

SPEED ZONES AND RESTRICTED AREAS - Emergency and Temporary Zones

What is being considered?

The Department is considering establishing 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](#), which was created as part of [Chapter 433 of the 2025 Laws of Maryland](#). In other contexts where the Department establishes rules by public notice, such as certain fisheries, the Department publishes the notice on its website and makes a reasonable effort to disseminate a public notice through various other media so that an affected individual has a reasonable opportunity to be informed, such as social media and Departmental email listservs. The Department is considering creating a similar process for public notices issued to establish the boating rules considered under this recently-passed legislation. Public notices issued for this purpose will be issued at least 24 hours prior to becoming effective.

Why is this change necessary?

Natural Resources Article, §8-725.9, Annotated Code of Maryland allows the Department to create speed zones and restricted areas by public notice under certain circumstances. Specifically, the Department may 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. Creating these 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.

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

This idea was scoped with the Boat Act Advisory Committee (BAAC) at their meeting on January 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.

When would this be effective?

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