Public Water Access in Minnesota:
The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trails’ water recreation program provides approximately 1,650 boat accesses, over 265 fishing piers and shore fishing sites and manages 35 designated Water Trails in Minnesota. The DNR, Federal Government and local communities operate boat accesses. See the table on the right for specific site information. The DNR boating programs are funded by user fees including boat license gas and diesel related marine use.

Public accesses are usually open 24 hours unless otherwise posted. Most sites have launch ramps but some sites, especially on smaller rivers, are carry-in only. Bathrooms and docks are usually located on the lower and busier sides.

Public Water Access Rules - The launch area must be kept clear and the following activities are unlawful: littering, charting, shunting, building fires, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 6218 for complete rules.

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

Licensing: All motorized and non-motorized watercraft must be licensed by the 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 Bureau, most County Auditors and many stores that sell fishing related goods. Trout fishing requires a trout stamp. For more information call the DNR Information Center at (651) 296-6157 or 1-888-ANADNR. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day call 1-855-MN-1MN0 (1-855-661-6600). To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-855-MN-1MN0 (1-855-661-6600).

Selective Harvest Fishing: Improved technology and increased fish survival have improved the quality of fishing to decline in many waters. Practicing “Selective Harvest” offers anglers an opportunity to take some fish home while releasing others back into the water to improve fishing quality. Here are some tips to use for effective Selective Harvest Fishing:

- Use barbless hooks.
- Play the fish quickly and handle the fish carefully.
- Susan hold the fish by the jaws.
- Use a needle nose pliers to remove hooks or cut the line if it is too deep.
- Ease the fish back into the water, do not throw it back.

Safe Boating:
Life Jackets: On all boats (except sailboats) greater than 26 feet in length there must be a readily accessible Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person on board. In addition, on boats 64 feet or longer, except canoes and kayaks, there must also at least be one Coast Guard approved throwable device, such as a ring buoy or sea cushion.

Boating While Intoxicated (DWI): It is illegal to operate a watercraft while intoxicated or attentive persons. Persons found to be under the influence there are significant penalties, including fines and possible jail sentences.

Personal Watercraft - Special laws apply including wearing a life jacket and operating at slow no wake speed at certain distances from other watercraft, swimmers and other objects in the water. Operator age restrictions also apply. Consult the Boating Guide for more information. A DNR safety vibe is available free of charge.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Laws and Requirements:
The DNR lists lakes and rivers as “infested” with certain aquatic invasive species. If you are harvesting bait, commercial fishing, or diverting or taking water, you might need to follow special regulations in infested waters.

To identify an infested water, look for orange invasive Species Alert signs at the access. You can also use the Limerender to find out if a particular lake is listed as infested: mndnr.gov. For more information about infested waters, including up-to-date infested waters list and additional location information, visit mndnr.gov/invasives.

Before leaving the water access or shoreline property, you MUST:
- Check off AIS aquatic plants and animals
- Clean all water including motors, anchors, boat hulls, boat buckets, motor and ballasted tanks
- Drain the plug and run it out
- Get into the habit of taking these three simple steps, and it will soon become part of your routine. Pull away from the boat ramp area. Check for and remove plants while launching the boat down. Pull the plug when adjusting the motor. If you have other people (especially kids) with you, then help! Adding a few minutes will help safeguard our waters.

Cleaning water-related equipment is just as important as cleaning boats, so while you’re cleaning your boat, please remember to:
- Clean anchors, ropes, fishing tackle, and other objects that were in the water. Many species can be transported in the mud or in fishing lines and rope.
- Drain water out of canoes, kayaks, and other watercraft before leaving. This is YOUR water and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, clean and drain your boats!

AIS Bait Laws:
It is illegal to transport lake and river water. To save your bait (insects or live bait), the DNR recommends bringing “fish safe”, treated water from home and keeping it in your vehicle or cooler. Bringing in a cold water bag on warm days could cool down the water.

DO NOT dump unwatered bait into water bodies or on the shoreline. Unwanted bait brings the trash to the trash or designated compost bin. Unwanted worms must be disposed of in the trash. If you are harvesting bait, commercial fishing, or diverting or taking water, you might need to follow special regulations in infested waters.

Accessible Accesses:
Public water access sites developed after 2012 have been designed with accessible parking spaces 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 red, accessible symbol shown on the map.

Fishing piers and developed shore fishing sites have been designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Parking is generally located within 300 feet of the site and there is a hard surface path from the parking area to the facility. The DNR cooperates with a variety of local units of government to maintain the fishing piers.

Sometimes, weather or vandalism can make these designed sites no longer accessible. If a site is found to be out of compliance, please report problems to the site administrator listed in the guide, or Contact the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6157 (MN DNR) or email info.dnr@state.mn.us.