Public Water Access in Minnesota:

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trail’s water recreation program provides approximately 1,500 boat accesses, over 365 fishing piers and shore fishing sites and manages 15 designated Water Trails in Minnesota. The DNR, Federal Government and local communities operate boat accesses. See the table on the right for specific information. The DNR boating programs are funded by boat license and gas 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 during business hours. Bathrooms and docks are usually located 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, camping, building fires, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 6212 for complete rules.

Boating in Minnesota:

The Annual Minnesota Boating Guide summarizes Minnesota boating laws and regulations in an easy-to-read form. 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. For more information contact the DNR License Department.

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 Auditors 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 1-888-646-6177. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-4331).

Selective Harvest Fishing - Improved technology and increased fishing have caused the quality of fishing to decline in many waters. Practices “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 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.

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 4 feet or longer, except canoes and kayaks, there shall be at least one Coast Guard approved throwable device, such as a foam ring or a cork collar.

Boating While Intoxicated (DWI) - 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 of a life jacket and operating at slow no wake speed at certain distances from other watercraft, swimmers and other objects in the water. Operating a boat in a public access prohibits DWI, speeding, and a number of other activities. Consult the Boating Guide for more information. A DNR safety video is available online.

Aquatich Invasive Species (AIS) Laws and Requirements:

The DNR lists lakes and rivers as “infested” with certain aquatic invasive species. If you are harvesting fish, commercial fishing, or distributing or taking water, you might need to follow special regulations in infested waters.

To identify an infested lake, boat for orange invasive Species Alert signs at the access. You can also use LakeFinder to find out 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/invasives.

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

- Clean off all aquatic plants and animals.
- Drain all water including bilges, bunk tanks, ballast tanks, motor and ballast tanks.
- Decontaminate if required.
- 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. 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.

Clean your watercraft, Drain all water, and shorefishing sites.

Minnesota State Parks and Trails-New Ulm

500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN  55155-4040

Access to Fishing

The Minnesota Guidelines for Public Access to Watercraft provide detailed descriptions of the Minnesota State Parks and Trails-New Ulm boat access. The sites are designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Parking is usually located only on the larger and busier sites.

Accessible Accesses

Public water access sites developed after 2012 have been designed with accessible parking spaces and accessible routes to the top of the boat ramp. Some sites have additional accessible routes to a dock or other site amenities. These sites are identified with the red, accessible symbol shown above.

Fishing piers and developed shore fishing sites have been designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Parking is generally located within 300 feet of the site and there is at least a surfaced 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 out of compliance, please report problems to the site administrator listed in this guide, or contact the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6157 (888-MN-DEER) or email info.dnr@state.mn.us.

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 concerned about the program, please ask.

When you can help the Watercraft Inspector:

- Please clean your boat and your plug as soon as you are safely able to. That way when the inspector arrives, the inspection process will move quickly.
- If you have any questions about the laws, please ask the inspector or call the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6157 (888-MN-DEER) or email info.dnr@state.mn.us.

The Watercraft Inspector can help you:

- The inspectors have tools, wrenches and pliers, so if you are facing a problem with your plug, ask them for help.
- The inspectors can also help pull weeds off boats or other such loads. They also have grinding tools for plants.
- When you see the Watercraft Inspector, please cooperate. The law requires compliance with inspectors, and it will help everyone to do their task in a timely and pleasant manner.

Access Water Trail Websites:

WaterTrail website: mndnr.gov/watertrail (503) 359-6000

MnDNR Public Access Map:

STATE PUBLIC WATER ACCESS MAP

Includes fishing piers and shorefishing sites

Clean in

Clean out

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

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

Minnesota State Parks and Trails-New Ulm

500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

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