Public Water Access in Minnesota:

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trails water recreation program provides approximately 1,400 boat accesses, over 300 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 boatage programs are funded by fees including boat license & fuel tax related to 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 open only during daylight hours. Bathrooms and docks are usually located only on the larger and boater sites.

Public Water Access Rules - The launch must be kept clear and the following activities are unallowed: littering, shading, building fishing, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 6200 for complete rules.

Boating in Minnesota:

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

Licenses - 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-MINN-DNR. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-4336).

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 increased fishing experience. Here are some tips to help you:

- 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.
- Avoid holding the fish by the eyes.
- Use barbless hooks.
- Never hold the fish by 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.

Aquatric 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 dividing or taking water, you might need to follow special regulations in infested waters.

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

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

- Clean your watercraft. Drain all water, including water containing fish eggs, aquatic plants and animals. Water from watercraft including: seawater, ballast water, fishing tackle, and motor and ballast tanks must be drained before leaving the water access or shoreline property.
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Safe Boating:

Life Jackets - All boats except a sailboat regardless of length must have 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 be at least one Coast Guard approved throwable device, such as a ring buoy or vest cushion.

Boating While Intoxicated (DWI) - 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 in low or 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. ASDI safety videos are available free of charge.

Public Water Access in Carlton County:

Public Water Accesses in Carlton County:

No public water access sites are listed for the state. A list of authorized water access sites is available at mndnr.gov/pwa.

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AIS Bait Laws:

It is illegal to transport lake and river water. To save your bait (minnows or minnows), the DNR recommends bringing “minnow safe”, treated water from home and keeping it in your vehicle or cooler. Draining ice can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

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