

by Bob Jensen



For many anglers across the Midwest, the 2009 fishing season is over. And, for many of us, this was a memorable fishing season. Fishing across the Midwest, on many bodies of water is getting better and better. The opportunity to catch more and bigger fish is outstanding. One of the reasons we're experiencing more success is progressive fishing regulations like slot limits. Almost everywhere where slot limits have been introduced, the fishing is better.

Another reason we're catching more fish is because anglers are more knowledgeable now. We have a tremendous amount of information available to us that enables us to be more successful on the water.

Lastly, the equipment that's available to anglers is giving us even more opportunities to catch more fish. With the open water season winding down, now is the time to make sure your equipment is properly stored for the winter months.

First of all, make sure your boat is properly winterized. You want to make sure the engines are ready for the cold weather. The Evinrude E-TEC motor that I run is extremely easy to winterize: I can do it myself. However, most motors should be taken to a dealer for winterization. If you decide to do it yourself, check for line that may have got tangled up behind the prop, disconnect the batteries and keep them charged and someplace warm. Also make sure the trailer lights are working. Fix them now so you'll be ready to go when the open water fishing season returns.

I like to take the depth-finders out of the boat and store them somewhere warm also. I don't know if that's necessary, but it's worked well for me so far.

While you're in the boat, make sure all the dry storage is checked. You don't want to leave clothing or anything in there over the winter. Leave the storage open so it can dry out completely. You might be surprised at all the stuff that accumulates in your boat's storage areas over the course of a fishing season.

Loosen the drag on your reels. Back it off almost all the way. Also make sure there is no bend in your rods.

Take forty or fifty yards of line off each of your reels. Modern lines are amazingly strong and durable, but I still like to start every season with new line. By taking the line off now, it forces me to add some line when the next fishing season gets closer. Wait until you're ready to go fishing again, then tie new line to the remainder of the line on your reel.

Open your tacklebox and allow air to circulate in there as well. If there was any moisture trapped in there, it could cause your hooks to rust.

While the tacklebox is open, take an inventory of baits that need to be replaced or added. Every year we lose a few lures, so we want to be sure to replace them before it's time to go fishing again.

Fortunately we have ice-fishing to enjoy during the open water seasons. If you store your fishing tackle properly, you'll be ready when open water fishing returns.

For more fishing information visit [fishingthemidwest.com](http://fishingthemidwest.com) and watch all the 2009 episodes of Fishing the Midwest television on [WaIleyeCentral.com](http://WaIleyeCentral.com)

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