

## Oil and Water

It's amazing to see the amount of information now available for bass fishing. Articles about your boat from the prop to the trolling motor as well as news of the latest tackle and techniques can be found with just a few clicks of the mouse. However, there's one important aspect of bass fishing that you're not going to find many articles on and that is money.

There are a lot of reasons for the lack of articles on money and bass fishing, but the bottom line is these two subjects are like oil and water. They don't mix and they make one ugly mess. It's gotten so ugly that as anglers we just try to ignore it. How much did you spend on gas last year for the boat and for towing? Or even better, how much do you have invested in just your tackle? Yep, it's easier to just not even think about it.

Whatever you spent on tackle last year, you paid approximately 10% to the federal government for the hidden excise tax placed on all fishing tackle. There's also the combined state and federal taxes on gasoline that average out to about 40 cents per gal, but varies by state. On the state and local level there are the various taxes such as property or luxury taxes and all the registration fees that apply in some combination to the boat, motor, and trailer. Let's not forget about the various state and/or local sales taxes either. Now add in boat ramp fees, and just to pour salt in the wound you had better not leave your fishing license at home. This is just what we spent in taxes and fees.

Over taxation is not likely to change, but we can influence where and how some of those tax dollars are spent. Remember, "The squeaky wheel is the first to be greased." But to have any influence on anything, we can't continue to "just not even think about it." In fact you aren't going to know how much you're spending and for what unless you do think about it. And thinking about it doesn't apply to just taxes.

If you fished a tournament last year, what percentage of entry fees was paid back to the field? That tournament paid one place for how many boats? Do you know or did you "just not even think about it"? In the past it probably wouldn't have mattered much if you had thought about it, but now it's important that you do because Guild members will determine Guild rules.

Current entry fees are \$150 per person (\$300 per boat). 85% of entry fees will be paid back at each tournament. That comes to \$38,250 for a full field event. The current fees and payout rate of 1 place for every 4 boats were adopted to give as many as possible the best chance of making a good check. Next year could be a winner takes all \$38,250 for first place if that's what the majority wants? Of course then your odds of making a check would go from 1 in 4 to 1 in 150.

So it's important for everyone to think about finances and rules, all of the rules. The current max horsepower rating is 250HP. That's the standard for most tournaments at the moment, but there's a good chance it will change to 300HP for some organizations. Whether or not it changes for the Guild will depend on how many want the change, but think about the implications before you decide. A 300HP max will mean bigger more comfortable boats. It will also mean more expensive boats, higher taxes and insurance premiums, more gas for the boat, and more gas for towing a larger boat. It will probably mean more tackle as well; you'll have to fill all that extra storage space with something. Now what will the price of gas be when you pay off that new boat with a 300 on it?

At the moment the max horsepower rating isn't an issue, unless enough members want to make a change. It is however an example of the affect rules can have on finances, and bass fishing for that matter. It's also why all matters concerning money are open for discussion, and should be discussed. It's time to start thinking about it.