**Public Water Access in Minnesota:**

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trail’s water recreation program provides approximately 1,000 boat accesses, over 365 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 free or low-cost fees including boat license & gas to be 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, may carry in only. Bathrooms and docks are usually stocked on the larger and busier sites.

**Public Water Access Rules:** The launch area must be clear and the following activities are unallowed: littering, camping, building fires, and consuming alcohol in designated areas. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 6121 for more details.

**Boating in Minnesota:**

The annual Minnesota Boating Guide summarizes Minnesota boating laws and regulations in a easy to read format. The guide supplies information about operating watercraft on the state’s waterways. These regulations apply to operators 17 years old and younger.

**Licensing:** All motorized and non-motorized watercraft must have a valid Minnesota State Parks and Trails-Bemidji or 1-888-MINNDNR License. Information about permits and licenses is available free of charge.

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trails-Bemidji or 1-888-MINNDNR License is available to provide more information about regulated fisheries, including special seasons, bag limits, and other administrative information, visit main.dnr.state.mn.us/conservation/main_pages/guides.htm.

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

- Check all AIS aquatic plants and animals
- Check your vessel for invasive species
- Dump water including live wells, bait buckets, roost and ballast tanks
- If a plug is in use, make sure you close it down.
- Get to the hold of making sure these three simple steps, and it will become part of your routine. Pull down the boat ramp. Check your vessel and inspect it for invasive species. If you find any, report it to the nearest DNR office. If you have been notified of a DNR office, please help! Adding a few minutes will help safeguard our waters.

Cleaning water-related equipment is just as important as cleaning your boat, please remember to:

- Clean oars, ropes, fishing tackle, and other objects that have been in the water. Many species can be transported in the mud or the boat motors.
- Pluck out plants, ropes, and other objects that were in the water. Many species can be carried on or in your boat, please help! Adding a few minutes will help safeguard our waters.

If you are harvesting bait, commercial fishing, or diverting or transporting saline water, you may need to follow special regulations in affected 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 for more information about infested waters, including up-to-date information on additional location information, visit main.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/infested_lakes.htm.

**Fishing in Minnesota:**

Fishing Regulations and Licensing: All persons 16 and older need a valid Minnesota State Parks and Trails-Bemidji or 1-888-MINNDNR License. Persons under 16 years old are not required to have a license when fishing. Licenses are available through the DNR License Information Center is available to provide more information about regulated fisheries, including special seasons, bag limits, and other administrative information, visit main.dnr.state.mn.us/conservation/main_pages/guides.htm.

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

- Use barbed hooks
- Play the fish quickly and handle the fish carefully
- Never hold the fish by the eyes
- Use a needle nose pliers to remove hooks or cut the line if it is too deep
- Make sure live fish back into the water, do not throw it back.

**Safe Boating:**

Life Jackets - On boats (except a sailboat) regardless of length there must be a freely accessible Coast Guard approved personal inflatable life jacket for each person on board. In addition, on boats 16 feet or longer, except canoes and kayaks, there must also at least one Coast Guard approved throwable device, such as a ring buoy or seat cushion.

Boating While Intoxicated (BWI): Boating While Intoxicated (BWI) is a misdemeanor, punishable by fine or imprisonment. Licensees convicted of BWI may lose their license for a specified period of time.

Operating Watercraft While Intoxicated: Operating Watercraft While Intoxicated is a gross misdemeanor, punishable by fine or imprisonment. Licensees convicted of this may lose their license for a specified period of time.

**Selecting a Waterbody:**

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

NO DTLP unintentional water body to another lake or river. Unwanted water must be disposed of in the trash.

**AIS Bait Laws:**

A dealer or other person who has the actual or constructive possession of regulated vessels may be subject to citation if the vessel is determined to be illegally possessed.

**Working Together to Protect the Waters:**

Watercraft Inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are clean, free of AIS, clean and free of other such tasks. They also have grabbing tools for plants.

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