

# Fishing boats can be individualized to your needs

By Tara Marion

In order to find the fishing boat best suited to their needs, fishermen have the option of buying a boat as a stock package or buying it in components in order to build a boat to their own personal specifications.

And the idea of putting together the fishing boat of their dreams is hard for fisherman to resist when manufacturers keep coming up with new ways to make the sport an even more pleasurable pastime.

According to Randy VanDam, owner of D&R Sports Center Inc., 8178 W. Main, the global positioning system (GPS) tracks and saves coordinates of specific fishing locations, so that “you can find your way back from or go to an exact spot without having a clue where you’re going.” The system has proven to be extremely popular with fishermen near and far.

Another highly requested component, says Bret Houtkeeper, of Kooper’s Marine, in Richland, is the environmentally friendly four-stroke outboard motor. The oil in this outboard is self-contained, similar to a car engine.

In contrast, a two-stroke motor combines gas and oil and they are burned through the cylinder and eventually dumped into the water. “That’s become a concern,” he says, “because we have all these waters and we want to protect them.”

Another advantage of the four-stroke outboard, he says, is that they are also quieter than two-stroke motors.

While new options are continually being developed to aid the fisherman, two things have remained constant. There are only two fishing boat materials—aluminum or Fiberglass, and fishing boats come in only two bottom styles—flat-bottom or V-bottom.

Aluminum boats are lightweight and portable. “If one guy wanted to go fishing by himself, it’s the type of boat that he could load and unload and not have trouble,” says Houtkeeper.

The advantage of Fiberglass boats is that, even though they are heavier than aluminum boats, they have smoother handling and are more efficient on the water, because they were easier to mold during the production process.

When it comes to bottom styles, the V-bottom boat is designed for rougher water because it cuts waves better. The flat-bottom boat is better for the calmer, shallower water of small lakes and rivers.

If you’re thinking about purchasing a fishing boat, VanDam and Houtkeeper offer the following tips to help you make the best choice:

- Plan the number of people you will fish with, and take that into consideration when buying a boat.
- Determine the amount of weight you can tow with your vehicle.
- Consider how often you fish and how far you plan to travel when you fish.
- Another consideration for anyone interested in purchasing a fishing boat is price. Houtkeeper reminds buyers that price is determined by floor plan, motor and equipment.

If you’re unsure of how to figure these factors, look to the experts. Says VanDam, “That’s what we’re here for.”