

The Huron Natural River District

What is a Natural Rivers District?

Much of the Huron River between Kent Lake and Barton Pond, and parts of Arms, Mill, and Davis creeks have enjoyed designation as a “Country Scenic Natural River” since 1979. This protective designation has contributed to the “up north” feel of the Huron River and provides unique access to the wild beauty of South East Michigan for anglers and paddlers alike.

The 1970 Natural River Act authorized the MDNR to develop a system of “Natural Rivers” to preserve our valuable riverine resources. On-the-ground administration of the program works through a permit process, similar to a local zoning permit. Any new development or land use activity on public or private land within 400 feet of the high-water mark (essentially within the “Natural River District” or NRD) requires a Natural Rivers permit and must meet certain development standards.

These standards help the Huron to maintain not only its natural look, but also its ecological health, leading to a collection of community benefits;

- Improved habitat for fisheries and wildlife
- Floodplain management and stream bank stabilization and erosion control
- Enhanced recreation and aesthetic enjoyment

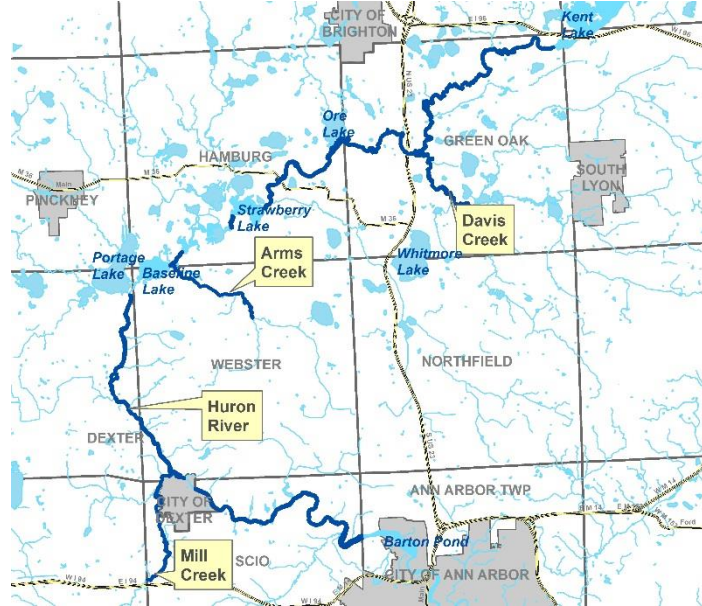


Figure 1: Dark blue denotes the Natural River District along the Huron River.

Examples of Activities that Require a Permit

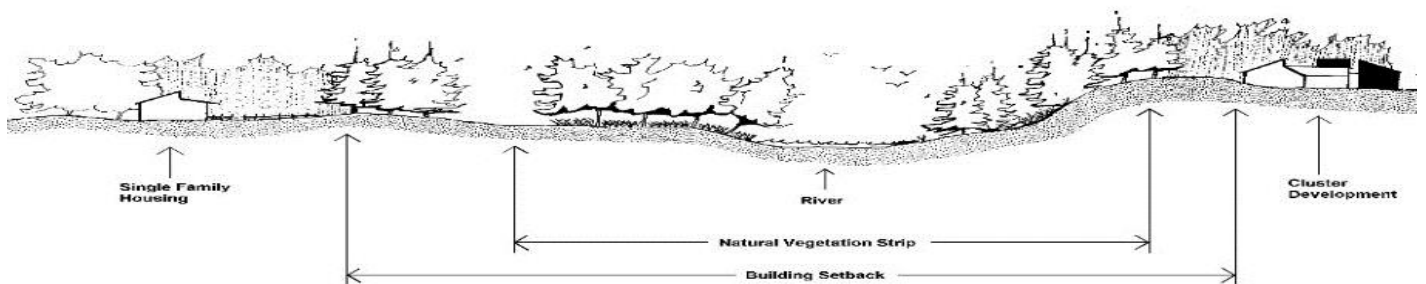
Building a house, garage, deck, or other structure (i.e. bridge, trail, stairway, well etc.) § Building an addition to an existing structure § Altering land in areas of high groundwater (i.e. initiating or expanding mineral extraction) § Changing the use of the property (i.e. from residential to commercial such as rental cabins.) § Cutting into the natural vegetation § Splitting property into smaller parcels

Prohibited Activities within the NRD

Most new commercial or industrial uses § Dredging or filling where the land surface is within four feet of the high groundwater level § Clearcutting or establishment of new lawns § Mineral exploration within certain distances of the river’s edge

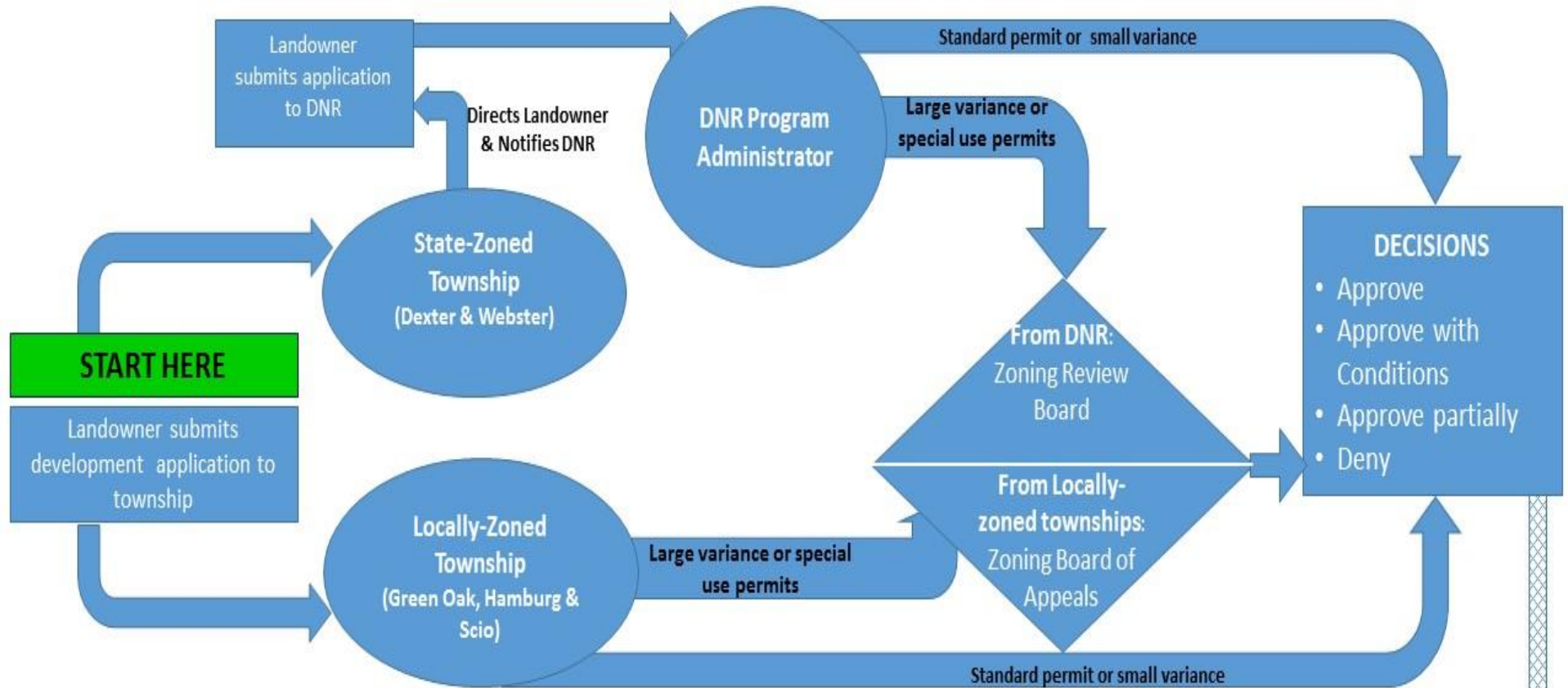
<i>For Permit Approval: Natural Riverfront Development Standards*</i>	Mainstream	Arms, Mill, or Davis Creeks
Building Setback	125 ft.	50 ft.
Natural Vegetation Strip	50 ft.	50 ft.
Septic Setback	125 ft.	125 ft.

*Other standards may apply



- For more information regarding the Natural Rivers Program, please visit the MDNR web site at <http://www.michigan.gov/dnrnaturalrivers>.
- To access details about NRD development standards and expectations for affected townships, please review the DNR Rules: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2010-026_Natural_Rivers_Zoning_Rules_438073_7.pdf

Huron Natural River District Permit Process



LOCALLY-ZONED TOWNSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES (Green Oak, Hamburg & Scio)

- Operates program in accordance with DNR rules and local ordinances.
- Considers standard permit applications and small variance requests
- Sends large variance requests or special use permits to ZBA
- Ensures compliance
- Sends annual reports and other updates on variances and special use permits to DNR

STATE-ZONED TOWNSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES (Dexter & Webster)

- Directs landowner to independently apply for a Natural Rivers permit from DNR.
- Notifies DNR of activities in NRD
- Serves on Zoning Review Board

DNR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Considers standard permit applications and small variance requests from state-zoned townships.
- Sends large variance requests or special use permits to ZRB
- Ensures compliance
- Reviews annual reports and other updates from locally-zoned townships

A Note on Administrative Review

- Property owners who disagree with Natural River zoning decisions and suggestions are entitled to no-cost, judicial review of their cases by state administrative law judges.
- If the property owner or the DNR is not satisfied with the judge's decision, they may take the case to the Natural Resources Commission for further, no-cost review.
 - If they are dissatisfied with the Commission's decisions, they can take their appeals to circuit court