

Critical Area Commission

STAFF REPORT

August 2, 2023

APPLICANT:	Talbot County
PROPOSAL:	Talbot County Critical Area Program Text Amendment Bill 1528: Structures and Erosion Control Measures Above Mean High Water, Piers, and Marine Uses
COMMISSION ACTION:	Concurrence with Chairman's Determination of Refinement
STAFF RECOMMENDATION:	Return with a list of changes to be made
STAFF:	Jennifer Esposito
APPLICABLE LAW/ REGULATIONS:	Natural Resources Article 8-1809(p)

DISCUSSION

Talbot County has submitted a text amendment to their Critical Area Program for approval by the Critical Area Commission. The bill amends several sections of the County Code relating to erosion control measures and structures above mean high water (MHW), private piers, and Critical Area Buffer establishment requirements. The proposed changes that directly impact the County's Critical Area Program are noted below and a copy of the bill is attached to this staff report (Attachment 1). Bill No. 1528 was approved by the County Council on April 25, 2023. The changes to the Talbot County Critical Area program are not effective until Critical Area Commission grants approval.

Proposed Amendments

Section 190-15.10.H. *Shoreline Development Buffer*

Talbot County Code Chapter 190-15.10 contains the Habitat Protection Area provisions of the Critical Area overlay zone. Part H. lays out the intent of the Shoreline Development Buffer, minimum width, and references additional parts of the Code for specific standards. This bill would add a new provision to Part H that would allow for erosion control measures and structures to be built above MHW on shorelines for which the bank is at least 4 feet in height. Certain standards apply, including a determination from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on the appropriateness of a structural measure, and a County-approved Buffer Management Plan and zoning certificate.

Section 190-31.2.A. Piers and related facilities (community and private, Number of piers, community piers, private piers, compensation.

Talbot County Code Chapter 190-31.2 contains provisions for piers and related facilities under the Marine Uses section of the code. Part 31.2.A.1 was amended to add provisions allowing for the construction of two piers on one lot, provided that the lot is over 40 acres in size, fronts two bodies of water and one pier is allowed per body of water. The language limits one pier per lot if the lot is further subdivided and prohibits the consolidation or reconfiguration with other adjacent lots in a manner that would be inconsistent with the Critical Area Commission's lot consolidation and reconfiguration regulations (COMAR 27.01.02.08).

Part 31.2.A.4 was amended to strike private pier as an accessory use and instead allow it as a primary use, either by right or by special exception. A dwelling is required on a lot with a private pier, except under the following circumstance in which it can be allowed by right: the residential lot could accommodate a dwelling of at least 1,000 square feet; driveway access is reviewed by the Department of Public Works; and Buffer mitigation and planting is provided. Under the special exception criteria, a private pier may be located on a lot without a dwelling under the following circumstance: the riparian lot was subdivided by a road from the original non-riparian lot that does have a dwelling; the riparian lot remains in common ownership; and the property otherwise meets the requirements for a private pier. In all other instances, a primary dwelling or grandfathered foundation is required for a private pier to be constructed. The standards for authorizing a pier as a special exception previously existed in the County Code under the Accessory Use standards.

The remaining edits to 190-31.2 do not specifically impact the County's Critical Area Program, but relate to private pier length, lateral lines and lateral line setbacks, platform size, the legal nonconforming status of a pier, and provisions that allow for the modification, reconfiguration, reorientation, reconstruction, and the demolition and replacement of a legally nonconforming pier in a different location. Lastly, the text amends the definition of a boathouse, platform areas, and raised walkway.

Consistency with Critical Area Law and Regulations

Commission staff reviewed an earlier version of the bill and provided County staff with general feedback. While most of Commission staff's initial comments and questions were addressed in later iterations of the text amendment, the proposed new provision allowing shore erosion measures and structures in the Buffer poses several questions and concerns. The text would explicitly allow for Buffer disturbance associated with certain types of erosion control measures or structures which are not a permitted activity in the Buffer unless it was associated with an MDE-approved shore erosion control activity. For example, the language would appear to allow structural measures such as bulkheads in the Buffer that would not touch MHW and therefore not require MDE authorization. Critical Area law and regulations allow shoreline stabilization, and therefore disturbance to the Buffer, consistent with other State laws and regulations. This language potentially provides a pathway for increases in Buffer disturbance and could have unintended and adverse consequences to the State's prioritization of nonstructural shoreline

stabilization measures where appropriate. Moreover, the language lacks a defined process and criteria to accurately base a determination for structural “appropriateness” given that MDE has no regulatory jurisdiction above the MHW line.

The remaining changes to 190-31.2 do not affect the County’s Critical Area program. However, we are providing a summary of those comment in more detail in the next section of this staff report for information for the County. Based on review by staff from Maryland Department of the Environment, the changes may not be entirely consistent with MDE law and regulations regarding piers.

State Agency Comments

Commission staff coordinated with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Chesapeake and Coastal Services (DNR CCS)¹ and the Maryland Department of the Environment’s (MDE) Wetland and Waterways Division to seek input on how this proposed text may impact/conflict with State goals and regulations. See Attachment 2 for the complete list of comments received.

DNR CCS has several concerns over the new provision under Section 190-15.10.H that would allow for hardened structures and erosion control measures above MHW. DNR CCS shares similar goals with MDE under their jurisdiction of the Living Shorelines Protection Act, which includes emphasizing the importance of nature-based projects, such as living shorelines, to help address escalating risks from extreme weather and climate-related events and to support the ability of habitat to naturally change over time as conditions evolve. Any hardening of the shoreline above MHW would reduce the ability of the shoreline and Critical Area Buffer to attenuate storm impacts and flood events. Additionally, shoreline areas where a nature-based approach would be anticipated to be successful are also areas where wetland and near-shore habitat migration is anticipated to provide long-term resilience benefits to the property as well as to adjacent properties, communities, and to State natural resources. Hardening of these areas would prevent the natural migration of habitat to provide enhanced protection ability over time. Furthermore, the hardening of the shoreline will increase the probability of toe scour² landward of the erosion control structure which will result in the further diminishment to natural beaches and/or wetland habitat.

Similarly, comments received from MDE noted the new provisions may undermine the intent of the Living Shoreline Protection Act, which requires improvements to protect a person’s property from shoreline erosion to consist of a nonstructural shoreline stabilization measure such as a living shoreline to help preserve the natural environment unless MDE issues a waiver. MDE has no regulatory authority above MHW unless private tidal wetlands or nontidal wetlands are

¹Chesapeake and Coastal Service is a unit of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources that works to ensure that the state and its communities are equipped to better balance the often competing and occasionally conflicting demands and needs of Chesapeake and coastal resource use, economic development and conservation. Among a variety of services they provide the public and state and local partners, they also provide financial and technical assistance for nature-based solutions along the shoreline areas of the State.

² Toe scour is caused by wave refraction from an installed hardened structure (e.g. revetment or bulkhead) that results in scouring or erosion of land or vegetation channelward of the structure.

present, yet the proposal delegates the determination authority of a structural measure above MHW to MDE. There is no mechanism in place for MDE to review any erosion control proposal outside of MDE's jurisdiction.

MDE had additional concerns relating to the requirements for piers. Those concerns included defining "lateral lines" in permit review and how they intersect with neighboring property owner riparian rights. MDE is obligated to protect future riparian rights and is concerned the proposed text amendments may allow for waivers of setback in situations which could impact those rights; i.e. riparian waterfront owners could lose riparian rights without input in the County process.

Refinement Review Process

In reviewing proposals to amend a local Critical Area Program, the Commission must ensure the proposed changes meet the purposes, policies and goals of the Critical Area law and all Critical Area regulations. The Commission has four options for a decision: (1) Approve, (2) Deny, (3) Approve subject to conditions, or (4) Return with a list of changes to be made. In this instance, the County proposal includes some provisions that do not meet Critical Area regulations and other State law and some provisions which are consistent with Critical Area law and other State laws.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Commission staff recommends that the Commission concur with the Chair's determination that this text amendment be processed as a refinement to Talbot County's Critical Area Program.

Further, Commission staff recommend the Chair return Bill No. 1528 to the Talbot County Council with the following change to be made:

1. The County strike the language in County Code 190-15.10.H.5 authorizing erosion control structures and measures above mean high water, as this provision does not meet Critical Area law or COMAR 27.01 et seq.

Lastly, staff recommends the Chair direct the County to work with Maryland Department of Environment to ensure the proposed amendments to Chapter 190 of the Zoning Code related to private piers is consistent with State law.

COUNTY COUNCIL
OF
TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

2023 Legislative Session, Legislative Day No.: March 14, 2023

Bill No.: 1528

Expiration Date: May 18, 2023

Introduced by: Mr. Callahan, Ms. Haythe, Mr. Leshner, Ms. Mielke, Mr. Stepp

A BILL TO AMEND CHAPTER 190 OF THE TALBOT COUNTY CODE (ZONING, SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT), SECTIONS 190-15 (CRITICAL AREA OVERLAY), 190-25.2 (TABLE OF LAND USES), 190-31 (MARINE USES), 190-33 (ACCESSORY USES), 190-50 (NONCONFORMING STRUCTURES), 190-58.2 (MINOR VARIANCES), AND 190-78 (TERMS DEFINED), REGARDING EROSION CONTROL MEASURES, PIERS, AND RIPARIAN STRUCTURES

By the Council: March 14, 2023

Introduced, read first time, ordered posted, and public hearing scheduled on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bradley Meeting Room, Talbot County Courthouse, South Wing, 11 North Washington Street, Easton, Maryland 21601.

By Order: 
Susan W. Moran, Secretary

A BILL TO AMEND CHAPTER 190 OF THE TALBOT COUNTY CODE (ZONING, SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT), SECTIONS 190-15 (CRITICAL AREA OVERLAY), 190-25.2 (TABLE OF LAND USES), 190-31 (MARINE USES), 190-33 (ACCESSORY USES), 190-50 (NONCONFORMING STRUCTURES), 190-58.2 (MINOR VARIANCES), AND 190-78 (TERMS DEFINED), REGARDING EROSION CONTROL MEASURES, PIERS, AND RIPARIAN STRUCTURES

SECTION ONE: BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND that Chapter 190 (Zoning, Subdivision and Land Development) shall be and is hereby amended as follows:

KEY	
Boldface	Heading or defined term
<u>Underlining</u>	Added to law by Bill
Strikethrough	Deleted from law by Bill
* * *	Existing law unaffected

* * *

§ 190-15 Critical Area Overlay District (CAO).

* * *

§ 190-15.10 Habitat protection areas; habitat protection plans.

* * *

H. Shoreline Development Buffer. (See §§ 190-15.11 and 190-15.12.)

1. The Shoreline Development Buffer is intended to consist of naturally vegetated areas, or areas to be established in vegetation, that are managed to protect aquatic, shoreline, wetland, and terrestrial environments from human-made disturbances.
2. In order to accomplish this intent, the Shoreline Development Buffer generally prohibits new development, requires protection of naturally vegetated areas, and requires mitigation whenever natural vegetation is disturbed or new development occurs.

3. The location and width of the Shoreline Development Buffer is determined by COMAR, § 27.01.09.01.E. This area is established for each lot or parcel based upon the criteria given in § 190-15.11.B below.
4. Requirements for the Shoreline Development Buffer are given in §§ 190-15.11 and 190-15.12.
5. Erosion control measures and structures above mean high water are permitted with an approved Buffer Management Plan and zoning certificate, provided that: (i) such measures and structures are determined by the Department of the Environment to be appropriate to address erosion of a shoreline bank at least 4' in height above mean high water, and (ii) mitigation is provided in the same manner as required for shore erosion control measures.

* * *

§ 190-25.2 Table of Land Uses

Amend Table IV-1. Table of Land Uses as indicated on Exhibit 1 attached hereto and incorporated herein.

* * *

§ 190-31 Marine uses.

* * *

31.2 Piers and related facilities (community and private).

A. Number of piers, community piers, private piers, compensation.

1. Parcels and lots shall be limited to one pier, except that parcels larger than 40 acres in size and having frontage on two bodies of water may have one pier on each body of water if the second pier is authorized by the Maryland Department of the Environment and by special exception. In evaluating whether the parcel has frontage on different "bodies of water", the Board of Appeals may consider a range of factors, including, without limitation, whether the second pier is proposed on a body of water that has materially different shoreline characteristics than the location of the existing pier, the depth and location of any defined channel relative to each shoreline, the length of any defined channel, whether and where a channel splits into or consolidates with other channels relative the location of the property, and each shoreline's orientation, water depth, fetch, wake activity, and presence of submerged aquatic vegetation. Private piers shall be limited to six outboard mooring piles, and a cumulative total of six boat or personal watercraft lifts. The six lifts shall include no more than four boat lifts. Lifts

with a fixed or floating platform, ~~or covered lifts~~ will be counted in the cumulative total platform area limit. If a parcel improved by multiple piers is subdivided, no more than one existing pier shall be permitted on any subdivided lot. A parcel improved by multiple piers may not be reconfigured or consolidated with other adjacent lots(s) in any manner that is inconsistent with Critical Area lot consolidation or reconfiguration regulations.

2. The owner(s) of a pier shall not be permitted to receive compensation for the use of their pier.
3. Community piers are permitted as a special exception use, subject to the following:
 - a. A community pier shall serve at least two lots.
 - b. Two or more community piers may be permitted by the Planning Commission to serve a riparian subdivision.
 - c. The right of access to a community pier shall be adequately provided for in a properly recorded set of covenants that incorporate maintenance agreements.
 - d. Primary dwelling footings and foundation members shall be in place and construction shall be diligently pursued on at least one lot prior to issuance of a permit for a community pier.
4. Private piers are permitted as ~~an accessory~~ permitted use, subject to the following:
 - a. They shall not be permitted on a lot served by a community pier.
 - b. A dwelling shall exist on the lot or pPrimary dwelling footing and foundation members shall be in place and construction shall be diligently pursued on at least one lot prior to issuance of a permit for a private pier.
 - c. Notwithstanding (b) above, a residential private pier is permitted on a lot without a dwelling, provided that:
 - (i) Such lot complies with the current minimum lot size and width requirements, or is a legally existing nonconforming lot with respect to lot size and/or width and of sufficient size and width to accommodate development of a dwelling 1,000 square feet in size;

(ii) Driveway access to the lot is reviewed and approved by the Department of Public Works.

(iii) To the extent the Shoreline Development Buffer of the lot is not fully established in three-tier vegetation and the only improvement constructed is the pier, buffer establishment shall be provided in an amount equal to the greater of: (1) such establishment as required for all proposed improvements in accordance with Section 190-15.11, or (2) 500 square feet. Such Buffer mitigation shall be required even if the pier improvement would otherwise be exempt from buffer establishment under Section 190-15.11(D)(1)(a) or 190-15.11(D)(4). All buffer mitigation or establishment shall be provided in accordance with Section 190-15.11(E).

d. Notwithstanding (b) and (c) above, a residential private pier may be approved as a special exception on a lot without a dwelling that also does not satisfy (b), provided that:

(i) Such lot is in common ownership with, described in a single deed as of August 13, 1989, and divided by a road only from a noncontiguous lot improved by a dwelling; and

(ii) The riparian lot is a legally existing nonconforming lot that does not meet current lot size or width requirements; and

(iii) The property otherwise meets the requirements for a private pier as provided in § 31.2; and

(iv) Until the pier is removed or the riparian parcel becomes a legal conforming lot, the lots shall remain in common ownership and shall be considered merged for zoning purpose for construction of the accessory residential pier only.

~~A private pier may be approved as an accessory structure on a parcel without a principal residential structure as listed in § 190-33.1.B.4.~~

B. Setbacks. Except for a community pier located on a joint property line or piers authorized under (C)(3) below, piers may not be constructed closer to a side property line than the required side yard setback for the zoning district in which they are located.

C. Water area for location.

1. Except as provided by (3) or (4) below, tThe water area within which a pier may be located is defined by the harbor lines and lateral lines and shall be determined in accordance with § 190-15.14, Water-dependent facilities.
2. Except as provided by (3) or (4) below, aAll piers shall be located a minimum distance of 25 feet from the lateral lines. This setback may be reduced to no less than five feet if a letter of no objection is obtained from the adjacent property owner.
3. For any parcel improved by a legal nonconforming or shared pier as of _____, 2023, [effective date of Bill] that encroaches upon or crosses a lateral line or lateral line setback, a replacement or reconfigured pier may be located across a lateral line and/or within the lateral line setback and may attach to land within a side yard setback upon the Planning Commission's approval of a waiver pursuant to § 190-62, provided that an Agreement of Setback and/or Lateral Line Encroachment in the form required by the Planning Officer is executed by the owners of both affected properties and recorded among the Land Records of Talbot County.
4. In situation where lateral lines and harbor lines would otherwise prohibit a pier from reaching (a) 150 feet in length, or (b) such shorter length as permits construction of two boat slips having a minimum water depth of three feet at mean low tide, the Planning Officer may, by minor variance pursuant to § 190-58.2, authorize a pier to be located across lateral lines and/or the harbor line provided that an Agreement of Setback and/or Lateral Line Encroachment in the form required by the Planning Officer is executed by the owners of both affected properties and recorded among the Land Records of Talbot County.

D. Extension, width, length, impedance of natural channel, repair or replacement piers.

1. New piers, or any portion thereof, including outboard pilings, finger piers, catwalks, boat or personal watercraft lifts, platform areas or floating docks shall extend 150 feet or less in length measured from the mean high-water, unless otherwise authorized by Subsection D.9 below. Notwithstanding any other section of this chapter, this limitation shall not be subject to modification by either a special exception or a variance, except as authorized pursuant to § 190-31.2(D)(8)(b)(ii).
2. The maximum width of a pier shall be six feet.
3. Finger piers shall be limited to two for private piers and to the number of slips permitted in Subsection F.4 below for community piers and shall not exceed three feet in width. In no case shall the length of a finger pier exceed the lesser of (a) 40 feet, or (b) ~~nor be longer than 50% of~~ the slip length. The area of finger piers, catwalks and platform areas associated with boat lifts as described in Subsection A.1 above shall not exceed a cumulative total of

240 square feet for private piers and 240 square feet per side for a shared pier serving two adjacent lots.

34. Platform areas, including but not limited to, floating or fixed docks, launching facilities, or boat lift platforms attached to or associated with a pier shall not exceed a cumulative total area of:
- a. Two hundred square feet for private or community piers located along a joint property line shared by two adjacent lots. Additional area projecting from a pier, including finger piers, and catwalks, shall be no greater than three feet wide. ~~Finger piers, catwalks and platform areas associated with boat lifts as described in Subsection A.1 above shall not exceed a cumulative total of 120 square feet for private piers and 120 square feet per side for a community pier serving two adjacent lots.~~
 - b. Three hundred fifty square feet for community piers serving three or more lots, excluding finger piers, catwalks and platform areas associated with boat lifts as described in Subsection A.1 above.
45. In no case shall any parts of a pier exceed 1/2 of the distance from the mean high-water line to the center line of the body of water, said line herein established as the tributary harbor line.
56. In no case shall any parts of a pier impede the natural channel of the waterway.
67. When measuring the width of creeks or rivers with a total width of less than 500 feet, small and shallow coves along the shoreline shall not be used in determining the width of the waterway.
78. Replacement or extension of existing piers. The following requirements apply to piers completed prior to February 14, 2004.
- a. A functional pier, meeting the state standard of performing at least 85% (or such lesser standard as established by State regulations) of the designed purpose, may be replaced in kind, even if it exceeds the maximum allowed width, the one-hundred-fifty-foot extension into a body of water or the two-hundred-square-foot limit on additional area.
 - b. Conforming piers and legal, nonconforming pPiers may be widened or lengthened and finger piers, platform areas, floating docks, mooring pilings, and boat lifts may be added, including beyond the 150 feet length limitation or beyond lateral lines or the harbor lines, only if the additional areas are in compliance with the requirements

in Subsection D.1 through ~~6~~7 above or do not increase the extent of any nonconformity with such requirements, except:

- (i) as otherwise provided Subsection D.8.d, or
- (ii) such minimum increase(s) in nonconformity as approved by the Planning Officer by minor variance pursuant to § 190-58.2 that are necessary to maintain the function of a conforming pier or legal, nonconforming pier existing as of _____, 2023 [effective date of Bill], where shoreline erosion or accretion impair the function of the existing pier.

~~Boat or personal watercraft lifts may be added to a legal, nonconforming pier, so long as they do not add platform area.~~

- c. A pier that does not meet the state standard of performing at least 85% (or such lesser standard as established by State regulations) of the designed purpose may be replaced beyond the 150-foot maximum allowed length standards provided in § 190-31.2.D.1, at a maximum width of six feet, to provide direct access to a legal nonconforming boathouse that remains functional and was historically accessed by the pier to be replaced.

d. A legal, nonconforming pier may be modified, reconfigured, re-oriented, reconstructed, or demolished and replaced at a different location on the same lot, provided that any one of the following requirements is met:

- (i) The reconstructed pier is replaced in-kind;
- (ii) The modified, reconfigured, re-oriented, reconstructed or relocated pier complies with the requirements of Subsections D.1 through D.7 above;
- (iii) The modified, reconfigured, re-oriented, reconstructed or relocated pier lessens the extent of one or more of the existing nonconformities with Subsections D.1 through D.7 above and is of the same or smaller dimensions than the original structure; or
- (iv) If a nonconformity with the requirements of Subsection D.1 through 7 above will be modified, reconfigured, re-oriented, or relocated without a reduction in the extent of such nonconformity, such construction shall comply with the following:

1. Any increase in a nonconformity with Subsections D.2 or D.3 above shall not exceed 15% and shall be approved by the Planning Director as a minor variance;
2. Any construction that will constitute a modification, reconfiguration, re-orientation or relocation of a nonconformity shall have been approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment;
3. The applicant shall provide the Planning Director with documentation that such modification, reconfiguration, re-orientation, reconstruction or relocation will provide a net environmental benefit over existing conditions. Potential examples of environmental benefits include, without limitation, reduction of prop wash and/or shading of submerged aquatic vegetation, access from a less steep portion of the shoreline buffer, or re-location to an area that minimizes buffer disruption for construction; and
4. For any encroachment upon a lateral line setback, the Applicant shall demonstrate to the Planning Director that the owners of immediately adjacent properties received written notice of the permit application and a 30-day period to submit written comments on the proposal to the Planning Director
5. The Planning Director may refer any application for a pier proposed under this Subsection to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation.

89. Functional piers, meeting the state standard of performing at least 85% (or such lesser standard as established by State regulations) of the designed purpose prior to any damage sustained by a storm event or other natural cause, may be repaired or restored in accordance with § 190-50.4, Reconstruction and relocation, of nonconforming structures.

910. Piers meeting the requirements and standards listed below may be extended:

- a. Pier length, width and platform area limitations set forth in Subsection D.1 through 3 and 7 above may be exceeded for piers required to support one or more of the following uses:
 - i. Fisheries activities facilities;
 - ii. Ports and related facilities;

- iii. Aquaculture (retail);
 - iv. Fish and game hatcheries; and
 - v. Aquaculture (wholesale).
 - b. The request for such extensions shall not exceed 200 feet in length.
 - c. Such increases for Subsection D.9.a.i. through iv. above shall be justified to the satisfaction of the site plan approving authority and shall be shown on an approved site plan. Any increase shall not exceed the minimum adjustment necessary.
 - d. Extensions for piers supporting aquaculture (wholesale) may be permitted consistent with this subsection by the Board of Appeals as a special exception.
- E. Mooring pilings, floating docks and platforms. All detached mooring pilings, floating docks and platforms associated with a land-based pier shall be considered a part of the land-based structure and, except as provided by Section D.8 above, shall comply with the applicable setback, pier length and platform area requirements contained in this chapter.
- F. Additional requirements for community piers. The following requirements apply to community piers, in addition to the supplemental requirements for water-dependent facilities in the Critical Area Overlay District § 190-15.14:
- 1. The facilities shall not offer food, fuel, or other goods and services for sale.
 - 2. The facilities shall be community owned and established and operated for the benefit of the residents of a platted and recorded riparian subdivision.
 - 3. Disturbance to the Shoreline Development Buffer shall be the minimum necessary to provide a single point of access through the Buffer to the facilities.
 - 4. Per COMAR, finger piers shall be limited to a maximum of three feet wide ~~and not exceeding 50% of the proposed slip length~~. Each property owner with a boat slip may be authorized up to two shared three (3) foot wide finger piers, a boat lift or other minor components, provided such components comply with all other applicable regulations.
 - 5. The number of slips shall be the lesser of Subsection F.5.a or b below:
 - a. One slip for each 300 feet of shoreline in the subdivision in the Rural Conservation District or for each 50 feet of shoreline in the

subdivision in a rural residential, village center, or town residential district; or

- b. A ratio of slips to platted lots or dwellings within the subdivision in the Critical Area according to the following schedule:

Table IV-2. Ratio of Boat Slips to Lots or Dwellings	
Number of Lots or Dwellings	Number of Slips
Up to 15	1 for each lot
16 to 40	15 or 75% of total lots, whichever is greater
41 to 100	30 or 50% of total lots, whichever is greater
101 to 300	50 or 25% of total lots, whichever is greater
Over 300	75 or 15% of total lots, whichever is greater

* * *

§ 190-33 Accessory uses.

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§ 190-33.1 Accessory uses, general requirements.

* * *

B. On lots without a principal use or structure.

1. An accessory storage structure may be approved as a special exception on a lot without a principal use or structure, as listed in the Table of Land Uses (Table IV-1) and § 190-33.24 below under "Storage building prior to construction of a primary structure."
2. An accessory storage structure is also permitted as a temporary use during construction, as provided in § 190-34.2.A, "Accessory building prior to construction of a primary structure."
3. If a proposed subdivision would create a lot with an existing private pier but no principal use or primary structure, the pier may be retained subject to approval of a waiver. The waiver must be approved by the approving authority for the plat prior to or at the time of subdivision plan approval.

~~4. An accessory residential private pier may be approved as a special exception on a lot without a principal residential structure, provided that:~~

- ~~a. The two noncontiguous lands are in common ownership, described in a single deed as of August 13, 1989, and divided by a road only; and~~
- ~~b. The riparian lot is a legally existing nonconforming lot that does not meet current lot size or width requirements; and~~
- ~~c. The nonriparian lot shall contain a principal dwelling; and~~
- ~~d. The property otherwise meets the requirements for a private pier as provided in § 31.2; and~~
- ~~e. Until the pier is removed or the riparian parcel becomes a legal conforming lot, the lots shall remain in common ownership and shall be considered merged for zoning purpose for construction of the accessory residential pier only.~~

- C. Accessory land uses in Table IV-1. Certain specific accessory uses are listed in Table IV-1. Requirements for these uses are listed below.
- D. Bulk requirements. See § 190-12.3 for bulk requirements specific to accessory structures.

* * *

§ 190-50 Nonconforming structures.

* * *

50.4 Reconstruction and relocation.

* * *

- B. Relocation. A nonconforming structure may be relocated or demolished and replaced at a different location on the same lot, provided that any one of the following requirements is met:
 1. The relocated structure complies with all bulk requirements.
 2. The Board of Appeals grants the necessary variances.
 3. A minor variance application may be submitted for a decision by the Planning Director if the relocated structure lessens the extent of the nonconformity; is of the same or smaller dimensions than the original structure; and is located in the same general area of the lot.

4. A minor variance application may be submitted for a decision by the Planning Director for relocated structures within the Shoreline Development Buffer, provided that:
 - a. The relocated structure lessens the extent of the nonconformity; is of the same or smaller dimensions than the original structure; and is located in the same general area of the lot; and,
 - b. Both the Buffer area and the entire site will comply with the Critical Area lot coverage requirement or, if nonconforming to the lot coverage requirement, the proposed relocation will not increase the lot coverage either within the Buffer or for the entire site. (See § 190-15.6C for lot coverage requirements.).
5. The procedures and standards for variances in § 190-58 shall apply.
6. The foregoing shall not apply to relocation, replacements or reconfiguration of a nonconforming pier authorized under § 190-31.2D.8.d.

* * *

§ 190-58.2 Minor variances.

- A. Authority and limitations. A minor variance may be granted by the Planning Director for:
 1. Vertical expansion of nonconforming buildings within the front, side or rear lot line setbacks, if the expansion:
 - a. Does not increase lot coverage within the setback;
 - b. Is no closer to the property line than the existing walls; and
 - c. Complies with all other requirements of this chapter.
 2. A request to vary any bulk requirement in an amount not to exceed 15% of the stated requirement; ~~and~~
 3. A minor expansion of a nonconforming structure, provided the proposed expansion complies with the limits established in § 190-50.3.C; and
 4. A request to cross lateral lines or harbor lines under § 190-31.2(C)(4) or to modify the method for measuring pier length under § 190-31.2(D)(4).
- B. Planning Commission recommendation.

1. A recommendation from the Planning Commission shall be required for a minor variance for:
 - a. a request that varies any bulk requirement by 10% and no more than 15%; or
 - b. Minor expansion of a nonconforming structure if the requested variance is from a Critical Area requirement; or
 - c. Minor expansion or relocation of a nonconforming structure if the area of expansion or relocation is within the Shoreline Development Buffer; or
 - d. A request to cross lateral lines or harbor lines under § 190-31.2(C)(4) or to modify the method for measuring pier length under § 190-31.2(D)(4).
2. The Planning Director may request a recommendation from the Planning Commission for minor variance applications other than those listed in Subsection B.1 above.

C. Planning Director decision. The Planning Director shall approve or deny a minor variance pursuant to the standards for variances provided below. The Planning Director's decision may be appealed to the Board of Appeals.

* * *

§ 190-78 Terms defined

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BOATHOUSE

A structure limited to storage of boats and/or boat equipment constructed over the water in conjunction with an approved or legal nonconforming pier or wharf.

* * *

PLATFORM AREAS

Fixed or floating horizontal surfaces in conjunction with ~~long~~ a pier that exceed a horizontal width of six feet used primarily for getting into and out of boats, lifting boats, including docks and launching platforms. For the purposes of calculating platform area, the section of the main pier, up to a width of 6', shall not be included.

* * *

WALKWAY, RAISED

A structure for pedestrian travel over a [tidal or nontidal wetland](#). A raised walkway is a pier-like structure with a walking surface supported by piles or posts.

* * *

SECTION TWO: AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that if any provision of this Bill or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid for any reason in a court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or any other application of this Bill which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and for this purpose the provisions of this Bill are declared severable.

SECTION THREE: AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that the Talbot County Department of Planning and Zoning and the Talbot County Office of Law, in consultation with and subject to the approval of the County Manager, may make non-substantive corrections to codification, style, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, spelling, and any internal or external reference or citation included in this Bill, as finally adopted, that are incorrect or obsolete, with no further action required by the County Council. All such corrections shall be adequately referenced and described in an editor's note following the section affected.

SECTION FOUR: AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that this Bill shall take effect sixty (60) days from the date of its passage.

PUBLIC HEARING

Having been posted and Notice of time, date, and place of hearing, and Title of Bill No. 1528 having been published, a public hearing was held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room, South Wing, Talbot County Courthouse, 11 North Washington Street, Easton, Maryland 21601.

BY THE COUNCIL

Read the third time.

ENACTED: April 25, 2023

By Order Susan W. Moran
Susan W. Moran, Secretary

Callahan	-	Aye
Stepp	-	Aye
Leshner	-	Aye
Mielke	-	Aye
Haythe	-	Aye

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 24, 2023

Talbot County Bill 1528

*Review Comments from Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
and the Department of Natural Resources,
Chesapeake and Coastal Services (DNR, CCS)*

Maryland Department of the Environment

From Tammy Roberson -MDE-

MDE is concerned the updated **Section 190-15.11 Habitat protection areas; habitat protection plans** may undermine the intent of the Living Shoreline Protection Act which requires improvements to protect a person's property against shoreline erosion must consist of marsh creation or other nonstructural shoreline stabilization measures that preserve the natural environment unless a waiver is obtained. The proposal identifies structural erosion control measures above mean high water are permitted if the Department of the Environment determines appropriate. MDE has no regulatory authority above the mean high water line unless private tidal wetlands or nontidal wetlands are present. Therefore, there is no mechanism in place for MDE to review any shoreline erosion control outside MDE's jurisdiction. However, MDE maintains on-line maps of shorelines that identify shorelines appropriate for structural shoreline stabilization measures. These maps are part of MDE's living shoreline waiver process that is identified in COMAR 26.24.04.01-1. Referencing the MDE maintained maps would be an appropriate mechanism to determine where a structural erosion control measure is appropriate.

The introduced bill is not consistent with State law. While the Department allows a pier to encroach over the extended construction setback lines when approved by the appropriate County process, the State cannot approve the crossing of the County approved extended property lines due to the Department's obligation to protect future riparian rights. Furthermore, the Department also has concerns that individual adjacent property owners should not be determining and approving extended property lines and waivers of setbacks without the County ensuring that there is not a net negative "taking" of riparian rights on other properties along the shoreline. This could result in a future riparian waterfront property owner losing without input, their rightful riparian access.

Department of Natural Resources, Chesapeake and Coastal Services

From Catherine McCall -DNR-

- The Department of Natural Resource (DNR) has concerns with the new provisions in that potential shoreline hardening that may occur under the Talbot County Bill above the MHWL for erosion control measures or structures could prevent the natural migration of habitat and reduce the overall ability of the shoreline and Critical Area to buffer against flood and storm impacts. Further, the hardening of the shoreline above the MHWL will increase the probability of toe scour below the shoreline erosion control structure. The installation of gray infrastructure (i.e. revetment/sea wall) above the Mean High Water Line (MHWL) will further diminish the natural beach and/or wetland habitat below and adjacent to the hardened structure.
- Through its work and partnerships to implement natural shoreline projects for community resilience, support the use of living shorelines for erosion control, and provide technical assistance to property owners, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) shares goals with the Department of the Environment (MDE) under their jurisdiction of the Living Shorelines Protection Act. The DNR's work on climate adaptation and habitat migration directly informs the prioritization of nature-based projects such as living shorelines to help address escalating risks from extreme weather and climate-related events, including storms and sea level rise. Such projects support the ability of habitats to naturally change over time as conditions evolve.
- Deep rooted persistent native plants such as those used in living shoreline projects are known to hold soils in place and reduce erosion. Steep unvegetated sandy banks provide important habitat for a number of insects and bird species (i.e. puritan tiger beetle, belted kingfisher, etc). Hardening, whether above or below the MHWL, will result in habitat fragmentation and impacts on the adjacent shoreline by changing how water and sediment moves through the system. Many areas of the shoreline where living shoreline erosion control applications would be anticipated to be successful are also areas where wetland and near-shore habitat migration is anticipated to provide long-term resilience benefits to both the adjacent properties and communities and to state natural resources.