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 31 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 fees and state-motorized tax revenue.

Public accesses are usually open 24 hours unless otherwise posted. Most sites have launch ramps but some sites, especially on smaller rivers, are open only during the daytime. Boat launches and docks are usually located only on the larger and busier rivers.

Public Water Access Rules - The launch area must be kept clean and the following activities are unlawful: littering, camping, shooing away birds, feeding fish, desalting alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota rules, chapter 623 for complete rules.

Boating in Minnesota:
The annual Minnesota Boating Guide summarizes Minnesota’s boating laws and regulations in an easy-to-read format. 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) 296-6177 or 1-888-646-6687. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-LICENSE (656-4733).

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 fewer fish 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
- Never hold the fish by the ears
- Use a needle nose pliers to remove hooks or cut in fishing lines and rope
- Dump out water of cans, kokes, and other watercraft before leaving

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

- Clean off all aquatic plants and animals
- Drain water including bilges, fuel tanks, battery boxes, bait buckets, motor and ballast tanks
- Pull the plug and leave 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 vegetation and stop the boat down. Pull the plug when adjusting the motor. If you have other people (especially kids) with you, they have helped. After 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 came in the water. Many species can travel in the mud or in fishing lines and ropes
- Dump waste out of cans, kokes, and other watercraft before leaving

Your water access and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, clean, and dry 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. Bringing a cardboard box of warm days to cool down the water

DO NOT dump unwanted bait into water bodies or on the shorelines! Unwanted bait投放ning, or a designated compost bin. Unwanted worms must be disposed of in the trash.

Working Together to Protect the Waters:
The Watercraft Inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are “clean, it, clean out!” If you need assistance, have questions about the laws, or are curious about the program, please ask.

Accessible Accesses:
Public water access sites developed after 2012 have been designed with accessible parking spaces and approaches 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 red, accessible symbol shown above.

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 this guide, or Contact the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6177 (MN-MNDNR) or email info.dnr@state.mn.us.

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 discharging 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 LakeFinder to find out if a particular lake is listed as infested (www.mndnr.gov/lakefinder). For more information about infested waters, including up-to-date infested areas, visit gomndnr.gov/mnispecies.

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Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:
- Please clear 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
- If there is a document or legal form 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 operate from a safe distance
- If there is a small craft, please operate it from a safe distance

Ways the Watercraft Inspectors can help you:
- The inspectors have two tools, witchets and poles, and if you are having trouble with your plug, wail
- If there are weeds that are too hard to reach, inspectors can also help pull weeds off boats or other such tasks. They also have grabbing tools for plants

When you see the Watercraft Inspectors, please be cooperative. If there are questions and restrictions in place, it will help everyone to be on their way in a timely and pleasant manner.