**Public Water Access in Minnesota:**

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trail’s water recreation program provides approximately 1,650 boat accesses, over 365 fishing piers and shore fishing sites and manages 55 designated Water Trails in Minnesota. The DNR, Federal Government and local communities operate boat accesses. See the tables on the right for specific site information. The DNR boating programs are funded by fees from boat licence and a tax related to marine use.

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

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

**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. Operator age restrictions apply to operate 17 years 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 equipment. For more information call the DNR Information Center at (651) 296-1917 or 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-4236).

Selective Harvest Fishing - Improved technology and increased fishing have caused 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 barrier floats
- Play the fish quickly and handle the fish carefully
- Never fold the line over the eyes
- 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.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) - The DNR lists lakes and rivers as “infested” with certain aquatic invasive species. If you are harvesting bait, commercial fishing, or downstream or taking water, you might need to follow special regulations in infested waters.

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

**Before leaving the water access or shoreline property, you MUST:**

- Close drain plugs, etc.
- Drain water including live wells, livewells, ballast tanks, toilets, and motor and boat tanks
- Drain boat and leave it out

Get into the habit of taking these simple steps, and it will soon become part of your routine. Pull away from the boat ramp area. Check for and remove plants while dragging the boat down. Pull the plug when adjusting the motor. If you have other people (especially kids) with you, have them 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 also:

- 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
- Dump water out of canoes, kayaks, and other watercraft before leaving

These are YOUR waters and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, clean, and disinfect your boat.

**AIS Bait Laws**

It is illegal to transport lake and river water. To save your bait (minnows or leeches), the DNR recommends bringing “fish safe” treated water from home and keeping it in your vehicle or cooler.

Draining can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

DO NOT dump unwanted bait into water bodies or on the shoreline. Unwanted bait belches in the trash or a designated compost bin. Unwanted waste must be disposed of in the trash.

**Fishing Regulations**

- Crappie (C), Sunfish (S), Bass (B), Trout (T), Walleye (W), Pike (P), Smelt (MT), Salmon (L), steelhead, (ST), Salmon trout (SL), - Sauger (SA)

**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 equipment. For more information call the DNR Information Center at (651) 296-1917 or 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-4236).

Selective Harvest Fishing - Improved technology and increased fishing have caused 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 barrier floats
- Play the fish quickly and handle the fish carefully
- Never fold the line over the eyes
- 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 -** All boats (even a spectator) regardless of length must be a readily, accessible Coast-Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person on board. In addition, on boats 16 feet or longer, except canoes and kayaks, there must also be at least one Coast-Guard approved throwable device, such as a ring buoy or seat cushion.

**Boating While Intoxicated (BWI) -** Boating while intoxicated is illegal. For 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 adage is free of charge.

**Working Together to Protect the Waters**

Watercraft inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are “clean, in, clean out” if you need assistance, have a question about the law, or are curious about the program, please ask.

**Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:**

1. Please clean your boat and pull your plug as soon as you are safely able to. That way when the inspector comes, the inspection process will move quickly.

2. If there is a Decontamination Unit present, please follow all 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.

3. The watercraft inspectors can help you:

   a. The inspectors have tools, wrenches and pliers, so if you are having trouble with your plug, ask.

   b. If there are weeds that are hard to reach, inspectors can also help pull weeds off boats or other such tools. They also have Goldberg tools for plants.

When you see the Watercraft Inspectors, please be cooperative. The law requires compliance with inspectors, and it will help everyone abide on their way it is a timely and pleasant manner.