



Cypress Black Bayou  
Recreation and Water  
Conservation District

## CYPRESS BLACK BAYOU

Recreation & Water Conservation District

135 Cypress Park Drive, Benton, LA 71006

(318) 965-2289

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Shoreline Construction Permits | Updated 2025*

### GENERAL PERMITTING

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#### **Q: When should I submit my permit application?**

A: After all required documentation is assembled. Submit the complete application but wait to pay the permit fee until your contractor is ready to begin work, as the 6-month permit validity period starts when payment is received, not when the application is submitted.

#### **Q: What are the most common reasons applications are delayed?**

A: Missing or incomplete surveys, plans not stamped by licensed professionals, contractor documentation not provided, and unclear project descriptions. Using the checklist helps avoid delays.

#### **Q: Who must submit the permit application?**

A: The property owner must submit and sign the application. The contractor must also sign. Both signatures are required before the application can be processed.

#### **Q: Can I start construction before my permit is approved?**

A: No. Construction without a valid permit will result in a \$500 per day fine, possible stop-work order, and may require removal of unauthorized work at owner's expense.

#### **Q: What is the permit review and approval process?**

A: 1) Submit complete application (don't pay), 2) Staff reviews for completeness, 3) Board review if needed (dig-ins, variances), 4) Conditional approval issued, 5) Pay fee (timeline starts), 6) Construction begins with inspections, 7) Final inspection, 8) Closeout.

#### **Q: How long is a permit valid?**

A: 6 months from the date payment is received. If work is not completed within 6 months, a new permit application must be submitted.

#### **Q: Are permit fees refundable?**

A: No. Permit fees are non-refundable once the application has been processed.

#### **Q: Do I need separate permits for separate projects?**

A: Yes. Each distinct project (e.g., boathouse and seawall) requires its own permit application and fee.

## INSPECTIONS

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### **Q: What is the purpose of inspections?**

A: To verify construction is proceeding according to approved plans, ensure compliance with District regulations, and identify any issues early before they become costly problems.

### **Q: How much notice do I need to give for inspections?**

A: Minimum 3 days advance notice. Contact CBB at (318) 965-2289 to schedule.

### **Q: What happens if I miss a required inspection?**

A: Missed inspections may require corrective action, removal and reinstallation of work, or additional inspection fees. In severe cases, the permit may be suspended.

### **Q: What are additional inspection fees?**

A: Permit fees include an anticipated number of inspections based on project type. Additional inspections beyond the bundled amount are billed at \$100 each at project closeout. These may be needed due to project complexity, deviations from plans, re-inspections, or non-compliance.

### **Q: Do I need to have my plans onsite during construction?**

A: Yes. Approved plans must be available onsite whenever the contractor is working so inspectors can verify compliance.

### **Q: Who is responsible for coordinating inspections?**

A: The property owner is ultimately responsible, though they often delegate coordination to their contractor. Either way, the owner must ensure inspections are scheduled and completed.

## SURVEYS AND CONSTRUCTION PLANS

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### **Q: When is a survey required?**

A: Required for: new boathouses/docks where none exist, new seawalls, floating docks without existing reference, all dig-ins (with legal description), projects near property line extensions, and tight coves (case-by-case).

### **Q: When is a survey NOT required?**

A: Generally not required for: seawall replacements in same location, repairs in kind, or dock extensions if dimensions can be shown relative to existing structures.

### **Q: What must a survey show?**

A: Property lines, contour line (pool stage), fee line (Cypress Lake), elevations referenced to NGVD 1929, and physical markers established and verifiable in the field.

### **Q: Do I need to show the flowage easement on my survey?**

A: The flowage easement line only needs to be shown if you plan to deposit fill dirt on your property. CBB verifies easement boundaries using GIS; surveys typically show contour line and fee line only.

### **Q: Can I use an older survey?**

A: Yes, if the physical markers shown on the survey still exist and can be verified in the field. The surveyor's office can often re-stamp older surveys if markers are intact.

### **Q: When are engineered plans required?**

A: Required for: new boathouses/covered structures, all floating docks (including restraint systems), all seawalls (new and replacement), dig-ins, converting uncovered to covered, and full structural rebuilds.

### **Q: When are simple sketches acceptable instead of engineered plans?**

A: Simple sketches may be acceptable for riprap-only erosion repair (no structural seawall) and minor repairs in kind.

### **Q: What must construction plans show?**

A: Overall dimensions, elevations (NGVD 1929), structural details and member sizing, marine-suitable materials specifications, piling depth and type, roof details if covered, and engineer/architect stamp and seal.

## ELEVATIONS AND BOUNDARIES

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### **Q: What is pool stage or contour line?**

A: Pool stage is the normal operating water level. The contour line is the shoreline at this elevation. Cypress Lake: 179.6 ft MSL. Black Bayou: 185.0 ft MSL. Structure lengths are measured from this line.

### **Q: What is the flowage easement?**

A: An elevation-based area where the District has rights for water level fluctuation and flood storage. Cypress Lake: up to 187.5 ft MSL. Black Bayou: up to 190.3 ft MSL. Construction within this area requires CBB permit even on private land.

### **Q: What is the fee line?**

A: On Cypress Lake only, the fee line represents the District's property ownership boundary. It's different from the contour line. All property below the fee line is owned by CBB. Black Bayou does not have a fee line; CBB owns below the contour line.

### **Q: What datum must elevations reference?**

A: All elevations must reference NGVD 1929 (National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929). This is critical for consistency and compliance.

### **Q: Are the lines on my plat accurate?**

A: Plat lines are often approximate. For precise location, especially near boundaries, a professional survey is recommended.

## CONSTRUCTION RULES

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### **Q: What is the difference between new construction and repair in kind?**

A: Repair in kind means replacing with the same size materials or better, without changing footprint or design. New construction includes expanding, modifying design, changing materials significantly, or substantially altering the structure.

### **Q: If I'm expanding my dock, do I need a survey?**

A: Typically no, if dimensions can be shown relative to the existing structure. However, if the existing structure's position isn't clearly established, a survey may be needed.

### **Q: Does converting an uncovered dock to a covered boathouse require a new permit?**

A: Yes. This is considered new construction and requires engineered plans, possibly a survey, and a full construction permit.

### **Q: If I'm completely rebuilding my structure, is it considered new construction?**

A: Yes. Even if rebuilding in the same footprint, a full rebuild requires new construction permitting. Establish and document field markers before demolition to avoid needing a new survey.

### **Q: Are boat lifts regulated by CBB?**

A: No. Boat lifts are not regulated by the District.

### **Q: Can I build a floating dock?**

A: Yes. Floating docks require engineered plans showing the restraint system, anchoring method, and must be securely moored at all times to prevent drifting during high water.

### **Q: What are the maximum dock/boathouse lengths?**

A: Cypress Lake: 100 feet from contour line. Black Bayou: 60 feet from contour line. Variances may be requested and require Board approval at a public meeting.

## SEAWALLS AND SHORELINE

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### **Q: Do all seawalls require engineered plans?**

A: Yes. All seawalls, whether new or replacement, require plans prepared by a Louisiana licensed engineer showing structural details, materials, tie-backs, and elevations (NGVD 1929).

### **Q: Does replacing a seawall require a survey?**

A: Generally no, if replacing in the same location. However, establish physical markers before demolition. If the location changes or conditions are unusual, a survey may be required.

### **Q: Can I build a retaining wall within the flowage easement?**

A: Possibly, if you're only cutting into existing grade (not adding fill). This requires permit approval and must not reduce flood storage capacity.

### **Q: Can I place fill within the flowage easement?**

A: Generally no. Fill within the flowage easement is prohibited except for limited backfill behind seawalls, which must be graded to drain and cannot extend land into the lake.

### **Q: Can I dredge to create deeper water access?**

A: Yes, with a permit. Dredging is allowed for maintenance or navigation access. All dredged material must be placed above the flowage easement elevation or hauled offsite.

**Q: What is a dig-in and what are the requirements?**

A: A dig-in is shoreline modification that creates additional flooded area. Requirements: survey with legal description, land dedication to CBB, flowage easement grant, seawall design, and Board approval at public meeting.

## **FENCES, PATHS, AND LANDSCAPING**

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**Q: Can I build a fence within the flowage easement?**

A: Yes, with a permit. Fences must allow water flow (no impermeable barriers) and typically cannot extend below the contour line (Black Bayou) or fee line (Cypress).

**Q: Can I build walkways or stairs to the water?**

A: Yes, with a permit. These must be built at existing grade (no fill) and designed to allow water flow.

**Q: Can I remove trees on District property?**

A: Tree removal requires District approval. Approval is typically granted for dead, diseased, or hazardous trees but not for healthy trees providing natural screening.

**Q: Can I clear brush and maintain a lawn down to the water?**

A: General lawn maintenance and brush clearing are typically allowed, but large-scale clearing or removal of healthy trees requires approval to preserve natural shoreline aesthetics.

## **CONTRACTORS AND PROFESSIONALS**

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**Q: Does my contractor need a Louisiana license?**

A: Yes, if the project exceeds \$7,500. Proof of contractor license and certificate of insurance must be submitted with the application.

**Q: Who can perform electrical work?**

A: All electrical work must be performed by a Louisiana licensed electrician. Proof must be submitted with the permit application if electrical work is involved.

**Q: Does Bossier Parish inspect boathouses, docks, or seawalls?**

A: No. Bossier Parish does not inspect these structures. However, they do inspect electrical work and roof work when applicable.

**Q: Can the District recommend contractors or professionals?**

A: The District can provide a list of professionals who have worked on previous projects, but this is not an endorsement or recommendation. Property owners should conduct their own due diligence.

**Q: What materials must be used?**

A: Materials must be suitable for marine environments and meet specifications in the engineered plans. The engineer/architect specifies appropriate materials based on project requirements.

## NEIGHBOR APPROVALS AND VARIANCES

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### **Q: When is neighbor approval required?**

A: May be required for: projects tying into a neighbor's seawall, construction in narrow coves affecting neighbors, or structures near projected property line extensions. Lack of approval doesn't automatically prevent the project—it goes to the Board.

### **Q: Who owns the property below the fee line on Cypress Lake?**

A: The District owns all property below the fee line on Cypress Lake. On Black Bayou, the District owns below the contour line.

### **Q: Can I request a variance to exceed maximum dock lengths?**

A: Yes. Variance requests (for shallow depths, replacement of prior longer structures, etc.) are presented to the Board at a public meeting. Provide written justification with your application.

### **Q: Can the Board grant variances for construction in the flowage easement?**

A: The Board generally does not grant variances to allow fill or habitable structures in the flowage easement. Only limited construction types (seawalls, boathouses, fences, erosion protection) are permitted, and these must meet specific criteria.

## DEMOLITION AND MAINTENANCE

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### **Q: Do I need a permit to demolish my structure?**

A: Yes, if demolition is a standalone activity. If demolition is part of a new construction permit, it's typically included. Either way, structures must be fully removed including pilings.

### **Q: Who is responsible for maintaining permitted structures?**

A: The property owner is responsible for maintaining all structures in compliance with District requirements. The District may require repairs or removal if structures deteriorate.

## VIOLATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

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### **Q: What happens if I construct without a permit?**

A: \$500 per day fine for each day the violation exists, possible stop-work order, and required removal of unauthorized work at owner expense.

### **Q: What if my construction doesn't match the approved plans?**

A: This is a violation subject to enforcement action. All deviations from approved plans must be communicated to and approved by the District before implementation.

### **Q: What if I miss required inspections?**

A: May require corrective action, removal and reinstallation at owner expense, additional inspection fees, or permit suspension in severe cases.

### QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED HERE?

Contact Cypress Black Bayou Recreation & Water Conservation District  
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