Clean your watercraft, Drain all water, Dispose of unused bait.

Fishing in Minnesota

Fishing Regulations and Licensing - All persons 16 and older are required to have the appropriate license with them when fishing. Licensees are validated through the DNR's License Bureau, most County Auditors and many stores that sell fishing related goods. To obtain a fishing license requires a $21.00 state fee. For more information call the Minnesota DNR Information Center at (651) 296-6157 or 1-888-646-6646. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MINEEFL (646-3356).

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 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 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 - On all boats (except a sailboat) regardless of length there 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 be at least one Coast Guard approved throwable device, such as a ring buoy or seat cushion.

Boating While Intoxicated (BDWI) - 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 while operating a jet or wave boat at speeds in constant distance from other watercraft, swimmers and other objects in the water. Operating age restrictions also apply. Consult the Boating Guide for more information. A DNR safety video is available for free.

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 darting 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 ask a DNR district specialist.

For more information about infested waters, including an up-to-date information sheet, and additional location information, visit mndnr.gov/Invasives.

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

- Clean, drain, and dry all water including bilge, livewells, drain tanks, bait boxes, boat motors and motor ballast tanks.

- In the water, use trash cans or other receptacles to throw away trash and keep it out of the water.

- 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 plants while strapping 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 your boat, so while you’re cleaning your boat, please remember to also:
  - Clean, drain, and dry all water including bilge, livewells, drain tanks, bait boxes, boat motors and motor ballast tanks.
  - In the water, use trash cans or other receptacles to throw away trash and keep it out of the water.
  - 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 plants while strapping 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.

- These are YOUR waters 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 (more for the fish), the DNR recommends bringing your 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 DTG untreated bait water into water bodies or on the shoreline! Unwanted bait belongs in the trash or a designated compost bin. Unwanted waste must be disposed of in the trash.

Working Together to Protect the Waters

Watercraft Inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are “clean, in clean condition” if you need assistance, have questions about the laws, or are curious about the program, please ask.

Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:
- Please clean your boat and pull your plug as soon as you are safely able to. When that way the inspector comes, the inspection process will move quickly.
- If there is a Decontamination Station, 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 inspector has tools, Venezuelan, and plans, so if you are fishing trouble with your plug, ask.
- The inspector can also help pull weeds off boats or other methods. They have grabbing tools for plants.

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

Examples: 
- Sandhill Cranes - North Dakota – Wetlands (usually located only on the larger and busier sites. Lake of the Woods - Minnesota (usually located only on the larger and busier sites.
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- Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trail (usually located only on the larger and busier sites.
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