**Public Water Access in Minnesota:**

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trail’s water recreation program provides approximately 1,600 boat accesses, over 365 fishing piers and over 200 sites 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 and through grants to local communities, so please use the access responsibly.

**Public Water Access Rules:** The launch area must be kept clear and the following activities are unlawful: littering, smoking, building fires, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Statute, chapter 612 for complete rules.

**Boating in Minnesota:**

The annual Minnesota Boating Guide summary includes 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 16 years old and younger.

**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, many County Auditors and many stores that sell fishing related goods. Those fishing requires a license, those not requiring a license are in certain situations. For more information call the DNR Information Center at (800) 657-1657 or 1-888-666-6276 to purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-Fish-DF northeast of (655-4290).

**Selective Harvest Fishing:** Improved technology and increasing fish have caused the quality of fish to decline in many waters. Fishing that appears as “selective harvest” is often 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:

1. Use baited hooks.
2. Play the fish quickly and handle the fish carefully.
3. Never hold the fish by the eyes.
4. Use a needle nose pliers to remove hooks or cut the line. If it is too deep:
5. Ease the fish back into the water, do not throw it back.

**Safe Boating:**

Life Jackets - On all boat (except a sailboat regardless of length must be a easily 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 several penalties, including fines and possible jail sentences.

**Personal Watercraft:** Special laws apply including wearing a life jacket and operating at 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. ACDN safety videos is available free of charge.

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**Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Laws and Requirements:**

If you are harvesting bait, commercial fishing, or cleaning 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 a label finder to find out if a particular lake is listed as infested—mind your lakes/streams. For more information about infested waters, including an up-to-date infested waters list and additional location information, visit mindingwater.info/areas.

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

1. Clean all fish, animals, debris, or items from the lake including boats, buoys, boat motors, and ballast systems.
2. Bag and keep out.

Get the habit of taking these three simple steps, and it will become part of your routine. Pull your boat away from the ramp area. Check for and remove plants while strapping the boat down. Pull the plug when adjusting the motor. If you have other people transporting boats with you, have them help. Adding a few minutes will help safeguard our waters.

Cleaning water-related equipment is just as important as cleaning your boat and motor. Using an anti-foul product to treat your motor is an important part of keeping your motor clean.

**Fish Species:**


**Public Water Access in Chippewa & Swift Counties**

- **AIS Bait Laws:**
  - It is illegal to transport lake and river water. To save your bait (mice or snails), the DNR recommends bringing “fish safe” treated water from home and keeping it in your vehicle or cooler. Bringing ice 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 fishing is a misdemeanor or a designated compact bin. Unwanted worms must be disposed of in the trash.

**Accessories:**

Public water access sites developed after 2012 have been designed with accessible parking spaces and accessible routes to the water access. These sites are identified by the red, accessible symbol shown above.

Fishing piers and developed shore fishing sites have been designed specifically to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Fishing piers are generally located within 300 feet of the site and there is a hand 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 administration based on the guide. Contact the DNR Information Center, 1-888-657-1657 (888-MINNDr) or email info.dnr@state.mn.us.

**Working Together to Protect the Waters:**

- Watercraft inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are “clean, clean, out.” If you need assistance, please ask the inspector near the boat, or if there are concerns about the program, please ask!

* Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:
  - Please clean your boat and trailer/pontoon as soon as you are safely able. That way when the inspector comes, the inspection process will move quickly.
  - 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.

* Ways the Watercraft Inspectors can help you:
  - The inspectors have tools, wrenches and spray to make sure your watercraft is clean.
  - There are watercraft sanitizers. 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 to be on their way in a timely and pleasant manner.