Public Water Access in Minnesota:

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trails’ water recreation program provides approximately 1,460 boat accesses, over 365 fishing piers and shore fishing sites and manages 51 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 from boat users including boat license & gas tax related to marine use.

Boating in Minnesota:

The annual Minnesota Boating Guide is available free of charge. Licenses are available through the DNR License Bureau for information. Fishing equipment and motor boat fuel.

Fishing in Minnesota:

Boating While Intoxicated (BWI) - Improved technology and related goods.

Selective Harvest Fishing - Improved technology and increased fishing fees 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 barbs hooks.
- Play the fish quickly and handle the fish correctly.
- 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 sailboard) 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 also be at least one Coast Guard approved throwable device, such as a ring buoy or seat cushion.

No dumping of waste into water bodies or on the shorelines! 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 out.” If you need assistance, have questions about the law, or are curious about the program, please ask.

The inspectors have tools, wrenches and pliers, so they can also help pull weeds off boats or other such tasks. They also have cleaning tools for plants.

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, county Auditor’s offices, and most stores that sell fishing related goods. Free fishing requires a trout stamp. For more information call the DNR Information Center at (651) 296-6157 or 1-888-646-6007. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-DNR (6673) (560-4396).

Cleaning water-related equipment is just as important as cleaning boats, so when you’re cleaning your boat, please remember to also:

- 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 rope.
- Pump water out of canoes, kayaks, and other watercraft before leaving.

These are YOUR waters and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, check, and clean your boats!

AIS Bait Laws

It is illegal to transport lake- and river-water bait. To save your bait (and you), the DNR recommends bringing “fish safe”, treated water from home and keeping it in your vehicle or cooler. Bringing on ice can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

DO NOT dump unwanted bait into water bodies or on the shorelines! Unwanted bait belongs 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 DNR lists lakes and rivers as “Infested” with certain aquatic invasive species. If you are harvesting bait, commercial fishing, or diving 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 out if a particular lake is listed as infested or not. For more information about infested waters, including an up-to-date list of infested waters and additional location information, visit mndnr.invasives.

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

- Clean all AIS aquatic plants and animals.
- Drain any water including boat, inflatables, coolers, bucket bags, bucket baskets, motor and ballast tanks.
- Pump out any water using a pump affixed to the boat.
- Get into the habit of taking these 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 (personally) with you, have them help. Adding a few minutes will help safeguard our waters.

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

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

Healthy lakes are the foundation of Minnesota’s economy. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources works to ensure our waters are a treasured resource and are enjoyed by everyone. If you have questions about our water quality, please contact the DNR Water Quality Program.

Minnesota’s boating laws and regulations are in an easy-to-read form. Operator age restrictions apply to Minnesota’s boating laws and regulations in an easy-to-read form.

Drain, Decontaminate and Dry. These are YOUR waters and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, check, and drain your boats!

Inspectors have tools, wrenches and pliers, so they can also help pull weeds off boats or other such tasks. They also have cleaning tools for plants.

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