Construction and Shoreline Alterations on the Twin Lakes

For additional guidance or clarification contact the Iowa DNR

North Twin Lake:
District Fisheries Biologist – 712-661-9655
Conservation Officer – 712-330-8462

South Twin Lake:
District Wildlife Biologist – 712-661-9726
Conservation Officer – 712-330-8462

"Meandered sovereign lakes" means those lakes which, at the time of the original federal government surveys, were surveyed as navigable and important water bodies and were transferred to the states upon their admission to the union to be transferred or retained by the public in accordance with the laws of the respective states. The State of Iowa holds sovereign title in trust for the benefit of the public to the beds of these lakes

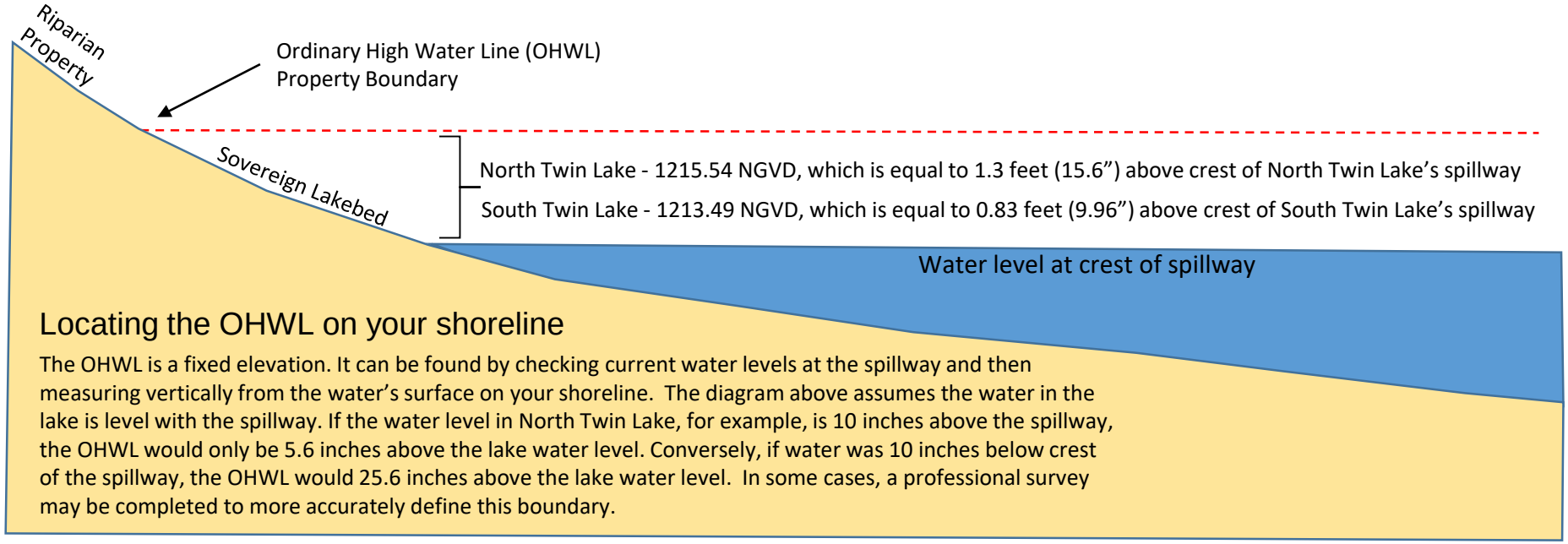
Ordinary High Water Line (OHWL) – "is the limit where high water occupies the land so long and continuously as to wrest terrestrial vegetation from the soil or saturate the root zone and destroy its value for agricultural purposes." IAC Ch 13, p1 571

OHWL elevation determinations on Iowa lakes provide a boundary between riparian property and public land/water.

Any construction including excavation, addition of fill, shoreline stabilization, rock armoring, or other activities below the OHWL will likely require state and federal permits. There is no charge for a permit. A joint application to obtain a permit for these activities can be found at https://programs.iowadnr.gov/permt

Construction or alterations extending beyond or below the OHWL must meet the criteria found in IAC 571 Ch 13.

It should be noted that the OHWL is not the record high water level. Water levels can and do bounce above the OHWL. This should be taken into consideration when planning construction to avoid property damage from high water.



Locating the OHWL on your shoreline

The OHWL is a fixed elevation. It can be found by checking current water levels at the spillway and then measuring vertically from the water's surface on your shoreline. The diagram above assumes the water in the lake is level with the spillway. If the water level in North Twin Lake, for example, is 10 inches above the spillway, the OHWL would only be 5.6 inches above the lake water level. Conversely, if water was 10 inches below crest of the spillway, the OHWL would 25.6 inches above the lake water level. In some cases, a professional survey may be completed to more accurately define this boundary.