

SMARTPHONE FISHING



by John Allen photos by the author

Take a few seconds to think about what is the most powerful tool that you use for fishing. Is it your favorite rod? Is it your favorite lure? Is it your boat? It is none of these things. It is your smartphone. Smartphones have a GPS, camera, map, tracking system, weather report and much more, all-in-one. I have always enjoyed exploring new waters, so I have always carried a map covered with highlights of all the trout streams that I have explored, along with a list of GPS coordinates and my GPS. I still carry my map as a backup, but it has been years since I opened it. Unlock the smartphone capabilities to make you a better angler.

First, if you are going to be handling an expensive smartphone on or around water, consider purchasing a waterproof case.

Mapping

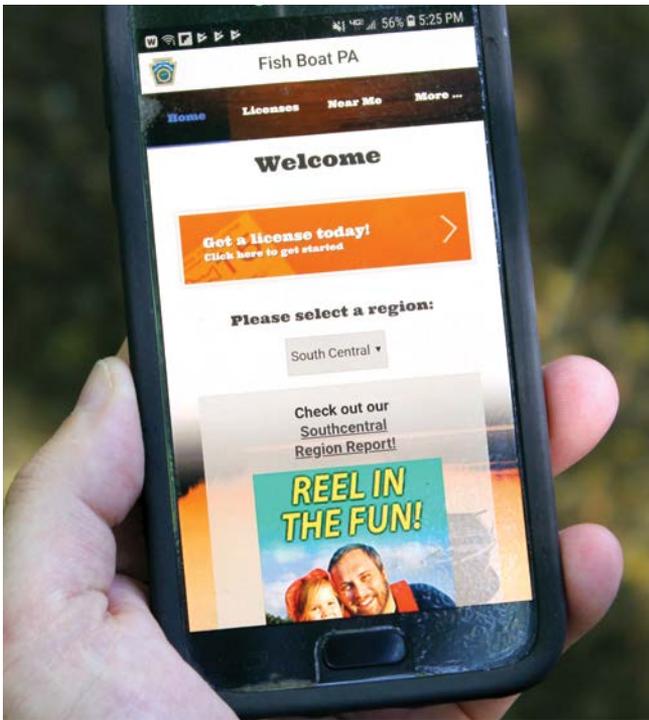
Every smartphone platform has mapping software. If you have a phone signal, you can use it to determine where you are located or where you are going. If you are unable to pick

up a signal, then there are maps that can be downloaded to your phone through an app. In this case, you can use the maps regardless of phone signal. This option was great to have while on a 5-day hike in the Pennsylvania Wilds. It allowed me to safely travel and locate each trout stream along the way. Maps use a lot of battery power, so it is good to be conservative with usage, or use a battery booster to enhance your available usage time.

Assuming you have a data signal, you can toggle between street maps and satellite maps to find streams or lakes. I use the street map to locate the “blue” water, then go to the satellite map to look at what the water looks like and to identify good spots to fish. Small streams can be difficult, but using this feature with lakes is incredible. You can locate large shoreline structures, creek channels, the size of the incoming creeks and find access points. Having these maps available on my phone is key when fishing new waters.

Camera

Carrying a camera while fishing may be cumbersome. With a smartphone camera, I can easily take a photograph of my catch and release and fish without keeping it out of the



The FishBoatPA app home page.

water too long. On a solo trip, I set up a tripod. If you use the front camera, sometimes referred to as “selfie-mode”, you can see the photograph before you take it. This feature allows you to take an even quicker photograph. Generally, this camera is of lower quality, which is the one drawback of the setting.

Many regular cameras today have a wifi setting that connects the camera to your phone, allowing you to preview the photograph before you take it. I like to do this on my



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kayak with my waterproof camera. I put the camera in a fixed position and connect it to my smartphone. I use the camera app to line up my shot before taking it using the timer option. This is also a timesaver when it comes to releasing your catch.

Applications

The thing that sets a smartphone apart from other electronics is the ability to download additional apps. My favorite apps for fishing include a counter, spreadsheet, notepad and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission’s (PFBC’s) FishBoatPA app (www.fishandboat.com/mobile.htm). I use a counter to count how many fish I catch. This way, I do not have to remember numbers while I am fishing. I use a counter that allows me to enter each species I target, so I know how many of each fish I caught. I use a spreadsheet to keep track of each outing. I include information such as date, body of water, the species caught, total fish caught and include a brief description of any highlights of the outing for future information. The notepad is good for writing down information while preparing for an outing. While I am reviewing the maps, I make notes about certain areas that I would like to concentrate on. The FishBoatPA app is good for finding a lot of the information that you would normally find on PFBC’s website but in a much more convenient way. I used to carry a list of all the trout streams by county with me. I would spend hours trying to figure out where these places were located prior to going fishing. Now, I just open the app and in three taps of the phone, I can find all the trout streams within a 50-mile radius of my location. There are other applications that will allow you to look up information about a body of water, interact with other anglers who have fished the same place and interact with your fish finder.

The sport of fishing is constantly evolving and so is technology. Smartphones are the most powerful tool in your tacklebox, and its capabilities will only improve. ☐

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