

Grass Isn't Always Greener... But It Can Be

By Tim Schwartz

In today's fast paced world of work, traffic, driving kids around the city, and trying to head out for some fun on the ice, it can be hard to slow down and focus in on just one activity. This mental rush hour can stick with us when we ice fish. It's important to know when to keep moving and searching for fish and when to dig in and wait for them to come to you. Here are some things I take into consideration before I go searching for greener pastures.



Before you start your drilling, start with a good lake map with bottom contours, look for key spots that should be holding fish. Then mark these likely spots with a pencil or highlighter. Even better – mark the spots on a handheld GPS with a Lakemaster or Navionics map chip. Key elements I am looking for are the standard structure spots like points, inside turns, mid-lake humps, weed lines, and sharp breaks near deep water.

As a general rule if I am fishing the sunrise or sunset I get there at least an hour and a half early. Pick your favorite spot from the lake map you have marked up and start there. I like to drill lots of holes to make sure you're on the spot. Run a line of holes on the top edge of the structure then come back along the deep side. If you have a handheld GPS and mapping chip there is a trick to help you stay on course when drilling – carefully hold your GPS and drive your 4 wheeler or snowmobile along the edge of the structure (if there is snow on the ice of course). Now you can use your tracks as a reference point when drilling. Since walleyes are most active at sunrise/sunset now is the time to set up the Frabill and wait for the fish to come to you.

The only other time I will camp out in a small area is when you are fishing structure that is less than 15 feet deep. Drilling holes this close to the fish may spook them from the area for a short while, so I will drill plenty of holes then set up the shelter and work from one hole to the next staying for 30 minutes to an hour at each spot.

Now when I fish water over 15 feet in the middle of the day it's time to fill up the ice auger with gas and get drilling. During the day walleyes generally move around less so you need to move around more. Again, start at high percentage spots you have marked on your map. Look all over the structure from the center of the mid lake hump to the bottom edge of the structure and beyond. I methodically drill a line of holes, checking every single one with the finder and look for fish. If I am in water greater than 25 feet I can drill the holes further apart since the cone of your transducer will be wider and pick up the fish in a bigger area. If you are in water from approx 15 to 25 feet drill your holes a little closer together. The key during the day is to keep looking until you find fish. There have been days when I have burned 2 or 3 tanks of gas before I finally hit the jackpot. Be persistent when searching for these daytime walleyes- they didn't leave the lake.

This fast paced world doesn't have to always be run and gun, knowing when to camp out and when to move will turn a good day on the water into a great day. Good luck this