Public Water Access in Minnesota:

The Minnesota-DNR State Parks and Trails’ water recreation program provides approximately 1,450 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 funded by fees including boat launch fees, tax related to marine use.

Public accesses are usually open 24 hours unless otherwise noted. Most sites have launch ramps but some sites, especially on smaller rivers, are carry-in only. Bathrooms and docks are usually located only on the larger and busier sites.

Public Water Access Rules — The launch area must be kept clean and the following activities are unlawful: littering, camping, shooting, building fires, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 62B for complete rules.

Boating in Minnesota:

The annual Minnesota Boating Guide summaries Minnesota boating and fishing laws and regulations is an easy-to-read form. The guide supplies information about operating watercraft on the state’s lakes and rivers. Operator age restrictions apply to motorized and non-motorized watercraft. Operator age restrictions are enforced by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Please contact the DNR License Bureau for information.

Licenses — All motorists and non-motorists watercraft operators must be licensed. Licenses are available through the DNR License Bureau and related goods. To order publications or for specific site information, call the DNR Information Center at (651) 296-6157 or mndnr.gov.In/s. (651) 296-6157 (local)

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 Auditor’s offices 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 1-888-946-2367. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN_LICENSE (665-4236).

Selecting Harvest Fishing — Improved technology and increased fishing lines have expanded the quality of fishing to decline in many waters. Practicing “Selecting Harvest” offers anglers an opportunity to take some fish home while releasing others back into the water. This is YOUR water and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, clean and drain your boats! AOS 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 water can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

DON’T dump unwanted bait into water bodies or on the shoreline! Unwanted bait can spread in the trash or a designed 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 out!” If you need assistance, have questions about the laws, or are curious about the program, please ask.

Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:

1) Clean your watercraft, Drain all water, Dispose of unused bait.
2) Do not transport lake or 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 water can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.
3) DO NOT dump unwanted bait into water bodies or on the shoreline! Unwanted bait can spread in the trash or a designated compost bin. Unwanted waste must be disposed of in the trash.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Laws and Requirements: The AIS list bans lakes and rivers as “infested” with certain aquatic invasive species. If you are harvesting bait, commercial fishing, or diverting or taking water, you might need to follow special regulations in infested waters.

To identify an infested water, look for invasive species information. Alert signs at the access. You can also see LakeFinder to find out if your particular lake is listed as infested: mndnr.gov/lakefind. For more information about infested waters, including an up-to-date list of infested sites and additional location information, visit mndnr.gov.Ins.

Before leaving the water access or shoreline property, you MUST:
1) Clean off AIS aquatic plants and animals
2) Drain all water, including bilge water, anchorwell, bilge water, bait buckets, motor and ballasted tanks
3) Fill the plug and shake 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 plants while docking the boat. 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 boats, so while you’re cleaning your boat, please remember to also:
1) 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 ropes.
2) Dump water out of canoes, kayaks, and other watercraft before leaving.
3) There are YOUR water and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, clean and drain your boats!

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 water can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

DON’T dump unwanted bait into water bodies or on the shoreline! Unwanted bait can spread in the trash or a designated compost bin. Unwanted waste must be disposed of in the trash.

Waters with Invasive Species

Working Together to Protect the Waters

Watercraft inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are “clean in, clean out!” If you need assistance, have questions about the laws, or are curious about the program, please ask.

Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:

1) Clean your watercraft, drain all water, dispose of bait, and operate at slow no-wake speed at certain distances from other watercrafts, swimmers and other objects in the water. Operator age restrictions also apply. Consult the Boating Guide for more information. A AIS safety device is available free of charge.

Safe Boating

Life Jackets — On all boats (except for sailboats) regardless of length must be a readily available Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person on board. In addition, on boats 30 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 (DWI) — Boating while intoxicated is illegal. For persons found to be under the influence of alcohol while operating motorized watercraft, the law requires compliance with inspectors, and it will help everyone to be on their way in a timely and pleasant manner.

Personal Watercraft — Special laws apply including wearing a life jacket and operating at slow 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. A AIS safety device is available free of charge.

Public Water Access in northern Koochiching County:

The DNR License Bureau is available to provide free publications of facilities and services as well as answers questions pertaining to DNR recreational opportunities in Minnesota.

Minnesota State Parks and Trails-Grand Rapids (218) 999-7923

Admin: 8405-1657 (local) or 1-888-MN-InS (665-4236)

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