

March 10, 2005

Richport YMCA: 7:30 PM

Our next meeting will be held at the Richport YMCA and we will begin at 7:30 PM.

The Elk Grove Library hosted 16 members on a chilly February evening. It was good to see *Jim Shell* again; he and his wife Marla, are expecting their second child in late March. Jim has not only been preparing for the new arrival, he has given birth to a new website devoted to Spoonplugging and Spoonpluggers. One of the most attractive features of the site is the well organized discussion board containing such topics as: General Discussion, Mapping & Interpretation, Weather & Water, Tools, and Lure Presentation. We encourage all Spoonpluggers to check out the site at www.spoonplugger.net. Jim has enlisted the help of Walter Kulikowski and John Bales to moderate the board. Great job, Jim, we look forward to using the new site. After a brief overview of the website the topic of discussion turned to the upcoming Winter Seminar and the season in review.

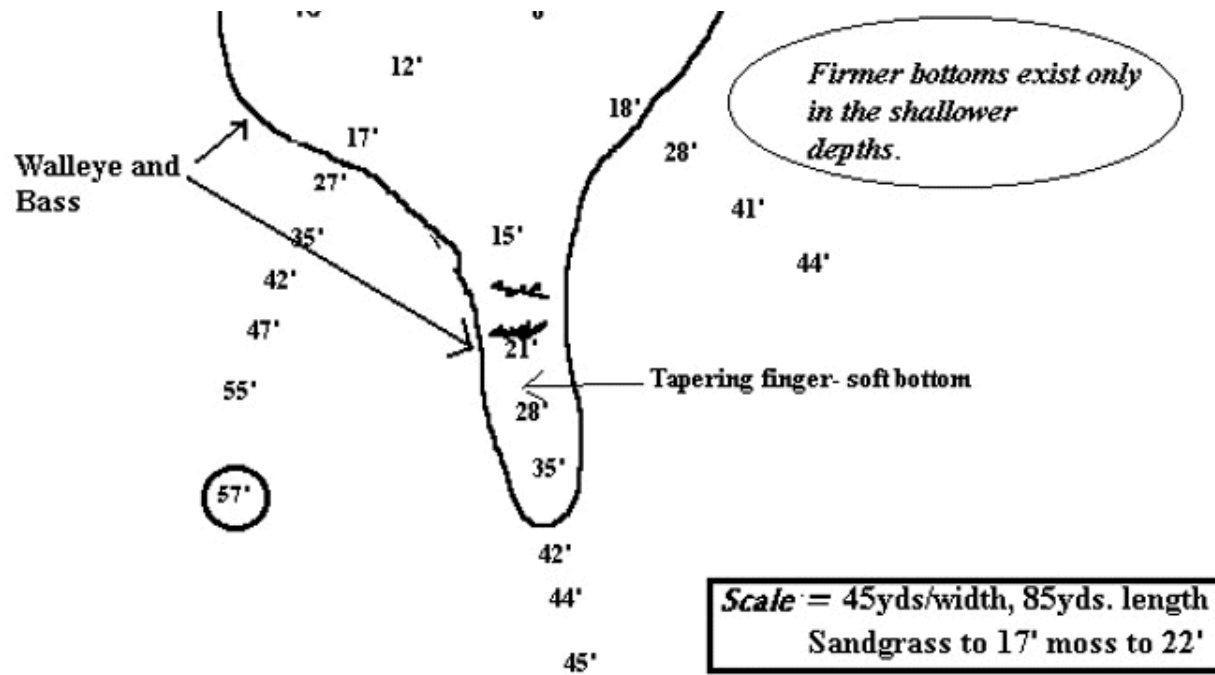
The details necessary to put together the seminar depend on volunteers and many club members stepped forward in their usual manner to offer assistance. Special thanks to *Scott Duff* and *Phil Szafranski* who teamed up to organize the event with much needed support from *Craig Hubbard*, *Joe Renholds*, *Jerry Hein*, *Walter Kulikowski*, *Mike Pukacz*, *Wayne Dylo*, and *Joe Zaremba*.

The questions for discussion have been included in this newsletter and handouts will be provided to all attendees at the seminar. Below, you will find a map and driving directions. Should you need to contact us the day of the seminar, you can call Phil Szafranski on his cell phone at 847-858-8272.

Walt Kulikowski has this reminder: *"All Spoonpluggers are encouraged to share on-the-water experiences relevant to any of the questions Remember, group interaction perpetuates a healthy dialogue, which provides additional insight into each topic of discussion."*

We currently have 30 Spoonpluggers registered to participate and we're looking forward to an informative discussion.

Jim Duplex gave a season in review presentation that focused on his successful pursuit of bass, northern, muskie, and walleye this year. His report indicated that although we had a cool season he was still able to enjoy some productive days on the water. Successful trips included outings with George Schauner to Kentucky, Wisconsin, and the Detroit River; getting into some nice bass with Phil up north; and showing Jim Perillo around Heidecke Lake. The season's coda was fall fishing with Gino for northern and muskie. Gino later got on the water with his brother Angelo, and had one of his most productive days ever for muskie fishing. Jim further noted the speed for the year was on average slow and patience, as well as targeting species, was the key to another satisfying season. Check out his report below.



In January's newsletter, Walt Kulikowski submitted a written summary concerning the 2004 fishing season. In it, he cited the following mapping procedures:

- *"dry-run contouring each prospective feature, coupled with tossing marker(s) where significant changes in configuration occurred.
- *At these "marked" points, one follow-up pass (straight-line) would be invested to establish the degree of their deep-water relationship.
- *Once this gathering process was completed, it would provide data critical for formulating an educated interpretation.
- *This same intelligence would then be projected through a more tangible outlet- lure presentation, but only in the following manner: confined, exclusively to areas where potential breaks were noted, in both the shallows and deep."

At the meeting, Walt utilized the overhead projector and highlighted profiles of some of the features where he applied these techniques. He also elaborated upon the "where's & why's" of these efforts, and concluded with a very familiar theme - patience & perseverance!

The Season in Review

By Jim Duplex

Seasonal Observations

Heidecke started out very slow this year with an abundance of small fish early in the season and sporadic big fish activity; first limit of fish did not come until the end of May and biggest walleyes didn't come until June 21st. Water temperatures were into the 70's but air temperatures fluctuated wildly and never seemed to really heat up.

Lake Barkley provided some big catfish action but the bass were few and far between. Weather, air & water temperatures, was good but we appeared to be early. Catfish dominated most of the structures we fished and while we hit a good many of them, the majority were lost. Eddy Creek has very good water color and structure but you have to hit it at the right time.

Lake Waubesa provided the most satisfying action with good catches of largemouth and muskies for the season. Big smallmouths were also caught but there doesn't appear to be a good population. The fish that were taken were big and deeper than the largemouth; their preferred depth on Waubesa seems to be 20'+ or more. We were able to get into schools of largemouth, muskies, and northerns but not so with the smallmouth.

The Detroit River was well worth the trip. We found the facilities to be excellent and the river itself is very fishable. There are places to get away from the boat traffic and the wind/weather. The fish are big and good equipment is imperative. These are river fish and they're strong; we had them stop our lures and break our wire line. The big sturgeon will run and take a good deal of the line from your reel. Be prepared!

Weather

The season could generally be classified as cool and unstable. Temperatures got into the 90's only once and most of the lakes fished did not have a bloom. *Heidecke* had good color early but the shut down of the plant along with the presence of zebra mussels cleared it up later in the season. Waubesa held good color for most of the season but lost it quickly in the fall. *Mendota* never did get a bloom.

The hottest and most stable weather came in late July, 21st & 22nd, and the fishing results mimicked the weather. There was some stable weather in the fall but I couldn't take advantage of it because of school. This is when Gino made a nice catch on Waubesa even though he was fishing under bluebird skies. Stability was the key.

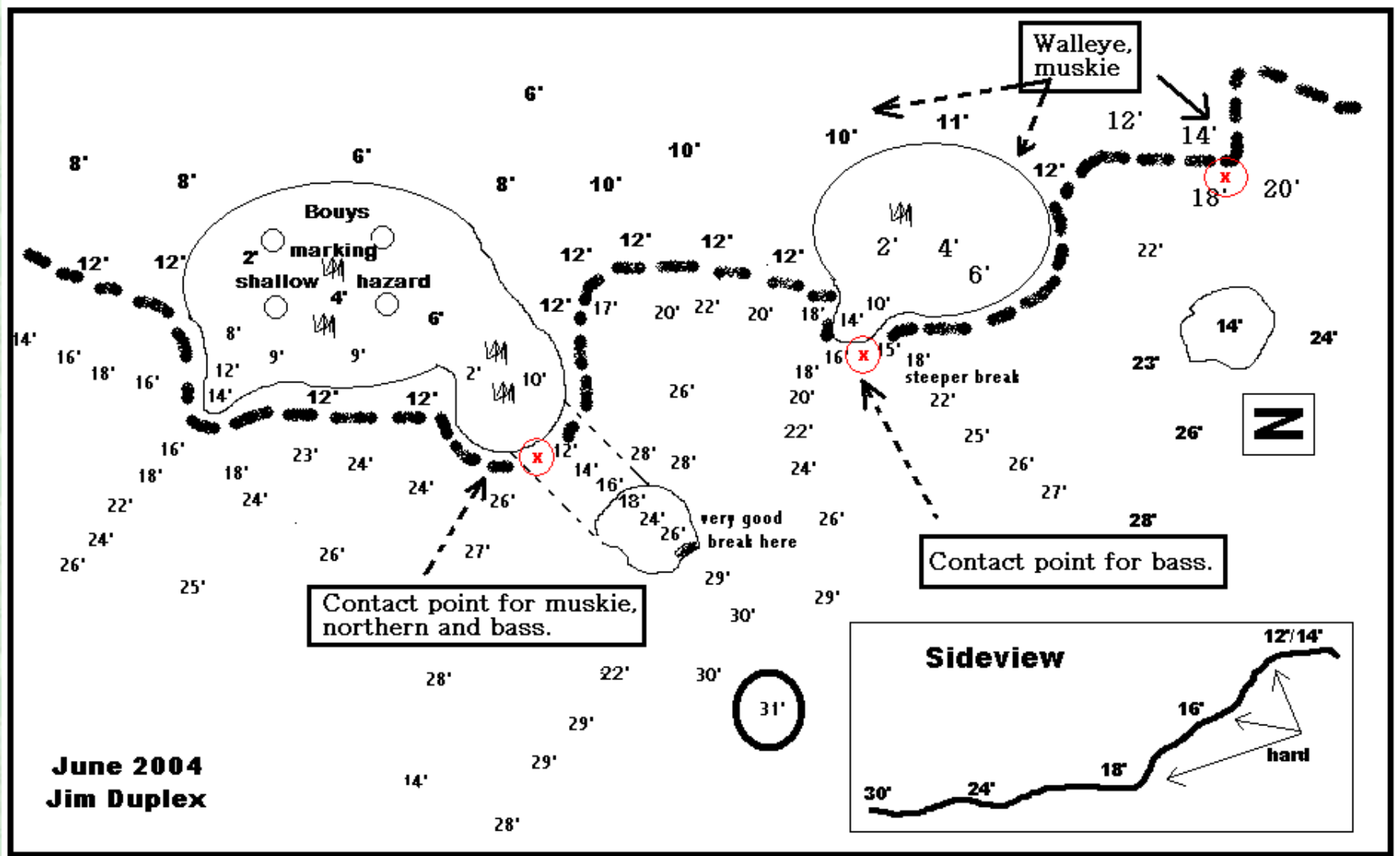
Lessons Learned

The bass action this year was a pleasant surprise; both for largemouth and smallmouth. Prior mapping of the most productive structures put me on the fish even under tough conditions. The contact point on three different structures was confirmed and this made the difference between making a catch and getting skunked.

Anchoring and casting, both Spoonplugs and jump baits, produced the most fish. Trolling produced the biggest: muskies/sturgeon. Most structures were checked by casting first and if this didn't produce, I went to the troll. I spent most of my time on structure situations and a very limited amount of time running around or trolling for "stragglers". The weather dictated that I should wait for them rather than trolling endlessly.

I got a real good feel for how the fish were using the structure, i.e. the contact point, and this greatly increased my confidence. Movement periods were on the short side this year with only one trip having multiple movements during the day, July 21-22.

Fishing multiple day trips made for efficient fishing and saved on gas. It also allowed me to get a feel for what was going on out on the water.



These structures produced bass, northerns, and muskie all season long.

WINTER SPOONPLUGGING SEMINAR

Saturday, March 12, 2005

Elk Grove Library:

1001 Wellington Ave. Elk Grove, IL

847-439-0447

Attention: *The hours of the seminar will be 9:00 AM to 4:45 PM. The library does not open until 9:00AM. Plan your arrival accordingly. There are restaurants in the area where you can get coffee and breakfast if you come early.*

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

From Indiana/Michigan

Take I-294 (Tri-State Toll road) north to the Eisenhower Expressway. Take the I-290 (Eisenhower Expressway) west to Biesterfield. Turn right on Biesterfield and continue east about 1 mile to Wellington. Turn right and the library is on the left: 1001 Wellington Ave.

From the east and south

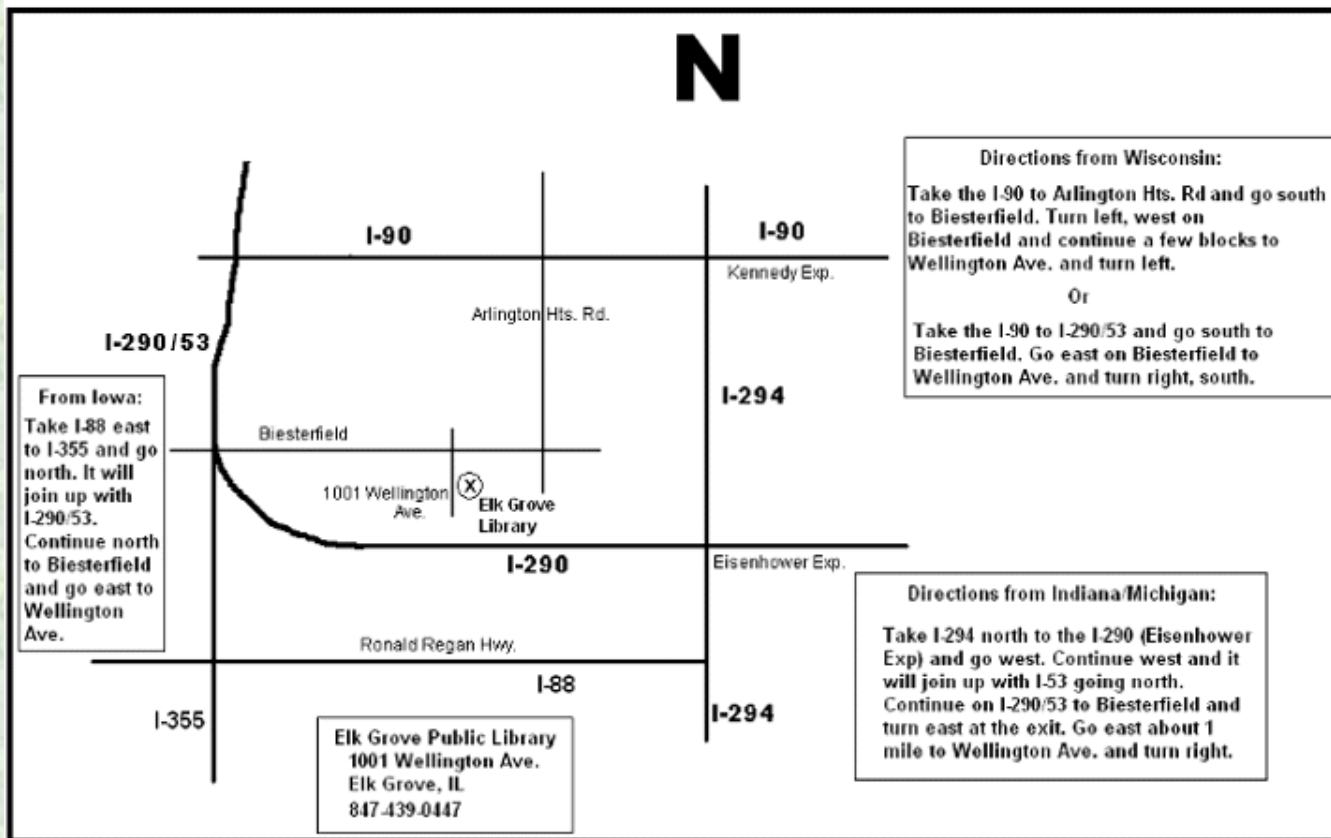
Take the I-290 (Eisenhower Expressway) west to Biesterfield. Turn right on Biesterfield and continue east about 1 mile to Wellington. Turn right and the library is on the left: 1001 Wellington Ave.

From Wisconsin

Take the I-90 (Northwest Tollway) southeast to I-290 and go south to the Biesterfield exit. Go east on Biesterfield about 1 mile to Wellington. Turn right and the library is on the left: 1001 Wellington Ave. You can also exit the I-90 at Arlington Heights Rd. and go south to Biesterfield. Turn right on Biesterfield about 3 blocks to Wellington and turn left. The library is at 1001 Wellington Ave.

From Northern Illinois

Take the I-294 south, to I-90, the Northwest Tollway. Take the tollway west to Arlington Heights Rd. and go south to Biesterfield. Turn right on Biesterfield about 3 blocks to Wellington and turn left. The library is at 1001 Wellington Ave.



Seminar Agenda

Questions for Discussion

Mapping & Interpretation:

- Don Dickson's method was covered last year; what other approaches are being used successfully with regards to mapping the various types of structure situations?
- When mapping a feature and checking depths with a sonar on a gradual slope, sometimes it is difficult to tell where the breaklines are located when they are only a foot or so difference. Can you give me some help identifying these breaklines?
- Do you like and recommend the Don Dickson method of mapping a structure to determine if it will be productive and to identify the contact point?
- *Organizing one's time on the water* How does the lake and structure type affect how one organizes one's time on the

water?

- Deep water is the home of the fish. 30 to 35 feet if present. Deepest in the lake, deepest water in the area, etc understood. In the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers by my house the water color in my mind must be considered excellent. However I am sure there are holes that aren't that deep. The question is in the part of the country where cold fronts come every 2 to 4 days, does the water color compensate for both lack of depth and weather? And to what extent. (I suspect the answer is depends on color of the day and the strength of the front but its something I have spent a lot of time thinking about.)

- In the study of humps and structure, First "Structure must lead all the way". Buck groups humps into 3 categories. My confusion is that in the green book there is a place where is says that deep water humps don't produce because they don't go all the way. It was discussed with the example with the guys having fun with catching the white bass and would just have it made if they could figure out how to catch largemouth bass also. Buck says it doesn't go all the way, so it won't produce largemouth. Later Buck says you can't pass the deep water humps because weather and water may not allow fish to come shallower. I would like this discussed. (more thinking about this makes me think that different species use different structures and maybe walleyes and pike types tend to use these type more. However Buck confused me on this topic)

Weather & Water:

- How do I recognize the early phases of the season for different species and on different types of waters? (i.e. pre-spawn, spawn, post spawn, etc.)

- Where and how do I approach fishing in the SPRING for bass, northern, and muskie? As a Spoonplugger who has never fished "beating the bank to death, like everybody else," spring is somewhat of a mystery. Spring seems to present problems for many Spoonpluggers, and I have always felt that spring is a season when the general guidelines need to be filled in with some specifics. Summer tactics often don't seem to work (Bales has written about this). I'm assuming we're talking good water color, feeder arms, shallow bays or coves adjacent to deep water and summer/winter structures, etc. Then, how do I present lures once I am in the right place?

Presentation of Lures:

- Let's say that I'm fishing a natural lake where the weeds ring the entire lake. The weeds come up to 3' and reach a depth of 20'. How would you fish this after you had mapped it out?

- How do you adjust tactics when approaching a clear water lake (i.e. Lake Geneva)? Due to the water clarity are the shallows considered deeper than 8-10 ft. Is contour trolling deeper breaklines used?

- When trolling a structure what is the most effective/ efficient way to check speeds? i.e. adjusting speeds constantly during each pass or making numerous passes at different but constant speeds

- I have noticed other Spoonpluggers appear to be contour trolling deeper breaklines. While I don't have problems with straight passes, I do with contour trolling past 15 feet...Any tips?

- My fishing seems to be most productive with the 200 and 250 series (bass, walleye, catfish and northern). I fish several bodies of water that produce at that depth and lure size. When I am not catching fish, and I have checked the shallows and go deeper the 700 and 800, I do not seem to catch any fish. Could it be that this lure is too large and should I consider 250

and 200's on wire? What is everyone's experience with the larger lures?

- If lure size doesn't matter, then why wouldn't I want to put the largest (deepest running) lure on my line and troll the shortest line for better control? This theory does not seem to work for me.

- Spoonplug and floating jig rig...Buck's idea as described by Mike Moran on message board. He describes rigging a spoonplug and floating jig at opposite ends of a 3' length of No-Bo. Tie an over-hand knot in middle of No-Bo, or closer to the spoonplug end and attach loop to the snap on trolling rod. The spoonplug will fish the bottom or a particular depth and serve as a downrigger for the jig, targeting smaller and less aggressive fish. (This sounds like it could be terrific for SM bass and stripers!) A variation of this rig is used on one of the Don Dickson videos. He utilizes a 3-way swivel with separate leaders for the Spoonplug and jig (with plastic twister). Does anyone in the attendance use this rig? (Buck also mentioned the jig tied to the rear hook of a 700 or 800, which I have not tried.)

- What type of lures and presentation do you use when casting to the deep water. What seems to work best for the more seasoned veterans. Does it vary with species of fish. What techniques do you use to catch Walleyes? What are the main differences between Walleye and Bass throughout the season. Bass might use a 10 foot hump, how deep a hump will Walleye use?

- How do you approach/ fish a lake where standing timber is a significant structure situation? Trolling/ mapping potentially productive bars can be difficult (and costly too).

- One of the things about moving fish along breaklines that I believe is that the fish don't all move at once. This was the way I viewed it in my mind for years. Maybe during the summer or with Smallmouth Bass they move in mass, but for most of the other fish and other times of the season I am better off viewing breaklines and breaks as fish moving along and to them in ones and twos etc. It is great if a bunch of fish move into a break, but this doesn't happen all the time. I have a bigger catch at the end of the day if I just stay on those good breaks and breaklines and wait on the fish to come along. Is this what you find to be true?

- What techniques are best employed to fish the base breakline; throwing markers, trolling, casting?

- How do you troll with wire – how do you make the turns with two in the boat?

- *Anchoring Position* How would you fish a small, heavily fished lake that is difficult to troll due to the size and crowding? Especially, with regard to finding good casting positions!

Tools:

- How do you tie to wire line?

- How do you release a hang?

- How can I effectively use my camera to establish rifle sights on a structure?

- I have never anchored much in the past and was looking for some tips...such as: What type of anchor is best? What are the advantages of different type of anchors? Are there times when two anchors are needed? How to best organize your anchoring equipment? How are the electric anchors?

Species:

- When fishing for muskies in a reservoir in the early season, what is a minimum depth needed in the channel area for features to be considered? At what depth do I cease going up the reservoir in the channel area?
- How would you fish for schools of large Northern in a large lake with deep open water? (Using spoonplugs and wire?)
- Regarding muskies, what are its behavioral peculiarities (vs. LM bass) which will help a Spoonplugger in presenting lures, "in the right place, in the right manner?" I'm thinking structure types, breaks, movement and migration patters, casting and trolling techniques, strike triggers, etc.
- What are the differences between the Largemouth and Walleye when it comes to the application of Spoonplugging? Example: For a structure to be productive it must go all the way from the deep to the shallows (8'-10'). This guideline applies to the largemouth but not the Walleye.
- Muskies - How would I fish the tight, sharp inside turn in the corner of a bar with a 9'-10' weedline breaking into deep water? Trolling short wire with big lures in there and making a quick turn? Run a trolled lure right up into the weeds? Casting top waters? Anchoring shallow and casting deep? This spot produces some nice muskies but people just seem to bump into them without knowing what's there. What's the correct approach?

General Questions :

- In Bucks home study course, (vol 6, lake types, page 12) Buck states that in rivers, "most migrations, or movements, during the warmer part of the season will be toward the deeper, steeper side, rather than toward the flat areas.....which is the opposite of what happens in lakes." Why is this so?
- What impact can be expected on the fishing condition of Heidecke this season? What color? Lake levels, and so on?

Best Practices Sharing

- Craig Hubbard will demonstrate how to release a hang using the "rubber band" technique.
- Jerry Hein will talk about using markers.
- Phil and Jim will discuss mapping techniques.

Looking forward to seeing you at the seminar!

