

Rods, Reels, & Line

- Take an inventory of what rods you have and make a list of rods, reels, and line you plan to add before the season starts.
- Inspect your rods for any defects – check the guides, reel seats, and blank itself.
- Make sure reels are in working order and greased/oiled properly.
- If you have any rods or reels in need of repair or replacement, reach out to the manufacturer before the open water season arrives.
- Remove last year's line (if you haven't already done so) and review what line you may have in stock at home. Spool up reels with fresh line.

Tackle

- Take inventory of what tackle you already have and make a list of any tackle you need to add to your arsenal before the upcoming season.
- Replace any hooks that aren't sharp. It's a good idea to keep extra hooks on hand throughout the season as well.
- Examine your tackle for any defects. Replace or repair as needed.
- Organize your tackle by type. Labeling your boxes adds a little legwork up front but comes in extremely handy later on. Knowing exactly what you have and where to find it will make you more efficient on the water.

Boats, Canoes, Kayaks and Trailers

- When it comes to boats, canoes, and kayaks there's a wide range of things to look at. These vary based on specific vessel and vessel type.
- Hopefully you stored your boat properly at the end of last season (i.e. cleaned, covered, and filled with something to prevent mice or other critters). Go over your boat up and down. Look for anything that needs to be cleaned or repaired before the season.
- Verify no hardware is loose.
- Make a list of any new accessories and plan to purchase them when you can find them.
- We all know how busy the season gets, so give it a proper cleaning before the season kicks off. Bust out the vacuum and power washer. It doesn't hurt to give your vessel a coat of wax as well.
- Take a look at your trailer. Ensure bunks or rollers are operational and tires are in good shape. Repair and replace as needed.

Motors, Batteries, and Electronics

- Depending on the vessel, you may have a motor or two to inspect before hitting the water.
- For outboard motors, invest in a pair of motor flushers (aka muffs) to ensure the motor is operational before fishing for the first time. If you don't have access to a pair, drive to a nearby body of water to make sure the motor is running properly.

Motors, Batteries, and Electronics (Continued)

- Inspect your prop. If you only have one, look into getting a backup. You never know when you'll need the extra one.
- For trolling motors, ensure that everything is working order. Check the motor itself for any defects and inspect the wiring.
- Ensure the batteries are operational and still take a charge. Examine the wiring for any issues. Replace and repair as needed.
- Verify that your electronics are still working. Make sure connections are clean and properly attached. Plan some time ahead of your first major trip to make sure electronics and transducers are operating as intended.
- Test the lights – both internal lights and navigation lights. Invest in some extra fuses. Keep them in a waterproof case.

Apparel

- Apparel is often neglected during the open water season, but having the right gear to keep you warm and dry is just as important, especially early in the year.
- Inspect your rain gear or suit. Wash and clean gear as needed.
- If you're planning to buy any replacement gear, buy it early.

The Extras

- There are a number of other things that you should take into account before hitting the water.
- Verify that your registration is current and that the up-to-date decals are attached to your vessel.
- Examine life jackets for any rips or tears. Ensure you have at least one life jacket per passenger and that they are appropriately sized for your passengers. Make sure you have a throwable flotation device on board.
- Depending on your state regulations, you may be required to have a fire extinguisher on board. Make sure it's functional and not expired.
- Nets come in handy for open water fishing. Inspect them for rips or tears. You don't want a faulty net to be the reason you lost your personal best.
- A small toolbox can be a lifesaver if something unexpected happens. Prepare one and find a place to store it in your boat.