



Boat Talk: Who and when fishing licenses are needed, and tech tip on how to get one

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With temperatures climbing this weekend, many will flock to Michigan lakes for a chance to enjoy time with family and friends.

Some will toss a few fishing poles in the car before heading out. Let me be the first to wish you good luck on your next big catch and best wishes for a fun afternoon. But keep Michigan law in mind to avoid any run-ins with Department of Natural Resources conservation officers.

The bottom line? If you're over the age of 17, you'll probably need a fishing license, too.

Welcome to this week's Boat Talk—the fourth installment in a summer-long series addressing your questions about boating and water safety, and other questions that arise while out on the water.

Recently, I heard from a reader who looks forward to teaching his grandchildren, ages 4 and 6, to fish this summer. I answered a question in **last week's column** about whether they would need life preservers. But fishing licenses are another topic altogether.

I decided to spare you the glazed-over eyes from taking in too much information and save the second part of that question for this week.

Do children need fishing licenses when getting their first taste of summer fishing? What about the adult accompanying them at the lake?



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Andy Pigorsh takes the hook out of the small catfish he caught on the Grand River last weekend.

I turned to Debbie Munson Badini with the Michigan DNR for a closer look at state fishing guidelines. She offered some insight on these questions and told me how much easier it is these days to be a licensed fisherman.

Have a smartphone? That may be all it takes.

State law requires anyone 17 years of age or older to carry a fishing license when dropping a line into the water. You must carry the license and identification used to purchase it. Conservation officers may ask for these items during routine checks.

Children are not required to be licensed fishers, and technically, a guardian watching them fish wouldn't have to be, Munson Badini says.



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Peter Pigorsh, Andy Pigorsh and Alan Paasche spend some time fishing the Grand River last weekend in downtown Grand Rapids.

But think about the chances of a child catching a big fish ... it's quite a bit of work to reel some of them in. And how many children are ready to handle those wiggling worms on their own?

"In reality, you're going to end up holding the fishing pole at some point," Munson Badini says.

And an adult taking hold of that pole, she says, will need a license.

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Things are a bit different at private lakes.

According to Munson Badini, if a lake is owned privately all the way around—with no public access, inlets, or outlets — fishers do not need to be licensed.

And one more thing: that privately owned lake must be one the DNR does not stock with fish. (Don't worry, you're not expected to know stocking information by memory. An easy **online database** allows fishers to plug in some simple information, like the county and name of the lake, and pull up the results.)

The state offers several options for licenses. The majority of money gathered from each purchase goes back to fish and wildlife funds that help stock Michigan lakes.

A 24-hour all-species license is \$7 for an adult and \$3 for anyone age 65 and older, and can be purchased online at **Michigan.gov/fish**. The site is a hybrid web application that's smartphone-friendly and enables an easy license purchase within a minute or two.

Purchasers of the 24-hour license are automatically entered in a state database, so they do not need to carry a paper copy. Conservation officers are able to pull the license information up on the spot.

Licenses also are available for a select 72-hour time frame, and for a full year.

A year-long restricted license is good for all species except trout, salmon, lake sturgeon, lake herring, amphibians, reptiles or crustaceans.

All-species licenses are a bit more expensive and are required when fishing in some bodies of water (**see more information here**).

Up for a trip to Holland State Park? Staff there offer children a chance to fish each Saturday night from 5 to 7 p.m. with free poles and a prepared stock of bait. The group meets weekly near the channel. Children 10 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

A "Fishing 101" class offers children a chance to learn how to cast lines and hook bait. The class will meet June 16 and June 23 at 3 p.m., starting from the Holland State Park beach pavilion. There is no cost, says park Secretary Wendy Winkler.

More information about these programs is available by calling the park at (616) 399-9390.

*Boat Talk is an MLive column that will run weekly Memorial Day through Labor Day. Have a question you'd like to see answered? Email: **hfenton@mlive.com***

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