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

Federal Aid Project funded by your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels.

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 offices and many stores that sell fishing-related goods. Tackle fishing requires a trout stamp. For more information call the DNR Information Center at (651) 296-6157 or 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-4236).

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 home 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.
- Neveristle the fish by the lips.
- 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.

Select Harvest Legal Fishing - 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. Bring in a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

DO NOT dump untreated bait into water bodies or on the shoreline. Unwanted bait belongs in the trash or a designated baitwells, bait buckets, motor and ballast tanks.

Safe Boating

Life Jackets - On all boats. Boaters victimized regardless of length there must be a readily accessible Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person on board. In addition, on boats 36 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 after Consumption of DHM - Boaters found intoxicated are 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 slow no-wake speed in 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 410 safety video is available free of charge.

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 deserting 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 use LakeFinder to find if a particular lake is listed as infested: mndnr.gov/LakeFinder. For more information about infested waters, including up-to-date infested waters list and additional location information, visit mndnr.gov/AIS.

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

- Clean all aquatic plants and animals.
- Remove all cleaning trash (hoses, barrels, boats, burners, motor and bail lift tons)
- Pull plug and leave it out.
- Get into the habit of taking these three simple steps, and it will become part of your routine. Pull away from the boat ramp area. Check for and remove plants while despuging 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 fish, please remember to also:

- Clean anchors, ropes, fishing tackle, and other objects that come in the water. Many species can be transported in the mud or in fishing lines and ropes.
- Dump water out of canoes, kayaks, and other watercraft before leaving.

These are YOUR waters 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. Bring in a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

DO NOT dump untreated bait into water bodies or on the shoreline. Unwanted bait belongs in the trash or a designated compost bin. Unwanted worms 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 law, or are curious about the program, please ask us.

Watercraft Inspectors:

- Please show your boat and tell your plug or esc in case you are unable to do so. When the inspector leaves, the inspection process will move quickly.
- If there is a Certification Card present, please follow all the instructions given by the inspectors, for your safety and theirs. There will be plenty of time to ask questions and understand what is happening.

Ways the watercraft inspector can help you:

- If the inspector finds both, they are approved to help pull weeds off boats or 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 to be in their way in a timely and pleasant manner.

Public Water Access in Minnesota:

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trail’s water recreation program provides approximately 2,500 boat accesses, over 365 fishing piers and shore fishing sites and manages 35 designated Water Trails in Minnesota. The DNR, federal, local 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 licence & the 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 in the fall. Bathrooms and docks are usually licensed only on the larger and busier sites.

Public Water Access Rules - The launch area must be kept clear and the following activities are unlawful: littering, climbing, shampooing, building fires, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 6218 for complete rules.

Boating in Minnesota

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

Licensing - All registered and non-registered watercraft must be licensed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Please contact the DNR License Bureau for information.

Safe Boating

Life Jackets - On all boats. Boaters victimized regardless of length there must be a readily accessible Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person on board. In addition, on boats 36 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.

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