**Public Water Access in Minnesota:**

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trails-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 site information. The DNR boatage programs are funded by boat users including boat license & 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 in summer. 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, shooting, building fires, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 612 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.

**Licensing:** All motorized and non-motorized watercraft 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 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 1-888-646-6367. To purchase a license by phone 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-3667).

**Selective Harvest Fishing:** Improved technology and increased fishing pressure have caused the quality of fishing to decline in many waters. Practice “Selective Harvest” offers anglers an opportunity to take some fish home while releasing other fish to the lake to improve fishing quality. Here are some tips to use for effective Selective Harvest fishing:

- **Use bare hands:**
- **Play the fish quickly and handle the fish carefully:**
- **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 small boat (25hp or less) and select waterways, a life jacket is required for all persons on board. In addition, on boats 16 feet or longer, except canoes and kayaks, there must also be at least one Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person on board. In addition, on boats 6 feet or longer, except canoes and kayaks, there must also be at least one Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person. In addition, on boats 6 feet or longer, except canoes and kayaks, there must also be at least one Coast Guard approved wearable life jacket for each person.

**Beating While Intoxicated:** 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 a flotation coat 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 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 diverting 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 it out if a particular lake is listed as infested. Minnesota.gov/Invasives. 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 Hull, aquatic plants and animals
- Drain of water including bilge, hawseholes, ballast tanks, bud baskets, motor and ballasted tanks
- Pull plug and leave it out
- Get into the habit of taking these three simple steps, and it will soon become part of your routine. Pull off the boat ramp area. Check for and remove plants while dragging 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:**

- 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
- Dump water out of canoes, kayaks, and other watercraft before leaving the water access or 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 (unplanted or transplanted), the DNR recommends bringing “fish safe,” treated water from home and keeping it in your vehicle or cooler. Bring 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 shoreline! Unwanted bait belongs in the trash or a designated baitwells, bait buckets, motor and ballast tanks. 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 laws, or are curious about the program, please ask!

- **Ways you can help the Watercraft Inspectors**:
  - Please clean your watercraft before you leave the access. Be courteous to inspectors during the inspection process.
  - If the watercraft inspector requests assistance with your watercraft, please accommodate.
  - If there are weeds that are too much, inspectors can 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 inspections, and it will help everyone to be on their way in a timely and pleasant manner.