

Open Water Planer Board Trolling
(Late Spring through Early Fall in Western Reservoirs)
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There is a myth that walleyes are harder to catch after water temps have started to rise and summer is in full swing...especially in the middle of the day. We want to share how we approach this time of year and what we do to catch these suspended fish.

The walleyes are on the move, feeding as they desire, and targeting baitfish when the mood strikes. You need to have your baits in the water and where the bait is located to be successful at this summer pattern. Walleyes will be located in areas that have quick access to deep water and in the best case some sort of deep structure that they use to travel back and forth to the shallows to feed. We will explore a variety of different areas looking for schools of bait and/or fish. This time of year you want to find areas that have quick access to deep water and cover or structure of some variety. If you are traveling to a new body of water the new series of HD paper maps available from Navionics can take a tremendous amount of time out of your searching if you spend some time looking for the correct structure. Even if it is the lake you have fished your entire life, you may be surprised that your favorite place to fish has characteristics in common with other parts of the lake that have yet to be discovered.

Once you have identified the area you want to fish, it is time to get out the “boards”. We want to cover a variety of different depths and also cover as much water as possible. This can only be done effectively with the use of Offshore Tackle planer boards. We prefer ours rigged with the OR 18 Snapper release up front and the OR 16 Red heavy tension release at the back with the Tattle Flag option. The OR 18 Snapper can be adjusted and works perfectly with all the new braided lines on the market. The Tattle Flag will help you detect light strikes and also let you know if you have a fouled lure, you can then bring in your lure and reset the line. For rods and reels we prefer a smaller linecounter reel, Abu Garcia 5500LC or Shimano Tekota 300 and a rod designed for pulling planer boards similar to the Fenwick planer board rod or similar in 7’ – 8’6” in length. All of our rods we want to be the same length so switching their positions is easy if needed. We run a braided line that will easily match up to the dive curves published in the *Precision Trolling Version 8*, this speeds calculating what depth your bait will be running at and also allows for added depth because of the decreased line diameter.

You have your tackle and planer boards all set, all that is left is lure selection, and this will be short and easy. If a fish won’t hit a Reef Runner Deep Little Ripper (600 series) or Reef Runner Deep Diver (800 series) presented at the right depth, it won’t hit any other lure either. We unquestionably favor the action of Reef Runners for this deep water somewhat slower presentation than what we employ in the spring. Colors that tend to be favored in clear water conditions have either a white, pearl or gray belly and in clear or stained water Red Oahe is almost impossible to outproduce...if you can find them.

We determine what level we think the fish are holding and we will run lures above them 1-10 feet depending on water clarity...closer to the fish in dirty water and higher up further away in clear water. Experiment with what the fish are reacting to, you don't want to run your lures at depths below the fish or at the same depth, they will be less likely to pursue prey they can't see. We will run our "highest" lures furthest away from the boat and the deeper lures closer in, both off the boards. We like to have at least 25 feet between boards on the same side of the boat and will run the boards up to 150 feet away with 50-75 feet separating the boards (THIS IS ONLY RECOMMENDED IN OPEN WATER SITUATIONS WHERE OTHER FISHERMEN, PLEASURE BOATERS AND/OR PWCs ARE NOT PREVALANT OR IN CLOSE PROXIMIY). We will try to select lures for the outside boards that achieve are target depth and possibly require more line out to get them behind the deeper diving inside lines. We will also utilize Offshore OR 16 Snapweights on the inside lines to get the lures down deeper with less line out to prevent possible overlap between the lines if there is only one productive depth. For example, if a 600 series Reef Runner runs 27 feet down with 110 feet of line out, the same 600 series lure may run 27 feet with 55 feet out and a 3 oz. Snapweight, this is not accurate as dive curves taper quickly the more line you let out, but it makes the point. You would then have a 55 foot cushion between your outside lines and inside lines with which to fight fish without having to clear lines.

There was an excellent article written in the 2007 April *FLW Outdoors Magazine Walleye Edition* about how to arrange your trolling spread and move rods accordingly with fish on. That is an entirely different article which we will try to have posted for people to read if they would like more detail on how to shuffle the rods around when you are running more than two rods on boards. We will run 6 lines, 3 per side, if permitted by local laws and at times 8, 4 per side, which requires a considerable amount of practice and also careful planning before running your baits in the water.

Remember that the line out given in *Precision Trolling* is either line from the boat with the rod parallel to the water and the tip low or from the back clip of the planer board. If you are trolling with the rod tip straight up in the air you will be off by as much as 10 feet or more depending on the lure and amount of line out. Utilizing the tools we have outlined here is critical to successfully and consistently catch those summer walleyes when many are finding it difficult. A couple of last points to make before we send you on your way, first, it is not the case that the faster you go the deeper your lure will run, it will get down to the target depth faster, not run deeper. We prefer speeds below 2 mph on the GPS for the 600 and 800 series Reef Runners. Second, letting out more line will not always achieve greater depth. Lures have a maximum dive curve relative to the diameter of line they are being run on, letting out more line will actually have your lure running higher at times as the line is causing more resistance in the water.

We commonly run lures 150-200 feet behind the boards this time of year on narrow diameter braided line to achieve depths where the fish are holding and add the use of Snapweights in late summer through the fall to continue reaching depths where the fish are holding...up to 60 feet deep without the use of downriggers. These are just a couple of common misconceptions many anglers have about the lures they are running and is

most likely the reason they are not catching. Offshore Planer Boards, Offshore Snapweights, *Precision Trolling*, linecounter reels and rods designed to pull inline planer boards are a must have for any angler, serious or recreational, to be able to target fish at specific depths and to repeat the success of their process.