



*Whether you want to explore new streams or locate productive spots, a GPS has become an essential piece of equipment to have along with you while fishing.*

## Using a GPS to Improve Your Fishing Success

*by John Allen*    *photos by the author*

The technology that we have today is simply amazing. To go somewhere that we've never been before, all we have to do is type in an address to a global positioning system (GPS) and before you know it, it will be like you've studied a road map for hours. At the same time, fishing has benefited from these same technologies. You can't type in "Find Largemouth Bass" and have it take you right to

the fish, but you can use it to help explore new waters and pinpoint productive areas.

### Exploring new waters

When exploring new waters, the GPS works great in conjunction with a map to locate wild trout streams. I

mainly focus on streams that will get me off the beaten path. If the map that you are using is electronic, chances are that you can get the GPS coordinates to that location through the program. If you are using a paper map, it will take a little of bit knowledge to figure out the GPS coordinate to a certain spot.

If all else fails, you can find the closest road on the map and type it into a car GPS and have it take you to that point. From there, mark your location with your handheld GPS and start your excursion. The safety aspect that the GPS provides is probably the best reason of all to have a GPS with you on these types of adventurous trips.

You can also use the Natural Trout Reproduction listing on the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission website. On the listing, it gives you GPS coordinates to the mouth of the stream listed. You do have to do a little research on these streams, because some of them are as wide as some rivers near their mouths. However, a lot of the streams are tiny backcountry brooks that receive very little pressure. This information is invaluable and can save a lot of time in trying to locate new streams.

## Pinpointing productive spots

When pinpointing productive spots, there are several ways to go about marking and finding these areas. If you're having a great day on a large body of water, mark the coordinates using a GPS. This allows you to go right back to that same spot without the navigational guess work.

Another good time to use a GPS is in conjunction with a depth finder or sonar. An example of this is locating

crappies that are transitioning from their deep water winter haunts to their shallow spawning grounds. These fish will tend to find structure between these two areas. If you can locate these structures before the fish are there, you will save a lot of precious fishing time.

For many of Pennsylvania's most popular lakes, you can also use the lake habitat maps located on the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission website. These maps show you each of the man-made habitat improvements put into the lake, as well as their GPS coordinates.

If you're like most anglers in Pennsylvania, you probably fish dozens of waterways and find dozens of productive looking spots in each. Most GPS units can hold only so many waypoints before they're full. Chances are fishing is not the only hobby that involves using your GPS. What I do is create a spreadsheet and create a tab for each body of water. After fishing a specific body of water, I'll go through my GPS and enter all of the waypoints that I recorded while fishing. I will also include some notes to help for future reference. The next time I want to fish that particular body of water, all I do is print that page of the spreadsheet and enter the waypoints into my GPS.

Whether you want to explore new streams or locate productive spots, a GPS has become an essential piece of equipment to have along while fishing. Technology is changing the way anglers fish. The best thing that we can do is to take advantage of it. If it helps us save time and catch more fish, why not? ☐



*When exploring new waters, using a GPS in conjunction with a map to locate wild trout streams that you've never fished before is a great tool.*