



# Lake Minnetonka

## SUMMER RULES 2024

— *Enjoying the lake safely and responsibly* —

Be a safer boater. Know the rules of Lake Minnetonka.

Photo credit: Vern Whitten Photography



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## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

For more than 50 years, the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District (LMCD) has been managing the use of Lake Minnetonka in its mission to preserve and enhance the "Lake Minnetonka experience." The LMCD is a regional governmental agency that brings together 14 different cities, two counties, and many state and local agencies to protect, preserve and enhance Lake Minnetonka's economy and vitality. Since 1967, LMCD has worked to adopt rules, provide resources and funding, and promote lake safety.



## A NOTE FROM OUR INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

Following an interesting winter, we're looking forward to a safe, fun summer on Lake Minnetonka that will hopefully provide many beautiful days to enjoy this great community asset.

I'm honored to continue on as the interim executive director for the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District (LMCD). Our LMCD board of directors and staff are committed to preserving and protecting Lake Minnetonka so it remains one of Minnesota's top natural resources and recreational lakes.

### Watercraft for hire code changes

As part of our work, we monitor trends and regularly review LMCD ordinances to ensure they're inclusive of current and emerging lake use. Earlier this year, the LMCD enacted a new amendment to its watercraft for hire ordinance. Watercraft for hire are boats or other waterborne vessels carrying passengers for a fee. New rules include:

- Watercraft for hire will now apply for and receive licenses – not certificates of registration. In the event that a licensee is not complying with code, their license will be revoked.
- Watercraft for hire with six passengers or less are exempt from needing a license.
- When applying for a license, there is now updated review criteria to promote public safety. This includes registering the proper amenities and establishing authorized ports of call, among other changes.

Additional information is available on our website at [lmcd.org](http://lmcd.org). Please reach out to our staff or your local board member if you have questions.

Here's to a safe and enjoyable summer!

**JIM BRIMEYER**

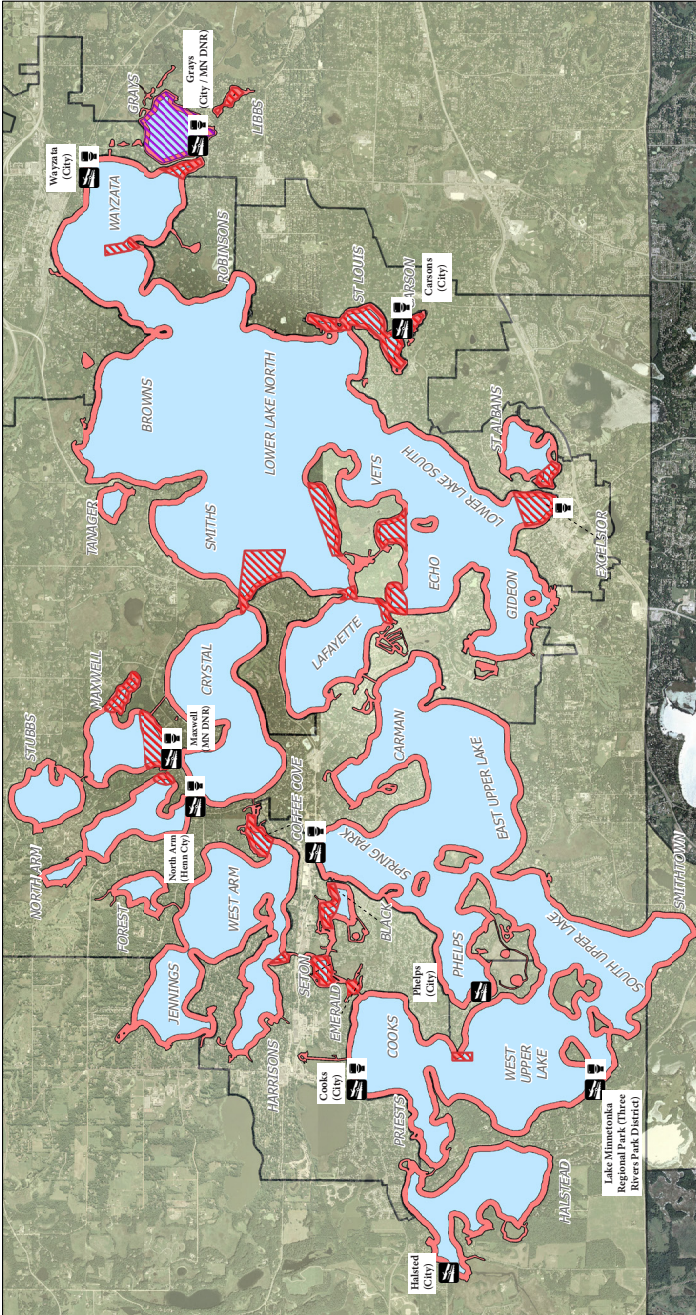
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



### MEET OUR TEAM!

The LMCD is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors and run by a dedicated group of staff members. Scan the QR code to learn more and contact your local board member or a staff member to share any concerns or suggestions on ways we can better serve the lake community.





**Lake Minnetonka 2024 Informational Map**

- Minimum wake 300 feet from the shoreline of the entire lake
- Minimum wake 150 feet from parked boats, swimmers, etc.
- Minimum wake in quiet waters



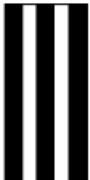








Disclaimer: This map is based on estimates and intended for illustrative purposes only.




## KNOW YOUR MARKERS/BUOYS BEFORE YOU SET SAIL!

Inland markers are used to help boaters safely navigate channels, direct traffic, control speeds, protect resources and identify dangerous waterways/areas. Thanks to the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Water Patrol and the LMCD Buoy Workgroup, many buoys on the lake have been replaced or repaired this past winter.

### Minnesota Waterway Markers

			
Channel lies between green and red markers		Do not pass between buoy and shore	Mid-Channel pass close on either side
			
Diver below stay 150' away	Mooring Buoy	Milfoil Area Boats Keep Out	
			
Controlled Area	Danger	Boats Keep Out	Information



**Life jackets save lives! Wear it!**

[mndnr.gov/boatingsafety](http://mndnr.gov/boatingsafety)

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## TOP SUMMER VIOLATIONS

- 1 Life jackets:** All PWC operators, passengers and towed persons must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
- 2 Boating under the influence:** Boating while under the influence of alcohol, or any other controlled or illegal substance, is illegal. The Minnesota limit is 0.08. Underage drinking is strictly enforced. Watercraft owners or operators may be held liable.
- 3 Fire extinguishers:** Fire extinguishers, horns, marine-grade carbon monoxide detectors (for specified watercraft) and lighting must be in compliance with state law.
- 4 Riding on gunwales or decking:** It is illegal to ride or sit on, or operate a motorboat while someone is riding or sitting on the gunwale (top edges of the hull), bow, transom, decking over the bow, side or stern while underway (unless it is equipped with an adequate railing).
- 5 Quiet waters/minimum wake zones:** Motor-operated watercraft and waterborne aircraft cannot be operated in excess of 5 mph or at a speed that results in more than a minimum wake in quiet water areas.
- 6 Navigational lights:** Proper navigational lights (red to port, green to starboard, white 360 degrees around watercraft) must be displayed when boating after sunset and before sunrise.
- 7 Public Nuisances and noise:** No person may commit or engage in any activity that constitutes a public nuisance—including excess noise, inappropriate behavior, indecent exposure, etc. Sound travels easily across the lake. Between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., sound from any device plainly audible at a distance of 150 feet is a violation of LMCD code.
- 8 Sanitation:** If bathroom facilities are not available on the watercraft, find a location with public facilities. Find a list of Lake Minnetonka amenities at [lmcd.org](https://www.lmcd.org).
- 9 Wakes:** It's illegal for your watercraft's wash and wake to endanger, harass or unnecessarily interfere with any person or property. View wake safety info at [dnr.state.mn.us](https://dnr.state.mn.us).
- 10 Channels & navigation:** No person may interfere or block navigation of watercraft, moor, or otherwise create safety hazards in channels or public passageways. Swimming, towing, jumping from bridges and overtaking boats in channels is also prohibited.

The LMCD Code and links to applicable state laws can be found on the LMCD website.



## MAXIMUM WATERCRAFT SPEED LIMITS



### DAYTIME

Speed limit: **40 mph**



### NIGHTTIME

Speed limit: **20 mph**



### AT ALL TIMES FOR ALL WATERCRAFT

Speed limit: **5 mph** within

- 300 feet of the shore
- 150 feet from dock structures, authorized bathing areas, swimmers, scuba diver's flag, anchored craft or structures

## KEY DEFINITIONS

**WATERCRAFT:** Any vessel, boat, sailboat, canoe, raft, barge, paddleboard, sailboard, or any similar device used or usable for carrying and transporting persons on the lake.

**MINIMUM WAKE:** The wave moving out from a watercraft and trailing in a widening 'V' of insufficient size to affect other watercraft or be detrimental to the shoreline.

**HOURS OF OPERATION:** Thirty minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset—except when weather or other conditions do not provide sufficient light to see people or watercraft at a distance of 500 feet.

## UNIQUE LAKE MINNETONKA REGULATIONS

**BIG ISLAND PUBLIC SAFETY LANES:** Public safety lanes are installed at the north end of Big Island to provide better access by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office for emergency purposes. Buoys delineate these lanes and extend 600 feet from shore. Watercraft may not be anchored in these lanes but may use them for traveling.

**BOWFISHING:** Bowfishing is prohibited 30 minutes after sunset to sunrise during the summer season and not at all during the winter season starting November 15 through May 1. Bowfishing is also prohibited in designated areas and during specific dates and times.

**SPECIAL "HIGH-WATER" AND "LOW-WATER" DECLARATIONS:** When the LMCD declares "High Water," minimum wake restrictions are implemented for user safety and shoreline protection. During "High Water," watercraft must maintain minimum wakes within 600 feet from shore for some bays and entirely for other bays, or as otherwise directed.

When the LMCD declares "Low Water," dock extensions may be allowed under certain conditions. Watch for updates at [lmcd.org](http://lmcd.org).

## AUTOMATIC CUTOFF DEVICES

If a watercraft is equipped with a lanyard-type engine cutoff switch, it must be attached to the life jacket or clothing of the operator when underway. It may not be altered, disabled or removed. Learn more about the [federal regulation](#).

## BEWARE OF ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING (ESD)

ESD results from paralysis caused by electrical currents from electricity leaking into the water from faulty wiring of boats, docks and lifts. ESD kills both humans and animals. There are many ways to prevent ESD. The most important of these is to never enter water around boats and docks using electrical power. For more information, visit [ElectricShockDrowning.org](#) or [lmcd.org](#). The LMCD Code and links to applicable state laws can be found on the LMCD website.

## CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

Sophia's Law, named for a seven-year-old who died from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning while boating on Lake Minnetonka, requires functioning marine-grade CO alarms on certain motorboats. To learn more about CO alarms, stickers and when they are required, visit the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website at [dnr.state.mn.us/safety/boatwater](https://dnr.state.mn.us/safety/boatwater).

## MARINE TOILETS & WASTEWATER DISCHARGE

To prevent accidental or intentional discharge of sewage into the lake, any watercraft must have macerator/grinder pumps removed and discharge valves ("Y-valves") locked.

## IT'S THE LAW: KEEP AIS OUT OF LAKE MINNETONKA

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are non-native plants, animals and other organisms that live primarily in water. They can drive out and eat native plants and wildlife, and spread disease.



**Clean:** Clean visible aquatic plants, zebra mussels and other prohibited invasive species off watercraft, trailers and water-related equipment before leaving water access or shoreland.



**Drain:** Drain water-related equipment (boat, trailer, ballast tanks, portable bait containers, motor) and drain bilge, livewell and baitwell before leaving water access or shoreline.



**Dispose:** Be prepared! Transport your catch in a cooler. Dispose of unwanted bait—including minnows, leeches, worms and fish parts—in the trash. It is illegal to release bait into the water or release worms onto the ground.



## PERSONAL WATERCRAFTS

All regulations for motorboats apply to personal watercrafts (PWCs or “jetskis”), in addition to the following specific PWC requirements.

### CARELESS OPERATION

A PWC may not be operated in a manner that unreasonably or unnecessarily endangers life, limb or property. This includes weaving through congested boat traffic or swerving at the last moment to avoid a collision if you weren't paying attention.

### WAKE JUMPING

PWC operators may not jump wakes within 150 feet of another watercraft or PWC.

### PROLONGED OPERATION

PWC may not be operated more than 30 consecutive minutes in a single area (defined as a small area where noise emanating from the PWC may be a nuisance or cause substantial annoyance to one or more shoreline properties).



### RENTAL REQUIREMENTS

A PWC may not be rented to anyone less than 16 years of age. Further, a watercraft operator's permit is required for all persons under 18 years of age.

#### Businesses are required to:

1. Distribute summary of laws free of charge (including instructions to laws and safety factors)
2. Provide required safety equipment
3. Ensure those less than 18 years of age show their watercraft operator's permit

## TOWING (SKIING, WAKEBOARDING, WAKESURFING, ETC.)

### NUMBER TOWED

No more than three persons may be towed at one time.

### OBSERVER

In addition to the watercraft or PWC operator, an observer (not a rear-facing mirror) is required to continuously observe the person(s) being towed. The observer must be at least 12 years old and able to communicate with driver.

**HOURS**

Towing is prohibited from 30 minutes after sunset until sunrise.

**PWC** - 9:30 a.m. to one hour before sunset. PWCs cannot be operated for longer than 30 consecutive minutes in a single area.

**LIFE JACKETS**

A person being towed must wear a life vest, belt or other buoyant device. If the buoyant device is not U.S. Coast Guard-approved, a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket must also be on board and readily available to the person being towed.

**PWC** - Anyone operating or riding on a PWC must wear a compatible U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.

**LENGTH OF TOW**

Maximum length of 85 feet (except with written permission from the Sheriff).

**DISTANCE**

Towing may not occur within 150 feet of a swim area, skin or scuba diver's flag, swimmer, watercraft, or dock or pier (except dock/pier where initially operating from).

**EMPTY TOW**

An unoccupied tow line may not be dragged behind a watercraft for an unreasonable length of time.

**TOWING IN CHANNELS**

No person shall tow or be towed into or through any marked channel connecting two bodies of water. It is unsafe.

**SHARE THE LAKE**

**SURF IN THE  
MIDDLE OF THE BAY**

**AVOID REPETITIVE  
PASSES**

**KEEP THE  
SOUND DOWN**

**SAFETY TIPS FOR NONMOTORIZED WATERCRAFT**

If you are kayaking, canoeing or paddleboarding, you can make yourself more visible to other lake users to prevent accidents by:

- Wearing vibrant clothing
- Flying a flag
- Installing a light
- Paying attention to lake conditions such as wakes, boat traffic and weather



## YOUTH REGULATIONS

State regulations for operator's permits and minimum age are vigorously enforced on Lake Minnetonka. Know the rules and keep your boating experience fun and safe!

### CURFEW

Youth may not be on a watercraft during the following hours unless accompanied by a parent or guardian:

- Under age 15: 10 p.m.–6 a.m.
- Ages 15–17: midnight–6 a.m.

### OPERATOR'S PERMIT

Permits may be obtained by successfully completing an approved boating safety course.



## OPERATOR'S PERMIT & BOATING SAFETY COURSES

### LMCD BOATER SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM

The LMCD partners with the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Water Patrol and Mound Fire Department to offer the Boater Safety Education Program. Adults and youth (ages 12 to 17) work directly with presenters to obtain their MN DNR watercraft operator's permit in a single full-day session. Parents and guardians are encouraged to attend. Learn more at [lmcd.org](http://lmcd.org) or call 952-745-0789.

### BOAT MINNESOTA: MN DNR'S ONLINE BOATING SAFETY COURSE

The Minnesota DNR offers an online watercraft operator's permit program for ages 12 to 17. Adults who want to learn more about boating safety or enhance their current knowledge can also take the course. Some insurance companies offer premium discounts for certification; check with your company for possible discounts. For more information, visit the MN DNR site at [mndnr.gov/boatingcourse](http://mndnr.gov/boatingcourse).

## PWC-SPECIFIC AGE MINIMUMS

- Operators less than 13 years of age: Cannot operate (even with an adult on board).
- Operators 13 years of age: Must be under the direct supervision of someone who is at least 21 years old. If they have a valid watercraft operator's permit, direct supervision is not required, but they must have someone on board who is at least 21 years old.
- Operators 14 to 17 years of age: Must have a valid watercraft operator's permit or someone on board who is 21 years of age.





**Lake Minnetonka Conservation District (LMCD)**

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Mound, MN 55364

**Office:** 952-745-0789

**Connect with us at:**

**Email:** [lmcd@lmcd.org](mailto:lmcd@lmcd.org)

**Website:** [lmcd.org](http://lmcd.org)

 [LakeMinnetonkaConservationDistrict](https://twitter.com/LakeMitkaCD)

 [@LakeMitkaCD](https://www.facebook.com/LakeMitkaCD)

- Licensing and surface regulations
- Docks, structures and watercraft storage
- Boater safety course
- Solar lights program
- Some services funded by SAVE the LAKE Fund contributions



**Hennepin County Sheriff's Office (HCSO)**

Water Patrol Unit  
4141 Shoreline Drive  
Spring Park, MN 55384

**Emergency: Call 911**

Non-Emergency 24/7 Dispatch: 952-258-5321; Office: 612-596-9880

Website: [HennepinSheriff.org/water-patrol](http://HennepinSheriff.org/water-patrol)

- Patrol and enforcement of State and LMCD laws on Lake Minnetonka
- Emergency and rescue operations
- Special events



**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR)**

Conservation Officers  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155

DNR Information Center: 651-296-6157 or 888-MINNDNR (646-6367)

Officer Locator: [mndnr.gov/officerpatrolareas](http://mndnr.gov/officerpatrolareas)

Website: [mndnr.gov](http://mndnr.gov)

- Boating and fishing regulations and enforcement
- AIS prevention and management