

## **The “Intangible” Accessory that’s A Must for Every Trip**

Respect and courtesy on the water should be just as important as following the rules. South Carolina’s boating regulations that are enforced by DNR are in place to ensure that people don’t endanger themselves or others when operating watercraft. South Carolina ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the number of registered recreational boats, so today’s angling experience involves fishing in a crowd and we need to accept the fact that we are always going to have to share space.

Spend enough time on the water and it’s bound to happen. You pull up to a favorite spot, start catching fish, and almost out of nowhere someone else anchors right beside you and starts fishing. With the ever increasing coastal population, this happens more and more frequently. It especially frustrates individuals who make a living fishing, such as guides or professional tournament anglers, but a person’s “purpose” still does not give them priority over another angler who may just be fishing for fun. And it’s not about what you can do (legally), but what you should do. Consideration of others goes a long way towards creating an enjoyable experience on the water.

Take for example the Bassmaster Classic this past February on Lake Guntersville in Alabama. For professional bass anglers, winning this tournament is a life changing event, and the stakes are incredibly high, with hundreds of thousands of dollars on the line. Pro anglers spend countless hours preparing and practicing for this three day event. Some pro’s had even located areas that held the winning fish, figured out how to catch them, but had to contend with local anglers, not in the tournament, fishing the area immediately after the pro left. Lake Guntersville is a public water body, and these local anglers did nothing illegal. The same applies to South Carolina where the state owns coastal and inland waters as a common property resource. Unless otherwise designated, no one person “owns” the right to any particular piece of water.

To the dismay of many people, especially anglers, there are no laws that apply to etiquette on the water. It isn’t against the law to be disrespectful or inconsiderate to others. There are however the unwritten rules regarding common sense and courtesies that have started to become an accepted part of the angling community.

Anglers should always consider these simple guidelines when fishing around others. Don’t encroach on another angler to the point that you inhibit them from fishing. Don’t cast over another person’s line. Although there is no “ownership” of a spot, try and respect the person who was there first. And perhaps most important, communicate politely with those fishing close by, rather than giving them the “evil eye” or shouting obscenities. Explain your intentions, come to an agreement, then do what you said you were going to do. Engaging in friendly conversation can often relieve tensions that are created when “sharing” water.

Courtesy could be considered an “intangible accessory” that anglers should have with them on every trip. After all, if we don’t abide by common sense rules and courtesies our sport will turn into an uncontrolled, chaotic activity that is no longer enjoyable.

