

## **Standard Operating Procedures for Use of Live Release Boat**

The Live-Release Boat was developed for black bass tournament organizers to use and aid in the survival of tournament caught black bass as well as releasing the fish back to that particular lake at multiple sites to avoid the stockpiling of bass at popular weigh-in sites.



The boat itself is a 29' triple pontoon equipped with a 200hp Mercury motor. Mounted on the boat is a three-compartment bottom-dump tank that holds approximately 650 gallons of water, which means that it can safely hold up to 650 pounds of fish. The tanks are individually plumbed for filling and also contain individual diffusers, which provide oxygen from a compressed oxygen cylinder. Funds to purchase the boat were provided by a \$10K grant from the FishAmerica Foundation. The Black Bass Program also matched the grant money in order to purchase and equip the specially designed boat and tank that were manufactured by Waco Manufacturing and Ketcher Metal Products in North Little Rock, AR.

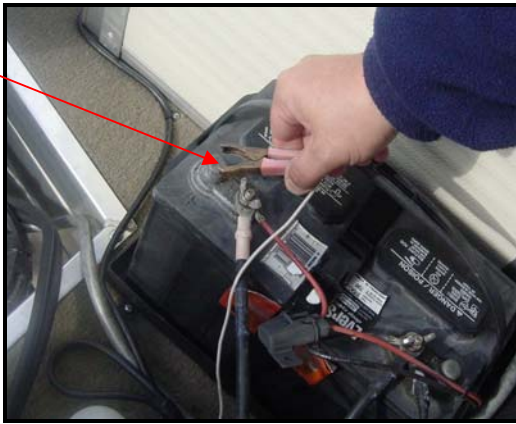
### **Below are the guidelines for using the live-release boat:**

- Anyone interested in using the barge must first contact the Black Bass Program Biologists @ 1-877-525-8606.
- Extreme caution should always be used when driving this barge.
- When in operation, the barge should have no more than two passengers on board.
- The tanks are to be filled one at a time beginning at the back (Tank #3) and this process is initiated by hooking up the alligator clip to the

battery at the back of the boat. Make sure that the valve to the tank is open before hand or the pump will lose its prime. The other two tanks have ball valves from which they are filled and these need to be closed until the first tank is nearly full.

- **Allow forty-five minutes to one hour for filling tanks while the boat is stationery.**

Alligator clip for starting pump.



Ball valve for filling tank in the open position



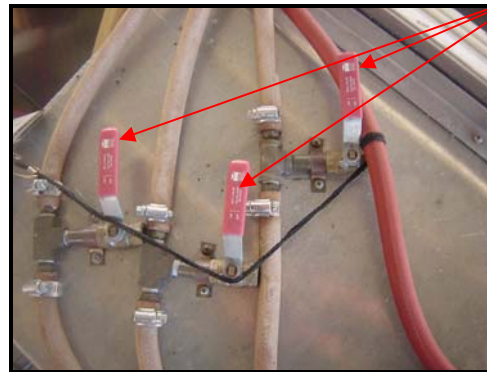
Water level after filling should be six inches below here

- Fill the tanks up to six inches below the bottom of the spicket on the ball valve, this will allow for the added water and fish from the weigh-in bags.
- Once all tanks are filled and the weigh-in is close to getting under way, the oxygen bottle can be turned on and the ball valves on the oxygen lines need to be closed.

T-Handle for regulating pressure



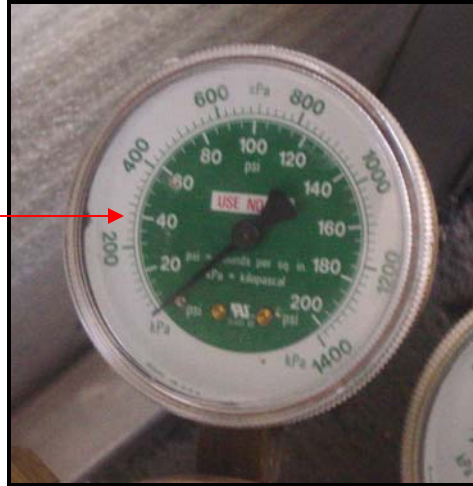
Turn on valve for oxygen cylinder



Ball valves on the oxygen lines in the closed position

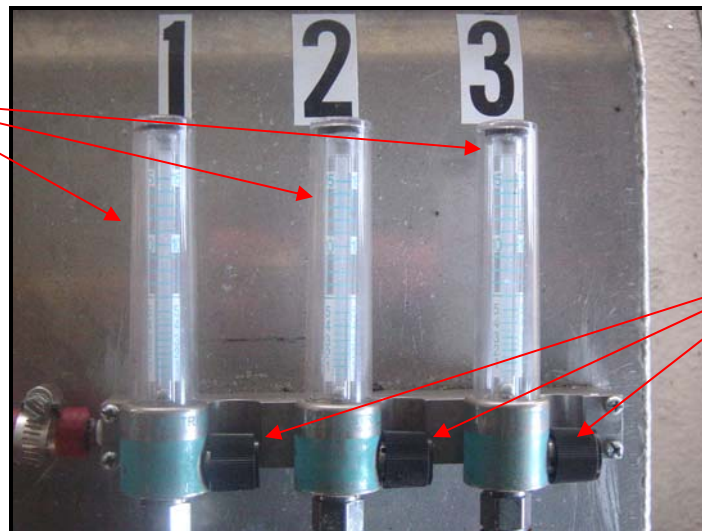
- The T-handle on the face of the regulator should be set at and not exceed 40 psi on the gauge.

Regulator showing the proper placement of the needle when pressurized



- Depending on the number of participants and/or fish all three tanks may or may not be necessary for use.
- The flow meters to the tanks may be turned on according to demand. We recommend that you begin using tank #1 first and if more than one tank is needed then proceed to tank #2 and so on.

Flow meters



Knobs for opening flow meters

- The flow meters should be set between 1 and 2 and monitored regularly. Turning the black knobs towards you when facing the flow meters opens them.

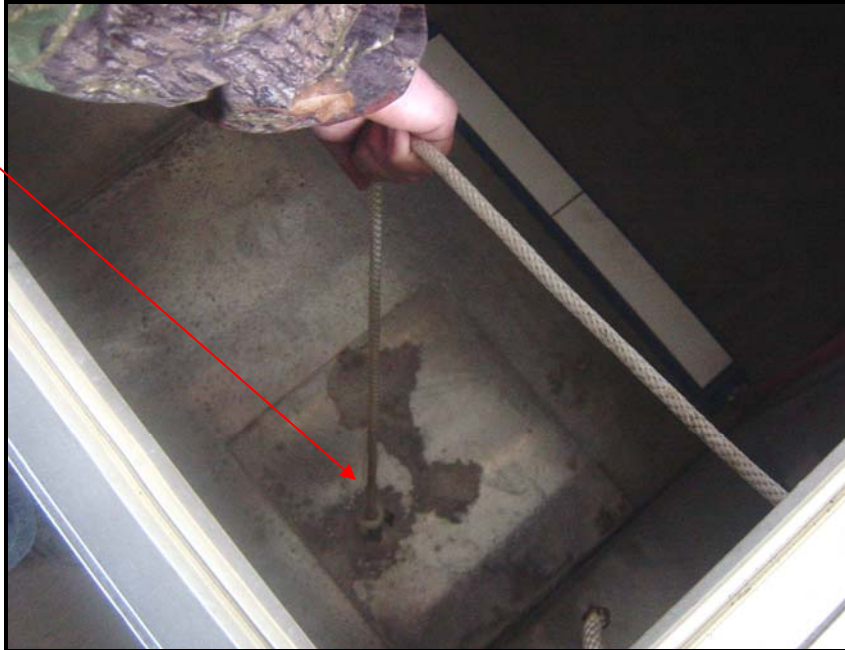
Proper  
position of  
ball in flow  
meter when  
in operation

Ball in  
flow meter



- You may keep up with the number of fish being distributed to tank #1 to help yourself know when you should begin putting fish into another tank. Generally, fish are going to average approximately two pounds each and each tank should hold and not exceed one hundred fish per tank.
- After the weigh-in is complete, secure the lids as well as any materials on the deck and put on life jackets and attach kill-switch.
- The barge is extremely heavy when loaded and is not intended to be driven at a high rate of speed.
- Before releasing the fish, check for weak or dead fish and use the net that is on the barge to remove these fish. **Please do not release dead or dying fish!**
- Tanks should be released beginning at the back. Use caution and open the lids slowly because the fish will begin jumping when the lids are opened. When you arrive at the first stocking location, stop the boat and close the flow meter to that specific tank and open the ball valve to that tank to bleed the line. **Wait approximately five minutes and then the tank may be released by pulling up on the rope that is attached to the gate in the bottom of the tank.** After pulling up the lid, you may set it on top of one of the other tanks until all fish are removed. You will need to have a bucket of water and the boat paddle handy for getting some of the fish out after release. Do not hit fish with the paddle, but you may use it to guide them towards the hole in the bottom.

Rope attached to lid  
in bottom of the  
tank, pull up to  
release fish



- When the last tank is ready to be dumped, you may turn the oxygen bottle off and open the ball valve to release all of the oxygen from the line.
- **It is very important that the flow meters are turned off and the ball valves opened to drain the oxygen from the lines and time is taken to ensure that the diffusers are not pressurized because they are made of ceramic and will crack when not submerged in water.**
- After dumping the last tank, secure all equipment in the appropriate place and return the barge to its original position at Mountain Harbor.
- We ask that the boat be treated as if it belonged to you and in doing so, it should be able to be used to redistribute tournament caught bass for many years to come.

**Please report any problems with the barge or motor upon return!!!!**

**Please sign below verifying that you have completely read and understand the guidelines for using this trailer.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_