

MINOR PROJECT CATEGORIES IN THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

47. Utility Line Activities

Category applies to:

- Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams
- Part 303, Wetlands Protection
- Part 325, Great Lakes Submerged Lands

Activities required for the construction, maintenance, repair, and removal of utility lines and associated facilities in wetlands, inland lakes, and streams.

A “utility line” is any pipe or pipeline for the transportation of any gaseous, liquid, liquescent, or slurry substance, for any purpose, and any cable, line, or wire for the transmission for any purpose of electrical energy, telephone, and telegraph messages, and radio and television communication. The term “utility line” does not include activities that drain a water of the State, such as drainage tile or french drains, but it does apply to pipes conveying drainage from another area.

This category includes:

1. Installation, maintenance, repair, and removal of utility lines provided there is no change in the preconstruction grade, that meet all the following:
 - Crossing locations shall be selected to minimize the impact to the wetlands, inland lakes and streams.
 - The outside diameter of the pipe, cable, encasement, etc. shall not exceed 36 inches.
 - A minimum of 36 inches of cover will be maintained between the top of the cable or pipe and the soil surface. Access areas (e.g., sealed manholes) may be allowed in wetlands if impacts are avoided and minimized. The installation shall use the best available construction technologies that are necessary to avoid and minimize impact when considering the wetlands and waters involved. Additional precautions and construction techniques may be necessary in areas of high quality resources. Use of directional drilling/jack and bore should be given particular emphasis in any area that is prone to erosion, on slopes upgradient from coldwater streams, in forested wetland habitat, in high quality wetlands or wetland types that are locally or regionally uncommon. Stream crossing shall use dry ditch open trenching, and shall be limited to 50 feet per crossing (bank to bank) and a cumulative total of 200 feet per application.
 - Wetland crossings using open trenching shall be limited to total cumulative crossing length of 500 feet per application.
 - All revegetation of wetland sites must be with plant species that are native to Michigan according to the Floristic Quality Assessment for the State of Michigan.
 - The construction of new permanent access roads is not included under this MP category.

When these methods are used, the following additional criteria apply:

Plowing-in/Knifing-in for Wetlands Only (greater than 6 inches in diameter)

- This method is not allowed for crossing wetlands with open water, streams, or lakes.
- There is no limit on the distance of crossing wetland areas using Plowing- in/Knifing-in methods.
- This category cannot be used in forested wetlands where trees need to be removed to conduct the activity.

- All impacted areas shall be immediately restored to grade.
- No additional fill materials (other than the utility itself) shall be placed in the wetland.
- Rutting or other soil disturbance shall be restored and stabilized.

Open Trenching

- Project design and construction features shall assure that backfill used in the excavated trench will not result in the drainage of wetlands. Clay plugs shall be shown in the construction plans and shall be placed at the wetland/upland boundary in all instances and as needed throughout the trench system.
- Construction mats shall be utilized to the greatest extent possible to minimize ground compaction and disturbance to waters of the state.
- For wetlands, excavated materials shall be stockpiled and used to backfill the trench area with the top 12 inches of topsoil being stockpiled separately to backfill the top portion of the trench.
- Any excavated materials that are sidecast or stockpiled in the wetlands shall be contained to the minimal amount of area feasible and shall not remain in the wetland for more than 30 days. Excess excavated materials shall be disposed of in an identified non-wetland site.
- Stockpiling or sidecasting is not allowed in any inland lakes and streams.
- All disturbed areas shall be restored no later than 30 days after completion. Restoration shall include restoring the area to original grade, decompacting the soils, and seeding and plantings native to Michigan to re-establish the preconstruction wetland type.