Public Water Access in Minnesota:

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trail’s water recreation program provides approximately 1,500 lake access points, over 350 fishing piers and shore fishing sites and manages 35 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 user fees including boat license & 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 carry-in only. Bathrooms and docks are usually located only on the larger and busier sites.

Public Water Access Rules - The launch area must be kept clean and the following activities are unlawful: littering, smoking, 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 watercraft on the state’s lakes and rivers. Operator age restrictions apply to operate 17 years old and younger.

Licensing - All motorized and non-motorized watercraft must be licensed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Please check 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 mndnr.gov.

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:

Always check your boat before you launch it. It is illegal to transport lake and river water. To save your bait marks, consider bringing “fish safe” treatments water from home and keeping it in your vehicle cooler. Baiting ice can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

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 200 feet of the site and there is a handi-cap surface path from the parking area to the facility. The DNR coordinates with a variety of local units of government to maintain the fishing piers.

Sometimes, weather or variability can make these designed sites no longer accessible. If a site failed to meet the standard of compliance, please report problems to the site administrator listed in this guide, or Contact the DNR Information Center, (651) 296-6157 (DNR-MNDNR) or email info.dnr@state.mn.us.