

DNR News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information:

Contact the DNR Information Center by [email](#) or call 888-646-6367.

Low water levels create challenges for boat launching, retrieval

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources advises boaters to take extra care at public water access sites throughout Minnesota, where ongoing drought conditions continue to cause low water levels. Nearly all of the state is experiencing some level of drought, with conditions ranging from moderate to extreme drought and 48% of Minnesota in severe drought, according to the [DNR's drought in Minnesota webpage](#) (mndnr.gov/climate/drought).

This means fall boaters, especially those operating larger watercraft with longer trailers, may experience difficulties launching and retrieving them at shallow boat ramps. Low water levels may also expose additional or unmarked obstructions at the ramp, including stumps, rocks, holes, sand bars, and other damage caused by power loading. While the DNR continues to repair and extend boat ramps where possible, options to address access challenges are limited on many lakes.

Boaters who rely on lifts or private docks should stay alert to changing water levels and be familiar with the boat removal options available locally. Removing watercraft ahead of further water decline might be a good option to prevent future complications. Professional lake service providers may be able to assist using specialized equipment.

Boater checklist for low-water conditions

- Inspect the ramp end for holes, drop-offs or mounds before launching or removing watercraft.
- Assign a spotter to watch trailer wheels and boat axles.
- Use idle speed only; do not race the motor on the ramp.
- Use the trailer winch instead of power loading.
- Back in just far enough for the boat to start floating.
- Wear a life jacket if entering the water.
- Confirm water depth before lowering the motor.
- Consult lake maps to avoid shallow zones and new obstructions.
- Monitor water levels and plan an early or alternate removal if needed.

For public water access maps, state water trail maps and boating information, go to the [DNR's public water access webpage](#) ([mndnr.gov/water access](http://mndnr.gov/water%20access)).

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