Keep it Clean

Boating activities have the potential to pollute the river. It also has the potential to spread exotic plants and animals species that are detrimental to the river ecosystem. Examples of exotic species include zebra mussels, Eurasian water milfoil and Asian carp.

- After every use, inspect your boat and trailer for stowaway aquatic plants and animals and remove them before leaving the boat landing.
- All water should be drained from the boat before leaving the boat landing.
- Clean your boat and trailer with a hot power wash if moving to another water body.
- Sanitize your live well, bilge and cooling system throughout the season.
- Fuel, oil and wastes should be controlled and contained at all times.
- Spills should be cleaned up immediately.
- Noise is pollution too. Less noise means fewer complaints from the public and less regulation in the long run.
- Exhaust system cut outs to enhance performance are illegal in some states.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service photo

U.S. Coast Guard photo

Keep it Safe

The Mississippi is a big river with fast currents, underwater hazards, submerged wing dams, commercial tows, and lots of recreational boaters. Following these simple tips will help ensure your outing is safe and enjoyable.

- Wear your life vest.
- Stay well away from towboats and barges.
- Use your navigation lights between sunset and sunrise.
- Keep a sharp lookout for hazards and other boats.
- Stay to the right of center channel when traveling up and down the river.
- Understand the meanings of all buoys and channel markers.
- Follow the lockmaster's instructions when locking through.
- Note river mile markers on your trip so you can accurately report where you are in emergencies
- Learn and follow all state and federal boating laws.
- Take a safe boating course.

For more information:

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UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
MINNESOTA WISCONSIN IOWA ILLINOIS MISSOURI

River-Friendly Boating Guidelines

We love the Mississippi River for all it offers to our senses and sensibilities. Boating on the Mississippi River is a pleasurable pastime for many in the region. Unfortunately, boating has the potential to accelerate shoreline erosion, stir up bottom sediments, reduce water clarity, pollute the water, dislodge aquatic plants, transport exotic species and disturb fish and wildlife. In other words, we can love the river to death.

By adopting the following guidelines you can enhance your boating experience while minimizing impacts to the river ecosystem. A few simple and easy changes to your boating activities can assure that the Mississippi River you love can be enjoyed by others.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service photo

Boat at an Appropriate Speed

Waves greater than 4 inches in height have the potential to cause problems.

- Traveling at less than 5 miles per hour will greatly reduce wave heights.
- If you need to get going fast, get up on plane quickly.
- Avoid driving between 5 and 10 mph – in general this generates the largest boat waves.
- Some large boats simply make larger waves the faster they go. These boats should travel less than 5 miles per hour to minimize wave heights.
- Stay as far as you can from shore to allow your waves to dissipate, while still keeping to the right side of the channel when going up or downstream.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service photo

MN DNR

MN DNR

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

Gas mileage for boats varies greatly. Besides operational cost savings and reduced use of non-renewable fossil fuels, less gas translates into fewer emissions and reduced chances for spills.

- Larger engines tend to use a lot more fuel. A rough rule of thumb is that a 2-cycle outboard will burn about 10 percent of its horsepower in gas per hour. A 25 HP outboard will burn about 2.5 gallons per hour, while a 100 HP will burn 10 gallons per hour!
- Engines with a CARB 3-Star rating (ultra-low emissions) run cleaner and more efficiently than other models.
- Explore backwaters with a kayak or canoe.

Keep to the Deep

Propeller wash can stir up bottom sediments, uproot plants and disturb bottom dwelling organisms. Navigate in the deepest water possible.

- Propeller forces on the bottom are reduced in water deeper than 9 feet.
- Few submersed aquatic plants grow in water greater than 6 feet deep.
- Chances of damaging your prop or hull are reduced when traveling in deep water.
- The smaller the boat and engine the less chance of disturbing the bottom.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service photo