Public Water Access in Minnesota:
The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trails water recreation program provides approximately 1,650 boat accesses, over 365 fishing piers and shore fishing sites and manages 15 designated Water Trails in Minnesota. The DNR, federal government, and local community operate boat accesses. See the table on the right for specific site information. The DNR boating programs are funded by fees including boat fuel tax and gasoline related taxes.

Public accesses are usually open 24 hours unless otherwise posted. 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 better sites.

Public Water Access Rules - The launch area must be clean and the following activities are unlawful: littering,amping, storage of fuel, and consuming alcohol beverage. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 6218 for complete rules.

Boating in Minnesota:
The annual Minnesota Boating Guide summarizes Minnesota 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 17 years old and younger.

Licensing - All motorized and non-motorized watercraft operators 16 years old and younger must be licensed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Please contact the DNR License Bureau for information.

Fishing in Minnesota:
Fishing Regulations and Licensing - All persons 16 and older are required to have the appropriate license with them when fishing. Licenses and addition information are available through the DNR License Bureau, most county Auditor’s offices, and many stores that sell fishing equipment. Their fishing requires a trout stamp. For more information call the DNR information Center at (800) 652-6677 or 1-888-666-6687. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-4236).

Selective Harvest Fishing - Improved technology and increased fishing have caused the quality of fishing to decline in many areas. Practicing “Selective Harvesting” 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 barrierless hooks.

Plug the fish quickly and handle the fish carefully.

Never hold the fish by the gills.

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.

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 dreiving or taking water, you might need to follow special regulations in infested waters.

To identify an infested water, look for orange information Sign alert signs at the access. You can also use lakefinder.to find out if a particular lake is listed as infested. roy-grande.fo/infested foreseeable. For more information about infested waters, including an up-to-date list of infested lakes and additional location information, visit roy-grande/infested.

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

Clean all aquatic plants and animals

Drain water including high, lowbow, bait, batt, baits, bucket, and ballast tanks

Foot the plug and know it is 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 dragging 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 water, while you’re cleaning your boat, please remember to also:

Clean anchors, ropes, fishing tackle, and other objects in the water. Many species can be transported in the mud or on fishing lines and rope.

Dump water out of coolers, totes, and bait buckets.

These 30 lakes are watercraft. If you’ve been cleaning your boat, you’ll probably see them. These are 35 designated sites. Unwanted weeds must be disposed of in the trash.

Working Together to Protect the Waters:
Public Water Access Inspectors are here to ensure watercraft and equipment are clean, clean out? If you need assistance, have questions about the law, or are curious about the program, please ask.

Want you can help the Watercraft Inspectors:

Please drain your boat before you plug in as you are safely able to. That way when the inspector comes, the inspector’s mission will save time.

If there is a discrepancy, 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.

Want the Watercraft Inspectors can help you:

Boating While Intoxicated (BWI) - Boating while intoxicated is illegal. If you are found to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances, you are guilty of boating while intoxicated.

Fishing - Fishing is a loanable weapon. If you are fishing with a plug, ask the inspector if you can use the plug. The inspector can also help pull weeds off boats or other objects they have grueling tools for plants.

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

Safe Boating:
Life Jackets - On all boats except sailboats 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 less, except canoes and kayaks, there must be at least one Coast Guard approved throwable device, such as a life ring or life cushion.

Boating While Intoxicated (DBW) - boating while intoxicated is illegal. If you are found to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances, you are guilty of boating while intoxicated.

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 DNR safety video is available for free.

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

Photos: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, unless otherwise noted.

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

Waters with Invasive Species:

Minnesota State Parks and Trails-Grand Rapids (218) 599-1923

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

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, unless otherwise noted. Persons with disabilities may request this information in an alternative format.

Persons with disabilities may request this information in an alternative format.

Includes fishing piers and shoreline sites.

The DNR Information Center
The DNR Information Center is available to provide free publications of facilities and services as well as answers pertaining to DNR recreational opportunities in Minnesota. 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4040 651-296-6157 (local) or 1-888-MN-DNR

mn.dnr.gov