Public Water Access in Minnesota:

Minnesota has approximately 3,000 public water access sites, 375 fishing piers and shorefishing sites and 35 state water trails. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), federal agencies and local government units can influence the ownership and operation of these facilities.

DNR public water access sites are usually open from dawn to dusk. Access sites owned by others may have different hours and rules. Most public water access sites have concrete launch ramps and are designed for launching watercraft up to 45 feet in length. There are some boat ramps that can handle larger boats. These ramps are unusually long, and no launch fees unless the access is located within a park requiring a vehicle permit.

The following activities are unlawful at public water access sites: littering, camping, overnight mooring, shoring, hunting, fires, storage of watercraft, vehicles, or equipment of any kind, and open container-alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 628 for complete rules.

Boating Access Etiquette

Keep the launch ramp area clear unless actively launching or loading. The line to launch/load is formed by the vehicles and trailers on land (not by the order of the boats in the water or at the dock). Conditions will vary from site to site and with the changing seasons so boaters should check the condition of the ramp and depth of water before entering.

Boating Laws

Enjoying Minnesota’s lakes and rivers by paddle or motorboat is a wonderful privilege which comes with serious responsibilities. Minnesota Boating Guide summarizes Minnesota’s boating laws and regulations in an easy-to-read format. The waterbody you are using may also be subject to federal and local rules and restrictions. For a copy of the Boating Guide contact the DNR information Center, 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367. Email: info.dnr州市@state.mn.us.

All motorized watercraft regardless of length and nonmotorized watercraft over 10 feet must be licensed and pay the registration fee (exceptions may apply).

Own Your Wake

Under Minnesota law, the determination of wake causes is treated the same as damage causation. Keep the legal collection- Respect others so everyone can enjoy their time on the water.

Stay more than 200 feet away from shorelines, docks, swimmers, and watercraft. Boats that create an artificial wake require even more distance to lower the impact. Do not select excessive speeds. Keep these areas down and courteous to other boaters.

Top Boating Safety Tips

Wear your life jacket—ensure children less than 10 years old always wear their life jackets. Stay sober—Alcohol is the #1 factor in boating fatalities. Share your Float Plan—Tell someone where you’re going and when you will be back. If you’re not back, they should call 911. Know you may not launch a boat or trailer in the water if it has aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or prohibited invasive aquatic species or water present in communities. You must drain all water, remove the drain plug(s) and leave all water-draining devices open when transporting watercraft, gear and equipment. You may not release bait or non-native species into the water. You may need a permit to harvest or transport water from an infested water body.

Fishing Information

Most persons 16 to 69 are required to have the appropriate license with the fishing (exception may apply). Licenses are available online and at many stores that sell fishing related goods. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, visit DNR LICENSE (888-665-4238) or go to mndnr.gov/buyalicense.

Season dates and bag limits can vary from lake to lake. See restrictions on access and fishing in a particular lake could be closed or limited. Check the Special Regulations and the Minnesota Fishing Regulations for more information or online at mndnr.gov/fishing.

Do Your Part to Protect Minnesota Waters

Watercraft Inspectors are Here to Help

Watercraft inspectors will inform you about AIS and will physically inspect your boat, trailer, other water-related equipment, and compartments that hold water. Be prepared.

When entering:

Arrive cleaned and drained. Open the lids of closed containers that could hold water, like live wells, so the inspector can see if they are drained.

When exiting:

Pull all drain plugs. Clean off any plants, mud and invasive animals.

Tell us how we are doing by emailing: wip.dnr@state.mn.us.

Take Action

Before leaving the access or shoreland, you must:

Clean your boat, trailer and gear to remove plants and prohibited invasive species.

Drain all water and leave plugs out during transport.

Dispose of unwatered bait in the trash.

Clean off any equipment that hold water. Be prepared.

To take these additional steps to reduce the risk of spreading AIS whenever possible:

Decommission your equipment—find free stations at mndnr.gov/decon.

Spray your equipment with high-pressure water or rinse it with very hot water (120 degrees for at least 3 minutes or 30 degrees for at least 10 seconds).

Dry your boat and gear for five days before using in another water body.

Know the Laws

You may not transport aquatic plants or prohibited invasive species, dead or alive. You may not launch or load a boat or trailer in the water if it has aquatic plants, zebra mussels or prohibited invasive aquatic species or water present in communities. You must drain all water, remove the drain plug(s) and leave all water-draining devices open when transporting watercraft, gear and equipment. You may not release bait or non-native species into the water. You may need a permit to harvest or transport water from an infested water body.

Access to the public water areas is provided through the boating, fishing and water related activities. Fishing piers and shorefishing sites are designed to provide a comfortable and safe fishing experience for the public. Fishing Information includes information on fishing regulations, seasonal dates, bag limits, and special regulations. Fishing Information also includes the location of fishable waters, fishing regulations, and fishing seasons. Fishing Information is updated annually and is available online at mndnr.gov/fishing.

Accessible Accesses

Public water access sites developed after 2012 will have accessible parking and accessible ramps to the top of the ramp. Some sites may have additional accessible routes to a dock and other site amenities. When known, these sites are identified with the red, accessible symbol shown in this guide, or contact the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6157 or 888-665-4238 to locate a facility that is accessible.

Fishing piers and shorefishing sites have been designed to meet the needs of people with mobility impairments. Fishing piers are generally within 300 feet of the site and there is a hard surface path from the parking dorm to the facility. DNR cooperates with a variety of local units of government to maintain the fishing piers.

If a facility is out of compliance or you have difficulty using any part of an access or pier, please report the problem to the site administrator listed in this guide, or contact the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6157 (888-MN-DNR) or email info.dnr州市@state.mn.us.