Public Water Access in Minnesota:

The Minnesota DNR State Parks and Trillium Trail recreation program provides approximately 1,500 boat accesses, over 250 fishing piers and shore fishing facilities and manages 55 designated Water Trails in Minnesota. The DNR, in cooperation with local governments and other agencies, operates boating access. See the table on the right for specific site information. The DNR boating programs are funded by user fees and grants received to maintain our lakes.

Public accesses are usually open 24 hours unless otherwise posted. Most sites have both launch ramps and sites, especially on smaller rivers, are open to only. Bathrooms and docks are usually located 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, hunting, fishing, and consuming alcoholic beverages. See Minnesota Rules, chapter 6218 for complete rules.

Boating in Minnesota:

The annual Minnesota boating guide provides summaries of 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 ages 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 or older are required to have the appropriate license with them while fishing. Licenses are available through the DNR License Bureau, most County Auditors and many stores that sell fishing supplies. For more information call the DNR Information Center at (651) 296-6157 or 1-888-646-6066. To purchase a license by phone for 24 hours a day, call 1-888-MN-LICENSE (665-5341).

Selective Harvest Fishing: Improved technology and increased awareness among anglers have caused the quality of fishing to decline in many waters. Practicing “Selective Harvesting” offers anglers an opportunity to take some fish while releasing other fish back into the water to improve fishing quality. Here are some tips to use for effective Selective Harvest fishing:

- Use barbed hooks
- Play the fish quickly and through 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.

Aqua 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 out if a particular lake is listed as infested: mn.dnr.net/lakefinder. For more information about infested waters, including an up-to-date information on lakes and additional location information, visit mndnr.gov/lakes.

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

- Clean off AIS, aquatic plants and animals
- Drain all water including bilge, livewells, ballast, bait buckets, motor and ballast tanks
- Dry the 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 away from the boat ramp area. Check for and remove plants while dragging the boat down. Pull the plug when the adjusting for use in your area. If you have any other questions (especially kids) with you, then those kids! Helping a few minutes will help safeguard our waters.

Cleaning water-related equipment is just as important as cleaning gear, 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 on the lines and ropes
- Pump water out of cooling, to and other watercraft before leaving
- There are YOUR waters and it is YOUR responsibility to inspect, clean, and drain your boats!

AIS Bait Laws:

It is illegal to transport live bait and live water. To save your bait (prawns or insects), the DNR recommends bringing "fish safe", treated water from home and keeping it in your vehicle or cooler. Bionically treated water can be a good idea on warm days to cool down the water.

DO NOT dump untreated water into bodies of water or on the shore. Unwanted bait can have negative impacts, especially in the Minnesota bass population. Unwanted worms must be disposed of in the trash. Also, used fishbait or “fish safe”, treated water into the water to improve fishing quality. Here are some tips to use for effective Selective Harvest fishing:

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