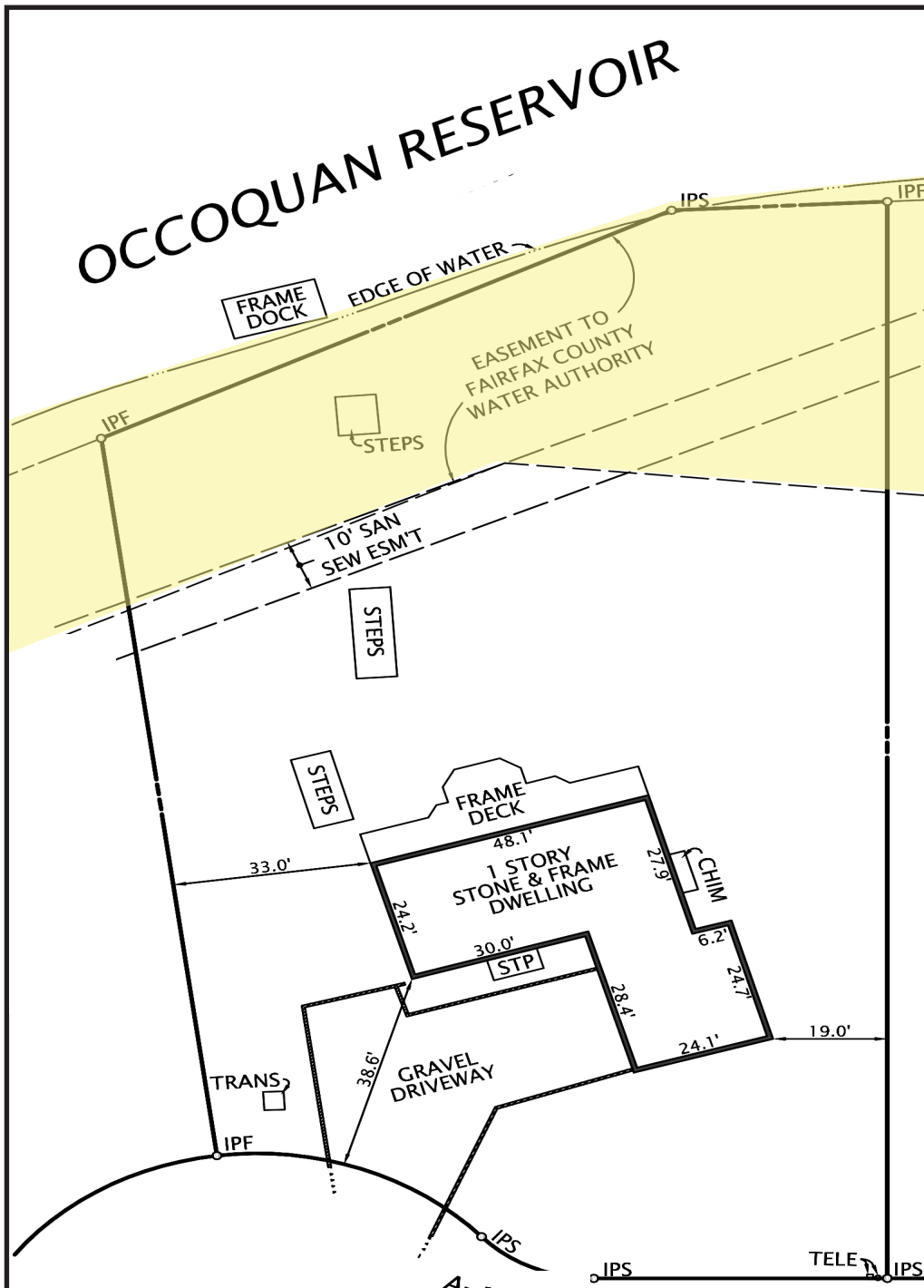
Where can I find the Reservoir's current water elevation?

You can find a current reading of the Reservoir's water level online at: fairfaxwater.org/occoquan-reservoir.



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LEGEND



Area of Easement

The Fairfax Water Easement should be defined on your home location plat. Most land survey companies can mark the Easement location on your property.

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What rules apply to Fairfax Water's Easement?

The Occoquan Reservoir Shoreline Easement Policy defines the rules and regulations set forth by Fairfax Water to maintain the safety and integrity of the public drinking water supply. There are additional restrictions within 100 feet landward of the water through the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act ordinances. This area is called the Resource Protection Area (RPA). Other county, state and federal regulations may apply.

What is allowed on the Easement?

Most shoreline property owners have the deeded right to fishing and boating, and for the construction and maintenance of piers and floats subject to the requirements set forth in the Occoquan Reservoir Shoreline Easement Policy.

What kinds of structures are allowed in the Easement?

Only stairs, piers, floats, and pier/float combinations can be constructed within the Easement with prior permission from Fairfax Water.

Can I cut a path down to the water?

Removal of trees and brush within the Easement is permitted to make a path no more than 4 to 6 feet wide with prior approval from Fairfax Water. You must submit an application with the location of the path and listing of trees, if any, that need to be removed.

Can I remove all the trees to get a view of the water from my house?

No. Clear cutting the forest is not allowed. Tree, shrub, and groundcover layers must be maintained in the Easement and the RPA.

My shoreline is eroding. What can I do?

Shoreline stabilization practices are allowed within the Easement with prior approval from Fairfax Water. Planting additional native vegetation and not mowing or removing vegetation within the Easement can help stabilize eroding banks. Other measures may be necessary.

How do I get permission for shoreline stabilization projects?

Before you begin your project, you must complete a Shoreline Easement Modification Application describing what you want to do. For projects that involve adding materials, such as rip rap, permission is needed from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in addition to permissions from the County and Fairfax Water.

For more information please contact Fairfax Water's Watershed Protection Specialist at:

Phone:
(703) 289-6060

Email:
shorelinepolicy@fairfaxwater.org

Web:
fairfaxwater.org/shoreline-easement-policy

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Only stairs, piers, floats, and pier/float combinations can be constructed within the Easement. Prior permission from Fairfax Water is necessary. Property owners must request permission prior to construction by submitting a [Shoreline Easement Modification Application](#).



Pier: A rigid structure built on pilings and extending into the water from the shoreline.



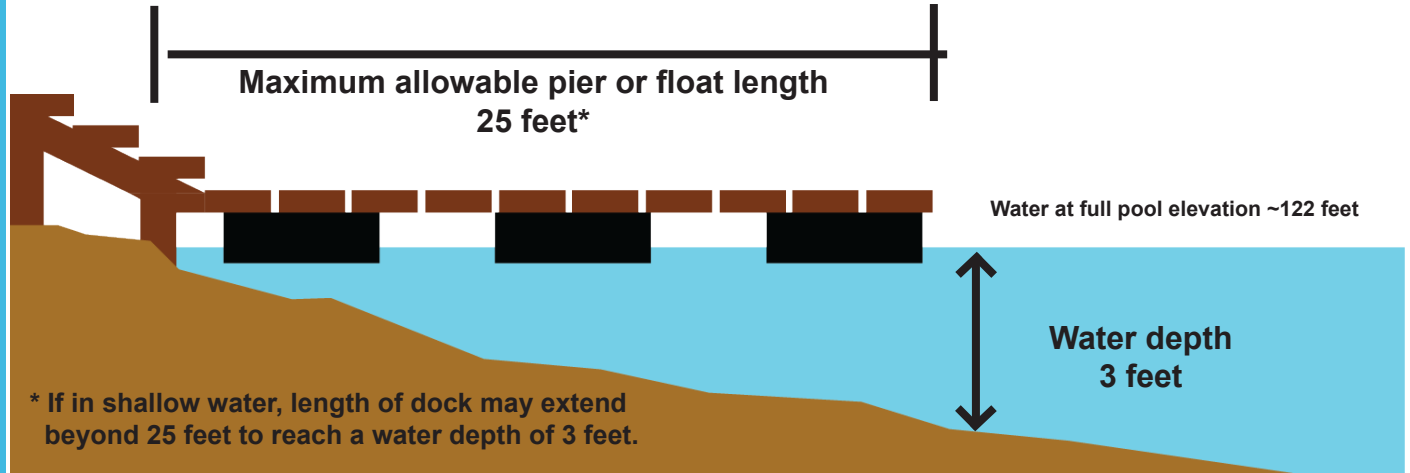
Float: A platform which floats on the surface of the water and is securely attached to either the shore or to a pier.



Pier/Float Combination: A floating dock connected securely to a pier.

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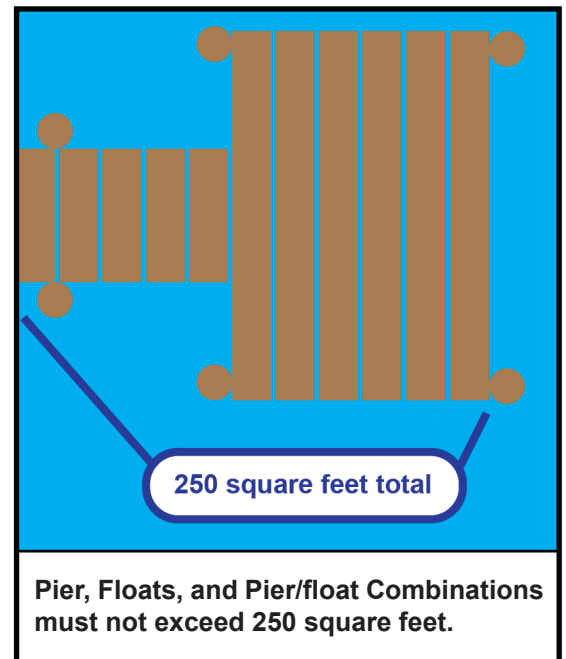
What are the size requirements for a pier or floating dock?

Any pier, float, or combination pier/float structure:

- (i) must not extend from the shoreline beyond a point where, when the Reservoir is at full pool, the water is 3 feet deep or must not be more than 25 feet long perpendicular to the shoreline (at full pool), whichever is greater, and
- (ii) must not exceed 250 square feet in total area.

How many docks can I have?

No more than one pier, float, or combination pier/float structure is permitted. All piers, floats, and pier float/ combinations are subject to review and permission by Fairfax Water.



How do I get permission to put in a pier or floating dock or steps?

Review the Occoquan Reservoir Shoreline Easement Policy and submit a [Shoreline Easement Modification Application](#). Include a property plat and detailed design of the structure. A site visit may be necessary before approvals can be granted.

You must wait for written preliminary approval before proceeding to request local, state and/ or federal permits. Preliminary approval is subject to a revocable License and Covenant Agreement, which will be recorded by Fairfax Water. Written final approval from Fairfax Water is necessary before beginning your project.

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What structures are NOT allowed in the Easement?

All structures other than piers and floats are prohibited. All structures without prior approval and that do not comply with the Shoreline Easement Policy are prohibited.

Any structure made of loose materials such as tires, rubble, scrap machinery, tree trunks or limbs, landscaping timbers, non-encapsulated foam or similar materials are prohibited.

Can I have a fire pit within the Easement?

No. Permanent structures such as fire pits are not allowed within the Easement. However, portable fire pits are not regulated under the Policy.

Can I withdraw water from the Reservoir to water my plants or lawn?

No. Pipes and equipment related to withdrawing or discharging water from the Reservoir except for storm drainage facilities provided by the County are prohibited.

Can I run electricity to my dock?

No. Installing electric lines or light poles in the Easement is prohibited.

Can I have a gazebo or stone patio or landing in the Easement?

No. All structures other than piers and floats are prohibited.

Can I put up a retaining wall or bulkhead?

No. Structures that impede Reservoir flow or displace water within the Reservoir, such as concrete pads and sea walls are prohibited. Hardened structures like walls and concrete pads have been shown to cause accelerated erosion to the adjacent shoreline.

Can I keep a storage bin or shed within the Easement?

No. Enclosed structures like storage bins or sheds within the Easement are prohibited. Fairfax Water must be able to see everything within the Easement to ensure no hazardous chemicals are being stored in an area that can affect water quality if flooded.



Permanent fire pits are prohibited within the Shoreline Easement Area of your property.

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My dock is considered non-complying but needs to be repaired. What do I do?

Those structures existing as of Jan. 1, 2004, when the Shoreline Easement Policy was first enacted that do not comply with the Policy may remain provided that they are repaired as needed to maintain their integrity.

The footprint existing as of Jan. 1, 2004, of the non-complying pier, float, or other structure must not be expanded. If the footprint is expanded, the structure is in violation of the Policy and must be brought into compliance with the current Policy.

If repairs of more than 51% of the total structure are needed, the new structure must comply with the requirements in effect at the time of replacement.

Can Fairfax Water require removal of my dock?

Yes. Fairfax Water has the legal authority to compel the removal of any structure not in compliance with the Shoreline Easement Policy.

Can I get an exception to the Policy?

No. If a non-conforming structure was built without permission from Fairfax Water, generally, exceptions are not granted. Special consideration may be given to public facilities located within the Easement.

Are there funds available to help pay for shoreline stabilization projects on the Occoquan Reservoir?

Yes, Fairfax Water offers a competitive Water Supply Stakeholder Outreach Grant Program in the Spring. Please visit fairfaxwater.org/grants for the most up to date information.



Storage boxes, bins and/or containers are prohibited on docks or in the Shoreline Easement area.

For more information please contact Fairfax Water's Watershed Protection Specialist at:

Phone:
(703) 289-6060

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shorelinepolicy@fairfaxwater.org

Web: fairfaxwater.org/shoreline-easement-policy