

Town of Morris, CT
Planning & Zoning Commission

BANTAM LAKE OVERLAY

Prepared for Planning Workshop on June 18th, reviewed and discussed with BLPA on August 20th, revised for Planning Workshop on September 17, 2025, October 15, 2025; set for public hearing on November 19, 2025. Revised for February 18th and March 18th, 2026 Planning Workshop; set for public hearing on May 20, 2026.

BACKGROUND

The Town of Morris Planning & Zoning Commission reviews the Town Plan (POCD) annually to prioritize its implementation.

The Morris Town Plan of Conservation & Development includes the following recommendations which are associated with Bantam Lake and its watershed:

Amend the zoning regulations to treat and control the negative impacts of stormwater run-off to lakes, ponds, wetlands, and groundwater.

Explore developing a Bantam Lake Waterfront Overlay District that would create restrictions for activities that negatively affect the water quality of Bantam Lake.

Increase awareness about and ensure that applicants follow the Low Impact Development Design Manual to treat stormwater run-off before it reaches the lake.

Amend zoning regulations to set a reasonable fence, berm, or visual barrier limit along public road frontage on the lake shore to protect against blocking roadside view of Bantam Lake.

These recommendations all emphasize **protecting water quality which was the highest priority of the Town Plan** when it was created in 2021.

An **overlay district** is a zoning mechanism that introduces additional development standards and/or restrictions to areas of sensitive environmental concern. Examples include the Flood Plain District in Morris, the Housatonic River Overlay Zone in neighboring towns, the West Hill Pond Overlay in New Hartford, and the Lake Waramaug Overlay Zone in Warren.

Additional standards are applied to portions of properties/properties that fall within this overlay in addition to the existing applicable standards in the underlying zone.

The purpose of the Bantam Lake Overlay District is to maintain and/or improve the water quality of Bantam Lake.

PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT

*It is suggested that the Bantam Lake Overlay District gets added within Article V Special Districts as **Section 56** – **Bantam Lake Overlay District***

Purpose

Bantam Lake is the largest natural lake in Connecticut, covering 947 acres. The purpose of the Bantam Lake Overlay District is to protect and preserve the quality and safety of waterbodies and shorelines within the Town of Morris and to promote the health, safety and welfare of all persons living adjacent to waterbodies and making use of them.

It is proposed that all properties/portions of properties within five-hundred feet (500') of the mean-high water (MHW) mark of Bantam Lake fall into the Bantam Lake Overlay Zone (BLOZ). All site grading, clearing, construction, and/or alteration of structures and site improvements such as the installation of pools, tennis courts, impervious surfaces, within this overlay will be subject to the BLOZ standards are outlined below.

Definitions –

BOAT LIFT – a structure in the watercourse or attached to a dock, or shore, designed to lift a vessel out of the water and/or provide a platform for a vessel.

BUBBLERS- devices that circulate water around a dock, preventing it from freezing solid

DOCK – **A structure is which: 1) is attached to the shoreline; 2) extends over the water; 3) is not a vessel; 4) is removable on a seasonal basis; and 5) allows the free movement of water underneath.**

FLOAT – a freestanding solid or inflatable platform other than a dock, walkway, vessel or boat lift attached to the bed of a watercourse by lines, cables or chains.

IMPERVIOUS SURFACE – an impervious surface is any of the follow surfaces which minimize or prevent the infiltration of rainfall into soil – buildings, roofs, hardscapes such as tennis courts and other sports courts, concrete or stone features such as patios and walkways, roads and driveways.

MEAN-HIGH WATER MARK- mark is a line that water impresses on the shore that distinguishes the land from the waterbody.

MOORINGS- a component to which a vessel may be secured. Examples include wharfs, jetties, piers, and anchor buoys.

VESSEL – every type of watercraft, motorized and nonmotorized, other than a seaplane on water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.

Specific Requirements within the Bantam Lake Overlay Zone

Outdoor Illumination-

1. Residential and commercial properties within the BLOZ shall adhere to Dark Sky Lighting standards (Section 67).

Docks, Floats, and Boat Lifts -

1. All docks affixed to the shore shall be numbered in accordance with the listed street address. The numbering shall be done with reflective materials that are at least 3 inches high. These numbers shall be affixed to the end of a dock to be visible from the water.
2. The use of marine structures (docks, floats, **boat racks**, and boat lifts) shall be recreational in nature, secondary to private residential use, and not for commercial purposes.
3. Docks and other marine structures subject to destruction or damage by ice movement must be removed on a seasonal basis [before ice].
4. Any dock, boat lift, rowing shell dock, or float placed in a watercourse may not be permanently affixed or installed in the waters or lakebed and cannot have any permanent contact with the submerged land. Any marine structure must be built and installed to be temporary in nature and readily removed seasonally or otherwise.
5. Docks shall be fastened to the shoreline in a manner to minimize any disturbance to the existing shoreline. There shall be no re-grading, re-contouring, or similar modification of the existing shoreline and surrounding land. The installation, placement, construction or maintenance of docks shall not include the obstruction, alteration, pollution, removal or disposition of material from or into Bantam Lake.
6. Docks and other marine structures shall be assembled from non-toxic rot resistant material. This can include plastic. The ZEO reserves the right to ask a property owner/applicant details about their dock specifications.
7. Marine and lakefront structures may not include appurtenances such as roofs, raised platforms, and decks. Removable fabric canopies or umbrellas and removable waterslides are allowed.
8. Only shoreline property owners shall have moorings within **their littoral boundaries**.
9. Property lines of shorefront properties shall be considered as littoral boundaries that extend into the lake. The lake itself is not to be misconstrued as one's private property. Bantam Lake is a shared public water resource that the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection manages.

Shoreline Setback

1. All non-marine structures [such as decks, sheds, pools, accessory buildings] shall be setback from the shoreline by at least **twenty feet (20')** as measured from the MHW. **The private use of marine structures (docks, floats, boat racks, and boat lifts) is exempt from this shoreline setback standard.**

Impervious Coverage

1. Impervious surfaces within the Bantam Lake Overlay Zone shall be minimized. Impervious coverage in this overlay zone shall not exceed twenty-five percent (25%). Gravel driveways are counted as impervious.

Low-Impact Design Standards

1. All lake-adjacent development and re-development projects shall be subject to the [Town of Morris Low Impact Development Design Manual](#) which has been in place since 2019 in addition to CT Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control and the Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual, which are applicable if a project's disturbance exceeds ½ acre.

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