

**455B.275 Prohibited acts — powers of commission and executive director.**

1. A person shall not permit, erect, use, or maintain a structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation in or on a floodway or floodplains, which will adversely affect the efficiency of or unduly restrict the capacity of the floodway, or adversely affect the control, development, protection, allocation, or utilization of the water resources of the state, and the same are declared to be public nuisances.

2. The department may commence, maintain, and prosecute any appropriate action to enjoin or abate a nuisance, including any of the nuisances specified in [subsection 1](#) and any other nuisance which adversely affects flood control.

3. *a.* A person shall file a written application with the department if the person desires to do any of the following:

(1) Erect, construct, use, or maintain a structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation in or on any floodway or floodplains.

(2) Erect, construct, maintain, or operate a dam on a navigable or meandered stream.

(3) Erect, construct, maintain, or operate a dam on a stream for manufacturing or industrial purposes.

*b.* The application shall set forth information as required by rule of the commission. The department, after an investigation, shall approve or deny the application imposing conditions and terms as prescribed by the department.

4. Notwithstanding design criteria and guidelines for Iowa dams adopted by the department, all of the following standards shall apply to a person reconstructing a dam that was damaged due to a natural disaster who files an application under [subsection 3](#):

*a.* The person reconstructing the dam is only required to possess the flooding easements or ownership which was held prior to the reconstruction as long as the former normal pool elevation is not exceeded and the spillway capacity is increased by at least fifty percent.

*b.* Flooding easements or ownership is only required to the top of the reconstructed spillway elevation.

5. The department may maintain an action in equity to enjoin a person from erecting or making or permitting to be made a structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation for which a permit has not been granted. The department may also seek judicial abatement of any structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation erected or made without a permit required under this part. The abatement proceeding may be commenced to enforce an administrative determination of the department in a contested case proceeding that a public nuisance exists and should be abated. The costs of abatement shall be borne by the violator. Notwithstanding [section 352.11](#), a structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation on a floodway or floodplain in an agricultural area established under [chapter 352](#) is not exempt from the sections of this part which relate to regulation of floodplains and floodways. As used in [this subsection](#), “violator” includes a person contracted to erect or make a structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation in a floodway including stream straightening unless the project is authorized by a permit required under this part.

6. The department may remove or eliminate a structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation in a floodway which adversely affects the efficiency of or unduly restricts the capacity of the floodway, by an action in condemnation, and in assessing the damages in the proceeding, the appraisers and the court shall take into consideration whether the structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation is lawfully in or on the floodway in compliance with this part.

7. The department may require, as a condition of an approval order or permit granted pursuant to this part, the furnishing of a performance bond with good and sufficient surety, conditioned upon full compliance with the order or permit and the rules of the commission. In determining the need for and amount of bond, the department shall give consideration to the hazard posed by the construction and maintenance of the approved works and the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the people of the state. [This subsection](#) does not apply to orders or permits granted to a governmental entity.

8. When approving a request to straighten a stream, the department may establish as a condition of approval a permanent prohibition against tillage of land owned by the person receiving the approval and lying within a minimum distance from the stream sufficient in

the judgment of the director or commission to hold soil erosion to reasonable limits. The department shall record the prohibition in the office of the county recorder of the appropriate county and the prohibition shall attach to the land.

9. The commission shall establish, by rule, thresholds for dimensions and effects, and any structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation having smaller dimensions and effects than those established by the commission is not subject to regulation under [this section](#). The thresholds shall be established so that only those structures, dams, obstructions, deposits, or excavations posing a significant threat to the well-being of the public and the environment are subject to regulation.

10. The commission or the department shall not initiate any administrative or judicial action to remove or eliminate any structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, or excavation in a floodway, or to remove or eliminate any stream straightening, or to place other restrictions on the use of land or water affected by the structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, excavation, or stream straightening if not initiated within five years after the department becomes aware of the erection or making of the structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, excavation, or stream straightening. After ten years from the completion of the erection or making of the structure, dam, obstruction, deposit, excavation, or stream straightening, the prohibition of [this subsection](#) applies to, but is not limited to, any administrative or judicial abatement or action in condemnation that the commission or department may initiate under [this section](#) unless action is required to protect the public safety, in which case [this section](#) is not intended to limit the department from taking actions otherwise authorized by law.

[C50, 54, §455A.19; C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §455A.33; [82 Acts, ch 1199, §29, 96](#)]  
C83, §455B.275

[83 Acts, ch 137, §18](#); [86 Acts, ch 1144, §2](#); [88 Acts, ch 1196, §1, 2](#); [90 Acts, ch 1108, §4](#); [2011 Acts, ch 25, §143](#); [2013 Acts, ch 69, §1](#); [2013 Acts, ch 140, §70](#)

Referred to in [§455B.265A, 469A.8](#)

Nuisances in general, chapter 657

In addition to prospective application, 1988 amendments amending subsection 5 and enacting subsection 10 apply to all knowledge possessed by department for at least five years before July 1, 1988, and to all projects completed earlier than ten years before July 1, 1988; [88 Acts, ch 1196, §3](#)

Validity of permits or licenses issued before July 1, 1990, under chapter 469, Code 1989; rights and obligations governed by [§455B.275](#); [90 Acts, ch 1108, §6](#)