

## Buying a Recreational Fishing Boat

### Introduction

North Carolina's abundant ocean, sound and river waters offer the recreational angler rewarding boating experiences — as well as challenging sportfishing opportunities.

There are many factors to consider when buying a recreational fishing boat for use in North Carolina's coastal waters. Modern fishing boats utilize the latest technologies in manufacturing techniques, building materials and marine propulsion systems.

Currently more than 150 North Carolina boat builders are producing crafts ranging from small coastal skiffs to large custom yachts. These skilled boat builders carry a rich tradition and heritage, and are recognized as some of the best boat builders in the world.

The countless models and options may seem overwhelming to the inexperienced buyer.

This publication provides a brief overview of information to enable the buyer to make an educated boat-purchasing decision.

### Hull Design

There are many types of hull designs from which to choose when considering the purchase of a recreational fishing boat. Some common types are flat bottom, semi-V, bay style, and deep-V.

The buyer should consider the types of sea conditions in which the boat will be used most often. An angler targeting inshore species such as speckled trout and flounder will want a different hull than the offshore fisher targeting pelagic species such as dolphin and wahoo.

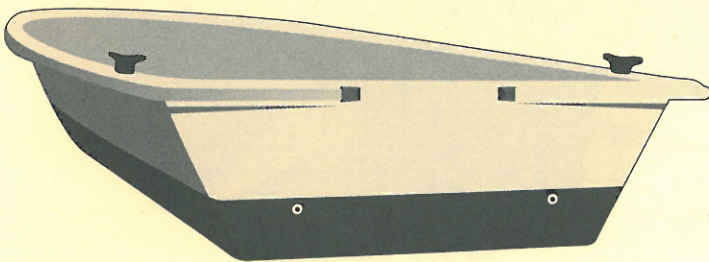
#### • Flat-Bottom Hulls

Flat-bottom hulls are popular among inshore anglers and have many advantages. Flat-bottom skiffs have less drag and thus require less horsepower to push the vessel on plane. These hulls have a very shallow draft (4" to 8"), making them useful in sounds, rivers and backwater marshes common to North Carolina's coastal plain. If the vessel is inadvertently grounded, a flat-bottom hull usually can be pushed off the bar or oyster bank with an oar or push pole. Flat-bottom boats generally are stable and have a high carrying capacity.

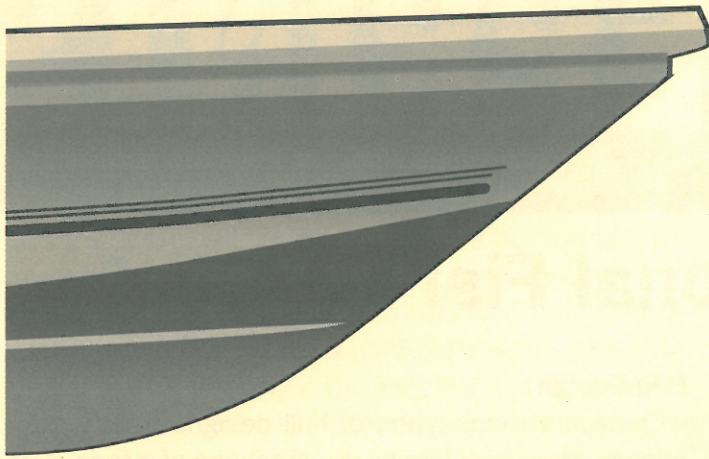
The major disadvantage of the flat-bottom hull is ride quality. The hull pounds against the water in larger seas or a heavy chop, resulting in an uncomfortable — sometimes wet — ride.

#### • Semi-V and Bay-Style Hulls

Semi-V and bay-style hulls are becoming more popular each year. These hulls provide a compromise of a shallow draft (7" to 10") and a comfortable ride. This allows the angler to fish both inshore and near-shore areas. Bay boats have become very popular among anglers who desire a versatile vessel that can be used to fish inshore for red drum and trout and near-shore waters to catch blues, spanish mackerel and king mackerel.



**Fig. 1. Flat-Bottom Hull:** The flat-bottom hull is popular among inshore anglers.



**Fig. 2. Semi-V Hull:** The semi-V hull allows the angler to fish both inshore and near-shore waters.

- **Deep-V Hulls**

Deep-V hulls are designed for offshore use where larger sea conditions may be encountered. The angler may have to travel a long distance offshore to reach the desired fishing grounds and sea conditions can be unpredictable. Deep-V hulls are designed to cut through the waves instead of riding on top of them. This provides a more comfortable ride in larger sea conditions compared to a flat-bottom or semi-V hull.

The disadvantages of deep-V hulls are that they require higher horsepower engines to push them on plane and they have a deeper draft (>10") making them unsuitable for shallow water.

### Vessel Layout

The layout of the vessel is very important to the function and "fishability" of the boat. The most popular layout of recreational fishing boats is the center console.

- **The center console** design provides the angler with several advantages, including a 360-degree area to fight and land fish. This design also allows the angler to pilot the boat from a center/standing position. The center console gives the best vantage point and the least amount of spray depending on wind and chop direction.

There are some disadvantages of the center console design. A lack of seating and storage space could be a disadvantage for family use or for carrying multiple passengers. The design provides limited protection from the elements unless the boat is equipped with spray curtains and a T-top.

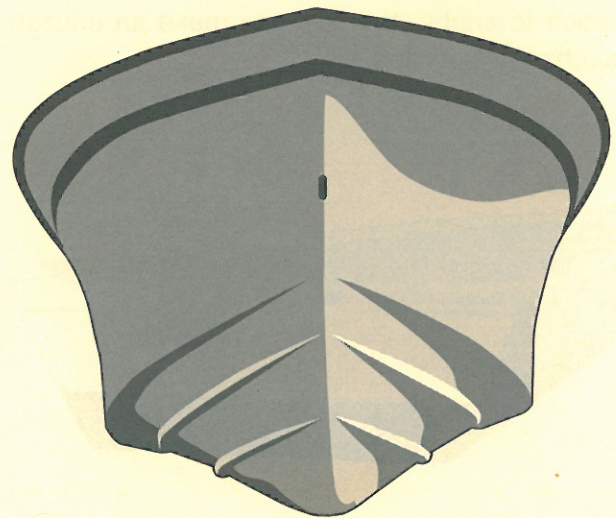
- **The dual console** layout provides separate windscreens for the captain and the passenger. For inshore use, raised platforms in the bow and stern provide the angler with casting and sight advantage while the vessel is at rest. Offshore anglers often desire deeper gunnels to lessen spray in rough waters and to provide "coming pads" to lean against when fighting large fish with stand-up tackle.

### Marine Propulsion

Modern technology, stricter emissions standards, and increased competition have resulted in quiet, fuel-efficient outboards. The major differences in outboard technology are 2-stroke vs. 4-stroke technology.

- **The 2-stroke** outboard motor generally is cheaper and lighter. It usually has more power in the "holeshot" or when the boat is getting on plane from a dead stop. There are several variations of the 2-stroke, including the traditional carbureted models, fuel-injected, and direct-injection models. Each manufacturer has models with various horsepower ratings.

Also, 2-stroke outboards burn an oil/gas fuel mixture and commonly have oil injection systems



**Fig. 3. Deep-V Hull:** The deep-V hull is designed for offshore use, where larger sea conditions may be encountered.

on higher horsepower motors. This requires that the oil reservoir be filled each time the gas tank is filled to ensure the cylinders are lubricated properly.

- **The 4-stroke** outboard motors are quickly becoming popular among many recreational boaters. These are efficient, quiet and expel low emissions. The power to weight ratio of 4-strokes generally is not as high as 2-strokes, but advances in technology are constantly improving the power of 4-strokes. Many of the higher horsepower 4-strokes are fuel injected to allow maximum fuel efficiency and easy starting.

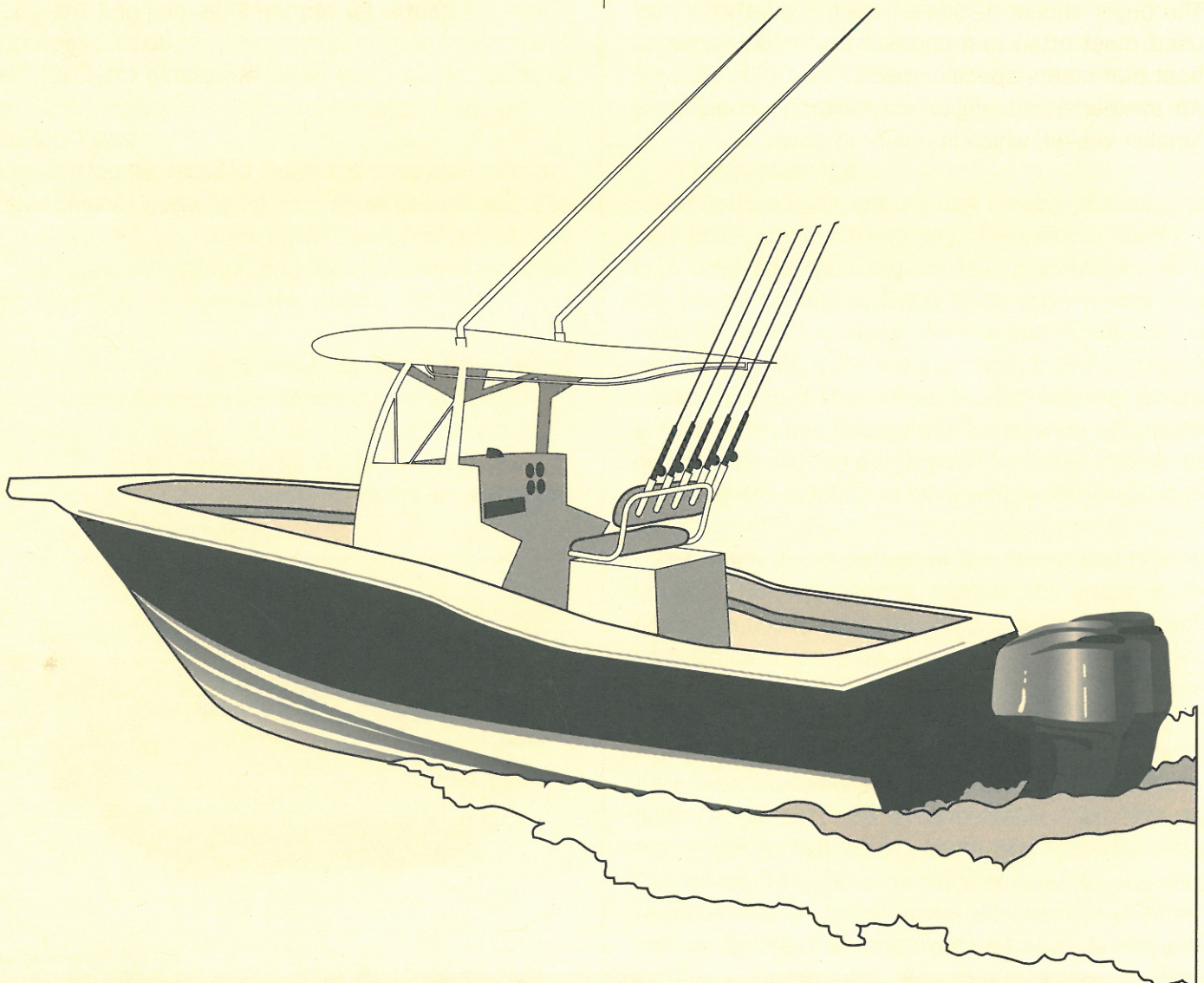
Also, 4-stroke motors do not run on an oil/gas mixture. They have a separate oil crankcase similar to a car. This prevents them from “gumming up,” a term used when the gas evaporates from the carburetors/fuel injectors after sitting over long

periods of time (usually during the winter), leaving a gummy residue that prevents the motor from starting or running smoothly.

As the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continues to strengthen emissions regulations, 4-stroke engines are expected to continue to gain popularity. Four-stroke engines are considered less harmful to the marine environment. A 2-stroke outboard engine burns an oil/gas mixture that releases harmful hydrocarbons into the environment, whereas a 4-stroke engine burns straight gasoline.

### **Boat Safety**

The new owner should take a boating safety class and have a courtesy safety inspection offered by the U.S. Coast Guard before operating the vessel. While safety is the most important consideration, there also is an



**Fig. 4. Deep V Hull, Center Console:** The center console gives the angler a 360-degree area to fight and land fish.

economic benefit. Alerting the insurance company once the boat safety class is completed successfully could result in an insurance premium reduction. For information about boat safety classes in North Carolina, go online to <http://coastguardaux.com>.

When operating the vessel, the owner should be aware that conditions such as wind and current play a major role in how the vessel will handle and react. It is important for the new boater to remain calm and not overcompensate at the controls. A new owner should consider devices such as global positioning systems (GPS) or weather radios for added safety on the water. On land, the new boat owner should practice backing the boat trailer accurately before arriving at a busy boat ramp.

### Summary

There are many options to consider when purchasing a recreational fishing boat:

- The buyer should decide where the boat would be used most often and choose a particular style of boat that meets specific needs.
- An inexperienced angler may want to consider a smaller vessel, which is easier to dock.

- The new owner should take a boating safety class and have a courtesy safety inspection by the U.S. Coast Guard before operating the vessel.
- Modern electronics such as GPS, VHF radios, NOAA Weather radio, and depth finders can keep the angler informed of current conditions.
- When operating the vessel, the owner should be aware that conditions such as wind and current play a major role on how the vessel will handle and react. It is very important for the new boater to remain calm and not overcompensate with the controls.
- The buyer should be aware of the vehicle's towing limits and should practice backing the trailer accurately before arriving at the ramp on a busy summer weekend.


— Brian Efland

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