

Take the Bait
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Capt. Dan Brooks

Recreational Responsibility

When we head out on the water for the day it is often for pleasure or some form of recreation. The whole idea is to have a good time, get away from the stress of everyday life, enjoy nature and spend some quality time with family or friends. New boaters hit the water everyday and find out the hard way that they were ill prepared for when something goes wrong or they end up getting a citation for doing something wrong. Like it or not when you take your boat out for the day it is your responsibility to have the proper safety equipment on board and to have your vessel documentation current. If you are going to fish get the proper license and learn the current rules and regulations on fish you intend to keep.

Whether it be the U.S. Coast Guard, the Florida Wildlife Commission, County Sheriff or City law enforcement, these agencies all have the authority to board your vessel at will and take whatever course of action they deem necessary. These folks are not out to ruin your day, they are there to enforce the law, ensure your safety and protect the environment. Treat them with honesty and respect and they will do the same for you. Simply complying with what the signs say could prevent the most common violations. For example, signs that read "NO WAKE" or "IDLE SPEED ONLY," mean just that! The signs are there for a reason trust me. The bottom line is that a boater is responsible for any damage caused by their wake. How about "NO INTERNAL COMBUSTION MOTOR ZONE?" Here's a no brainer, you're not supposed to be running in that area unless you are using a push pole or an electric trolling motor. You may even encounter

areas that say “NO PROP ZONE”. Simple enough the only way to get around in the area is with a push pole or drift. What’s so hard about that?

Over the years I have rendered assistance to a number of folks that were broken down or run aground and were ill prepared. We are all at the mercy of our machines when on the water so take a few essential precautions before you leave the dock. Take some form of communications device, either a cell phone or a VHF radio. Be able to give accurate information on your position and situation. No one is going to be able to help you if they can’t find you. A handheld GPS would work just fine for the weekend warrior. Always have some fresh water on hand, you may be out longer than you expected so be prepared.

This year I would like to include some of the fine catches our readers have made here in the Paradise News. Have a good catch to brag about? Email photos to me at wildd1@gte.net with a brief description of the catch; general location and what they were caught on and maybe we can share information and techniques to help fellow anglers. Stay safe out there and enjoy what life has to offer.

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