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CRC-25-08

January 21, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Coastal Resources Commission
FROM: Ken Richardson
SUBJECT: Rule Amendments to 15A NCAC 07H .0309 (“small structure exception”)

15A NCAC 07H .0309(b) is an existing rule that defines conditions for exceptions within the Ocean Hazard AEC (OHA) setback when proposed development cannot meet the required erosion rate-based construction setback. This rule limits the exception on lots existing as of June 1, 1979, to a 1,000 square foot footprint, and 2,000 feet of total floor area, including roof-covered decks and structurally attached porches. Additionally, the rule requires the structure to be set back the maximum feasible distance on the lot (a minimum of 60 feet) and no more oceanward than the landward-most adjacent structure.

Initially approved by the CRC at your April 2023 meeting, draft amendments to 15A NCAC 07H .0309(b) address earlier concerns expressed over the inability to apply this exception within the oceanfront setback to lots created after June 1, 1979. You may recall that this issue was raised following the repeal of 15A NCAC 07H .0104, which contained similar provisions for lots created after June 1, 1979, that could not meet the required setback. Aside from the date stipulations, the primary differences between the two rules were that 07H .0104 allowed the option to measure setbacks using the erosion setback factor in place at the time the lot was platted, while 07H .0309(b) requires a setback of at least 60 feet regardless of the erosion rate setback factor. Both rules limited new construction to no greater than 2,000 square feet, but 07H .0309 limits a structure’s footprint to 1,000 square feet. Although separate rules, they had been commonly referred to as the “small structure exceptions.”

As requested by the CRC at the November 2024 meeting, these are the amendments to 07H .0309(b) to remove the 1,000 square foot footprint, retain the total floor area of 2,000 square feet, and remove the June 1, 1979 stipulation. This would make the .0309 exception applicable to all oceanfront and inlet areas, except for Unvegetated Beach Areas. For those that cannot meet the minimum setback for a larger structure, they could potentially utilize this exception for a structure up to 2,000 square feet if the other conditions outlined above are met. This amendment addresses the primary concern related to the earlier repeal of 07H .0104, while removing the complexity of tracking past erosion rates and recognizing the dates that lots were platted during Minor Permit reviews.



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DCM Staff are asking the Commission to consider approval of the proposed amendments to 15A NCAC 07H .0309(b) to move forward with rulemaking.

Attachment 1: Proposed Amendments to 15A NCAC 07H .0309



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ATTACHMENT 1: PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO 15A NCAC 07H .0309

15A NCAC 07H .0309 USE STANDARDS FOR OCEAN HAZARD AREAS: EXCEPTIONS

(a) The following types of development shall be permitted seaward of the oceanfront setback requirements of Rule .0306(a) of this Section if all other provisions of this Subchapter and other state and local regulations are met:

- (1) campsites;
- (2) driveways and parking areas with clay, packed sand, or gravel;
- (3) elevated decks not exceeding a footprint of 500 square feet. Existing decks exceeding a footprint of 500 square feet may be replaced with no enlargement beyond their original dimensions;
- (4) beach accessways consistent with Rule .0308(c) of this Section;
- (5) unenclosed, uninhabitable gazebos with a footprint of 200 square feet or less;
- (6) uninhabitable, single-story storage sheds with a foundation or floor consisting of wood, clay, packed sand or gravel, and a footprint of 200 square feet or less;
- (7) temporary amusement stands consistent with Section .1900 of this Subchapter;
- (8) sand fences;
- (9) swimming pools; and
- (10) fill not associated with dune creation that is obtained from an upland source and is of the same general characteristics as the sand in the area in which it is to be placed.

In all cases, this development shall be permitted only if it is landward of the vegetation line or pre-project vegetation line, whichever is applicable; involves no alteration or removal of primary or frontal dunes which would compromise the integrity of the dune as a protective landform or the dune vegetation; is not essential to the continued existence or use of an associated principal development; and meets all other non-setback requirements of this Subchapter.

(b) Where application of the ~~oceanfront~~ **Ocean Hazard Area** setback requirements of Rule .0306(a) of this Section would preclude placement of a structure ~~on a lot existing as of June 1, 1979, the structure shall be permitted seaward of the applicable setback line~~ in Ocean Erodible Areas, State Ports Inlet Management Areas, and Inlet Hazard Areas, but not Unvegetated Beach ~~Areas~~ **Areas**, ~~the structure shall be permitted seaward of the applicable setback line~~ if each of the following conditions are met:

- (1) The development is set back from the ocean the maximum feasible distance ~~possible~~ on the existing lot and the development is designed to minimize encroachment into the setback area;
- (2) The development is at least 60 feet landward of the vegetation line, measurement line, or pre-project vegetation line, whichever is applicable;
- (3) The development is not located on or oceanward of a frontal dune, but is entirely behind the landward toe of the frontal dune;
- (4) The development incorporates each of the following design standards, which are in addition to those required by Rule .0308(d) of this Section:
 - (A) All pilings shall have a tip penetration that extends to at least four feet below mean sea level;
 - (B) ~~The footprint of the structure shall be no more than 1,000 square feet, and the~~ total floor area of the structure shall be no more than 2,000 square feet. For the purpose of this Section, roof-covered decks and porches that are structurally attached shall be included in the calculation of footprint;
 - (C) Driveways and parking areas shall be constructed of clay, packed sand or gravel except in those cases where the development does not abut the ocean and is located landward of a paved public street or highway currently in use. In those cases, other material may be used; and
 - (D) No portion of a building's total floor area, including elevated portions that are cantilevered, knee braced, or otherwise extended beyond the support of pilings or footings, may extend oceanward of the total floor area of the landward-most habitable building or structure. The alignment shall be measured from the most oceanward point of the adjacent building or structure's roof line, including roofed decks. An "adjacent" property is one that shares a boundary line with the site of the proposed development. When no adjacent building or structure exists, or the geometry or orientation of a lot or shoreline precludes the placement of a building in line with the landward most adjacent structure of similar use, an average line of construction shall be determined by the Director of the Division of Coastal Management based on an approximation of the average seaward-most positions of the rooflines of adjacent structures along the same shoreline, extending 500 feet in either direction. If no structures exist within this distance, the proposed structure shall meet the



applicable setback from the Vegetation Line but shall not be held to the landward-most adjacent structure or an average line of structures. The ocean hazard setback shall extend landward of the vegetation line, static vegetation line or measurement line, whichever is applicable, a distance no less than 60 feet.

- (5) All other provisions of this Subchapter and other state and local regulations are met. If the development is to be serviced by an on-site waste disposal system, a copy of a valid permit for such a system shall be submitted as part of the CAMA permit application.
- (c) The following types of water dependent development shall be permitted seaward of the oceanfront setback requirements of Rule .0306(a) of this Section if all other provisions of this Subchapter and other state and local regulations are met:
- (1) piers providing public access; and
 - (2) maintenance and replacement of existing state-owned bridges, and causeways and accessways to such bridges.
- (d) Replacement or construction of a pier house associated with an ocean pier shall be permitted if each of the following conditions is met:
- (1) The ocean pier provides public access for fishing and other recreational purposes whether on a commercial, public, or nonprofit basis;
 - (2) Commercial, non-water dependent uses of the ocean pier and associated pier house shall be limited to restaurants and retail services. Residential uses, lodging, and parking areas shall be prohibited;
 - (3) The pier house shall be limited to a maximum of two stories;
 - (4) A new pier house shall not exceed a footprint of 5,000 square feet and shall be located landward of mean high water;
 - (5) A replacement pier house may be rebuilt not to exceed its most recent footprint or a footprint of 5,000 square feet, whichever is larger;
 - (6) The pier house shall be rebuilt to comply with all other provisions of this Subchapter; and
 - (7) If the pier has been destroyed or rendered unusable, replacement or expansion of the associated pier house shall be permitted only if the pier is being replaced and returned to its original function.
- (e) In addition to the development authorized under Paragraph (d) of this Rule, small scale, non-essential development that does not induce further growth in the Ocean Hazard Area, such as the construction of single family piers and **small-scale small-scale** erosion control measures that do not interfere with natural oceanfront processes, shall be permitted in the Ocean Hazard Area along those portions of shoreline that exhibit features characteristic of an Estuarine Shoreline. Such features include the presence of wetland vegetation, and lower wave energy and erosion rates than in the adjoining Ocean Erodible Area. Such development shall be permitted under the standards set out in Rule .0208 of this Subchapter. For the purpose of this Rule, **small-scale small-scale** is defined as those projects which are eligible for authorization under 15A NCAC 07H .1100, .1200, and 15A NCAC 07K .0203.
- (f) Transmission lines necessary to transmit electricity from an offshore energy-producing facility may be permitted provided that each of the following conditions is met:
- (1) The transmission lines are buried under the ocean beach, nearshore area, and primary and frontal dunes, all as defined in Rule .0305 of this Section, in such a manner so as to ensure that the placement of the transmission lines involves no alteration or removal of the primary or frontal dunes; and
 - (2) The design and placement of the transmission lines shall be performed in a manner so as not to endanger the public or the public's use of the beach.
- (g) Existing stormwater outfalls as of the last amended date of this rule within the Ocean Hazard AEC that are owned or maintained by a State agency or local government, may be extended oceanward subject to the provisions contained within 15A NCAC 07J .0200. Outfalls may be extended below mean low water and may be maintained in accordance with 15A NCAC 07K .0103. Shortening or lengthening of outfall structures within the authorized dimensions, in response to changes in beach width, is considered maintenance under 15A NCAC 07K .0103. Outfall extensions may be marked with signage and shall not prevent pedestrian or vehicular access along the beach. This Paragraph does not apply to existing stormwater outfalls that are not owned or maintained by a State agency or local government.

*History Note: Authority G.S. 113A-107(a); 113A-107(b); 113A-113(b)(6)a; 113A-113(b)(6)b; 113A-113(b)(6)d; 113A-124;
Eff. February 2, 1981;
Amended Eff. April 1, 2020; June 1, 2010; February 1, 2006; September 17, 2002 pursuant to S.L. 2002-116; August 1, 2000; August 1, 1998; April 1, 1996; April 1, 1995; February 1, 1993; January 1, 1991; April 1, 1987;*



*Readopted Eff. December 1, 2020;
Amended Eff. August 1, 2022.*



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