

INSIDER VISIONS & VIEWS

REEL WEEDS—REAL DEAL



Reel Weeds are mobile artificial fish attractors closely resembling freshwater weeds, and while the use of artificial fish attractors isn't new, incorporating the idea into a portable system is. The concept is designed to mask the otherwise unnatural profile of underwater camera cables and camera head by making them appear to be an aquatic plant. This is accomplished by attaching 4 feet of artificial weeds to the cable via simple clips called Camera Cable Structure. Not only does this make fish more comfortable, it pulls them in to investigate.

Structure on a String, the next evolution, consists of 4 feet of the same weed structure—6 feet on the Extreme version—attached to 40 feet of 100-pound-test cord and with an adjustable ice-free float, all wrapped onto a lightweight, hassle-free storage unit. With this, anglers now have the ability to quickly create their own mini-environment wherever and whenever they wish to.

Reel Weeds aren't just decoration. Many years have been spent designing and testing the ideal material to be the perfect artificial weed for fishermen and fisheries alike. The result is a product that's durable under extreme conditions and lasts for many seasons. Reel Weeds are legal in every state, so long as you take them with you at the end of each day. It's the same principal as most state laws concerning unattended lines or littering.

Fish are attracted to cover—including weeds—for a number of reasons. They seek cover to provide protection from larger predators—the cover becomes both safety net and comfort zone. This is true for many forms of aquatic life, from small invertebrates and minnow species to the top of the food chain, where larger predatory fish associate weeds not only with shelter, but also with food. Eventually, one or two predators attract others. This breeds competition and a greater chance for positive response to your lure or bait presentations.

Reel Weeds are surprisingly uncomplicated and easy to stow and deploy. They come spooled on a foam holder with a designated position for each component—weight, cord, and float, leaving no pieces hanging and eliminating tangling or snagging. Unroll

the weighted weed portion and drop it down a hole, position the adjustable float stop to your desired depth (usually just above bottom), and you're set. Storing Reel Weeds is just as easy: Roll them up at the end of the day, shake off any excess water, toss into a storage tote, and they're ready for your next outing.

This product is likely best suited for a stakeout-and-ambush approach rather than "running and gunning." By moving constantly, you wouldn't be giving your cover configuration enough time to attract fish. If you're right on target with your setup the response can be fast, while at other times it might take up to an hour. Prime areas are where fish are loosely scattered and not relating to anything in particular. In such scenarios, I set up anywhere along a line where fish are likely to be moving back and forth.

Reel Weeds work on my favorite "honey holes," too, adding another element to make these spots even better. And they can make otherwise hit-and-miss locations into great spots, as I don't usually have to compete with other anglers for a few fish in over-pressured community holes. I set up a short distance from one



Time-lapse video shots showing the effect of Reel Weeds.

Camera Cable Structure.



of these busy areas in slightly deeper water and set my Reel Weeds. The hordes of anglers push fish out of busy holes to linger over nearby featureless water—except it's no longer featureless. I've added my own cover and am quietly catching more fish.

One setting where Reel Weeds work well is for perch that roam in deep open basins in midwinter. Instead of spending time locating and then trying to follow them, I set up in a likely location and give them a reason to linger. In an otherwise unremarkable environment, some underwater cover usually attracts and holds fish. And once I work over one group, another usually gathers before too long.

This system is effective on flats full of downed weeds, too. Fish use these areas in late fall and early winter, passing through them especially in low-light periods, and will continue to do so if I sweeten the area a bit. By setting up on points or inside turns where vegetation meets the basin substrate, I create my own spot-on-the-spot, providing them with a reason to congregate. The use of an underwater camera to evaluate how the fish are responding helps me determine if adjustments are needed.

How you set up Reel Weeds can be as simple or as complex as you wish. A typical setup for me is 5 or 6 Structure On A Strings below the sled portion (back) of my Fish Trap, in a tight pattern with 3 or 4 clustered along each side and perhaps a few in front of the shelter. If I'm using a camera, I use Camera Cable Structure, as well. This amounts to a miniature inside turn and serves to funnel fish to your baits. If several anglers are fishing together, you can create a fish maze, with your baits being the "cheese" along the corridors.

This concept also has open-water applications. Reel Weeds were used

in a Perch Habitat Spawning Project conducted by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks on a small lake in northeastern South Dakota devoid of suitable spawning habitat. The results look encouraging. This use holds potential as a cost-effective means to help fish reestablish in marginal bodies of water.

Reel Weeds have the potential to rank with the Vexilar and the Aqua-Vu in terms of useful accessories. After all, it wasn't so long ago that many die-hards scoffed at those using electronics on ice. However, fish won't magically appear where there are none, nor will they make up for presentation approaches on your

part that aren't appropriate. Reel Weeds are another valuable tool—part of our ongoing evolution to be the best-equipped and most astute anglers we can be.

Visit reelweeds.com for answers to frequently asked questions and to watch real-time videos of fish interacting with Reel Weeds. ■

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Typical Shelter Setup

