

SPEED ZONES AND RESTRICTED AREAS - Emergency and Temporary Zones

What was proposed?

The Department proposed to establish a process to delineate speed zones and restricted areas by public notice for the instances laid out in Natural Resources Article, §8-725.9, Annotated Code of Maryland (2025 Md. Laws, Chap. 433). Natural Resources Article, §8-725.9, Annotated Code of Maryland, allows the Department to establish or alter by public notice an area where vessel movement is controlled, limited, or restricted as designated by the U.S. Coast Guard or another federal agency, or, if the Department determines public safety is at risk and it is contrary to the public interest to delay action, a speed zone near: (1) A construction project on or adjacent to State waters; (2) A marine event; or (3) An accident or other emergent situation.

The proposed action requires the public notice to be posted on the Department's website a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the effective date. The public notice will also be disseminated through various other media (e.g., social media, email lists, publishing in the Maryland Register, etc.) and buoys will be placed in the area so that an affected individual has a reasonable opportunity to be informed.

Why is this change necessary?

The proposed action establishes the process for issuing a public notice to implement the statute. Creating or modifying speed zones or restricted areas by public notice will allow the Department to better manage the use of state waters in times of emergency or in response to short-term needs.

Who will this affect?

Anyone who boats in the State of Maryland.

What is the specific regulatory action?

Amend Regulation .04 under COMAR 08.18.01 General.

Was this change discussed with advisory bodies or other interested or impacted individuals?

- The idea was scoped with the Boat Act Advisory Committee (BAAC) at their meeting on January 22, 2026.
- The idea was scoped with the general public from February 2, 2026, through February 22, 2026.

Regulatory Process

Boating rules in Maryland may be created by either the General Assembly or the Department. When the Department creates a boating rule, it is called a regulation. When the General Assembly creates a rule, it is called a statute. The Department often has to create a regulation to implement a statute. The regulatory process begins with scoping and the Department follows normal [procedures](#) as concepts move forward.

During the scoping process, the Department gathers suggestions and ideas from stakeholders and others about how to solve a boating problem or address a need. The goal of scoping is to identify issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issues so that

management actions can be developed. After the public has had an opportunity to comment on possible management actions during the scoping process, the Department considers these comments and develops an appropriate management strategy.

At the conclusion of the scoping process, the Department determined that the action is necessary and appropriate. The rules are being promulgated following the Administrative Procedures Act described in Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the State Government Article Annotated Code of Maryland.

- The General Assembly's Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review Committee reviews the regulatory proposal for fiscal and legal analysis.
- The proposal was printed by the Division of State Documents in the Maryland Register on April 17, 2026.
- A 30 day public comment period began on the day of publication. The comment period ends May 18, 2026.
- After review of the comments, the Department may adopt the changes.
- If the Department adopts the changes, they become effective after a notice is published in the Maryland Register that announces the adoption and effective date.

When could this be effective?

The Department projects that this change could be effective in June of 2026. However, the exact date cannot be determined at this time.