



# Drop-In Kayak Fishing

*by John Allen*      *photos by the author*

Have you ever been driving along and came upon a stretch of river that looked absolutely perfect to kayak fish, but there was no boat launch in site? Have you ever found yourself fishing a lake with only one launch, but your favorite spot is nearly a 2-mile paddle away? Well, as long as you can find a safe pull-off and the land is public or you have landowner permission, you can go drop-in kayak fishing.

Drop-in kayak fishing can be best described as launching a kayak from a location that lacks a designated boat ramp. This discussion will cover the more difficult to reach locations. There are many drop-in spots along Pennsylvania waterways where you can pull up and launch within minutes. However, there are many spots where it's a walk to get to the water, or there's a steep embankment.

## Situations

I find myself looking for sections of rivers or lakes with less fishing pressure. Often, the best spots are also the hardest to reach. When trying to find these types of spots with a kayak, I have additional limitations. I'm not going to be making any 2-mile runs upriver. Sometimes, I find myself trying to figure out how close I can get with my truck and drop-in my kayak

from that point. You can always go from one public launch to another, but you don't always have time for a 4- to 6-hour float. When I want a shorter float, I obtain permission along private ground or find access from a public area. Unless you can find a stretch with a lot of different current breaks, paddling up a larger river is more of a chore than it's worth.

My favorite stretch of the Susquehanna River to fish has multiple islands that break up the current and allows me to paddle up river almost as if it were a lake. I park myself at a pull-off for a creek fishing access and carry my kayak down an 80-yard path into the creek.

To complete this task easier, I utilize a kayak cart, which prevents me from making multiple trips back and forth to my vehicle. I load up all of my gear into the kayak cart, strap the kayak onto the cart and away I go. Once I get to the creek, I fold up the cart, remove the wheels and fit it into my hatch. On my kayak that doesn't have a hatch, I can either strap it down with my built-in bungee cords or fit it behind my seat.

When faced with a steep embankment, I make shuttle runs by taking the kayak first followed by my gear. If I feel that it is too steep to carry the kayak, I throw everything on



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my kayak cart and pull it down the hill. Then, I take the cart back up to my vehicle.

I also find myself fishing on several different lakes where there is only one access point, but the lake is at least 1-mile long. In order to fish the evening bite, I would have to paddle over a mile back to the boat launch in the dark. Instead, if available, I drive to the other end of the lake, park my truck and cart my kayak to the shoreline. I would much rather cart my kayak down a path in the dark with the aid of a headlight than paddle in the dark. I have enjoyed some of my best evenings on the water using this method on a lake.

## Gear

When preparing for a drop-in fishing outing, I like to go as light as possible. That includes my kayak. I have a 12-foot kayak and a 9-foot kayak. Unless I plan to paddle upriver, I bring my 9-foot kayak, because it is lighter weight and easier to navigate on a path through the woods. As for gear, I use a pack that is big enough to bring enough gear for a short outing. When selecting my rods, I bring multiple piece rods that can easily fit into the hull of the kayak, so I don't have to worry about snagging on branches. In addition, I bring a dry bag for my phone and keys along with a waterproof camera. I may not have the gear selection that I would on a boat, but I usually bring 90 percent of what I would most likely use on a full-day on the water.

The next time you find yourself wondering about a stretch of water without a nearby boat launch, give drop-in kayaking a try. You will be surprised at how good the fishing can be in some of these spots. ☐



*A kayak cart can make drop-in fishing considerably easier.*