Boating in Minnesota

The annual Minnesota Boating Guide summarizes Minnesota’s boating laws and regulations in an easy-to-read form. The guide supplies information about operating watercraft on the state’s lakes and rivers. For further information on age restrictions please apply to operations 17 years old and younger.

Licensing: All motorized and non-motorized watercraft are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Please contact the DNR License Bureau for information.

Fishing in Minnesota

Fishing Regulations and Licensing: All persons 16 and older are required to have the appropriate license with them when fishing. Licenses are available through the DNR License Center, most county Auditor’s offices, and many stores that sell fishing related goods. Trout fishing requires a trout stamp. For more information call the DNR License Information Center at (651) 296-6157 or 1-888-MINNDNR to purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-4236).

Selective Harvest Fishing: Improved technology and increased fishing have caused the quality of the fishing to decline in many waters. Practicing “Selective Harvest” offers anglers an opportunity to take only fish that are the desired size. Many species can be transported in the mud or sand. Some waters prohibit the haul and use of certain, kayak, and other watercraft before leaving.

Golden Shiners: DNR advises anglers to use goldfinches and to inspect, clean, and drain your boat before returning to other waters.

AIS Bait Laws

It is illegal to transport lake and river bait. To save your bait (whether or not it is), the DNR recommends bringing your own water treated for transport water from home and bagging it in your vehicle or cooler. Lining your boat can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

AIS Bait Laws:

Waters with Invasive Species

Workinng Together to Protect the Waters

Watercraft inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are “clean, drain, dry!” If you have any questions about the laws, or are curious about the program, please contact the DNR.

Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:

- Please clean your boat and pull your plug in as soon as you are safely ashore. That way when the inspector comes, the inspection process will move quickly.
- If there is a Decontamination Unit present, please follow the instructions given by the inspector for your safety and theirs. There will be plenty of time to ask questions and watch them work from a safe distance.
- Ways the Watercraft inspectors can help you:

- If you are harboring weeds, inspectors can also help pull weeds off boats or other such tools. They also have grapple tools for pulling weeds.

Accessible Watercraft:

Public access watercraft access sites developed after 2012 have been designed with accessible parking areas and accessible routes to the top of the boat ramp. Some sites have additional accessible routes to a dock or other site amenities. These sites are identified with the accessible symbol shown above.

The DNR and Minnesota Department of Transportation cooperate with a variety of local units of government to develop the fishing ramps.

Accessible Watercraft

When necessary, or very adverse weather conditions make these sites too difficult, or if a site is not to be constructed or maintained, the DNR may issue a special permit allowing for the use of the facility. The DNR may issue a special permit allowing for the use of the facility. The DNR may issue a special permit allowing for the use of the facility.

Federal Aid Project funded by your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels. About the Minnesota Boating Guide

Contact the DNR’s Office of Aquatic Resources at 651-296-6157.