

TOO DRUNK TO FISH

Beer bait and the boys. That's boating. Well it is to some extent a bit of tradition, or even expected to down a few cold ones while out fishing with friends. Fishing and beer, sunset and wine. They go together like Fred and Ginger. Drinking while boating is commonplace and widely accepted while driving after drinking carries a vulgar stigma. Drinking aboard and while driving are both against the law. In fact both laws share much in the way of language and penalty. Why then do we apply a difference in social acceptance?

During the course of my considerable research upon this topic I have found the fishing / drinking rules to remain fairly constant. For example the no- fish-no beer rule is universal. You can't have a beer until you catch your first fish. On a hot day after throwing a cast net 10 times, baitfish count! I try not to exceed the 1 beer an hour rule but it may play out a bit uneven with certain hours getting far more attention than others. Is that bad? I'm not sure but I do know that I have never been too drunk to fish.

Ok, so much for fishing, but what about beach days? Has anyone ever been to Keywadin on a Saturday? How do you feel about water sports?

Water sports rules are easy. Don't drink. That's it. Not a drop until the last skier is aboard and the ropes are in. Nada, Nicht, zilch, zero. Pulling skiers is a cold stone sober good time for this operator. Last year my 6 year old was just learning to ski. He was up on the trainers and pulling like a hero. Our joy was turned to terror when two PWC (personal water craft) operators, obviously a couple in their late 30's started crossing our wake back and forth right behind my little boy beginner skier. I couldn't chop the throttle and drop my boy because they would run him over. The more evasive maneuvers I tried the more fun the PWC riders seemed to have. In short they were oblivious to the danger to my son and equally oblivious to my frantic gesturing. My poor wife was trying to cover four little ears with only two hands. It was then I noticed cup holders with beer on the little machines. I didn't even know you could buy cup holders for a wave runner but I suppose it shouldn't surprise me. Were the operators drunk? I have no idea but I would like to think that their God given normal common sense was blunted by something other than enthusiasm. I didn't drink while pulling skiers before that day but that incident sure cemented the rule for our boat.

Beach days are tricky; It is so easy to down far more cold beverages in a short time while strolling the sand bar and admiring the latest swim fashions. Self-control, lots of food and a designated driver are all the advice anyone can offer. I submit this as yet another reason to make sure your wife; husband, girlfriend, whatever knows how to run your boat and runs it

enough, on a regular basis to earn your trust. Next week I am going to pound this into you. Your wife absolutely must be able to run that boat.

I suppose all one can ask is to use some judgment. If you go fishing on our boat I expect you to bring some beer. I also expect you not to get staggering drunk. Lets all have fun and be careful out there

It is a violation of Florida law to operate a vessel while impaired by alcohol or other drugs. A vessel operator suspected of boating under the influence must submit to sobriety tests and a physical or chemical test to determine blood or breath alcohol content. In Florida, a vessel operator is presumed to be under the influence if their blood or breath alcohol level is at or above .08.

Any person under 21 years of age who is found to have a breath alcohol level of .02 or higher and operates or is in actual physical control of a vessel is in violation of Florida law.

There are some great deals on boats right now. I have seen offers accepted that are blowing the lid off the market! The Miami show is coming, the deals are out there waiting and the price of gas is back in reality. Now is the time to figure out just what sort of boat you dream of and go get it!