

We're Not Talking About Golf Clubs

Even the most introverted anglers can benefit from joining a fishing club. Fishing clubs are an excellent conduit for exchanging information, encouraging fellowship, and providing the opportunity to be a part of a cohesive group of like-minded individuals.

Unlike national organizations, which may have hundreds of thousands of members spread out over a large geographic area, clubs typically consist of less than 100 localized members. These smaller, more intimate clubs tend to provide anglers with a chance to be more actively involved.

While some clubs have annual dues and require a level of active participation, the expense and time commitment are usually minimal. Clubs are also a great mechanism for getting involved in activities that benefit natural resources within local communities. For example, numerous saltwater fishing clubs in South Carolina regularly work with the Department of Natural Resources to assist in habitat restoration, fish tagging studies, and other research projects related to saltwater gamefish. In addition, developing and maintaining partnerships with fishing clubs have proven to be an extremely efficient and effective way for SCDNR to disseminate information to the recreational angling community. Clubs also regularly offer the opportunity for SCDNR staff to speak at meetings on a variety of topics.

Anglers join clubs for a number of different reasons. Most anglers join fishing clubs as a way to enhance their skills. Clubs that hold tournaments throughout the year offer friendly competition and are a great starting point for those interested in pursuing tournament fishing at a higher level. Some clubs are more intense and competitive than others. I was once a member of a freshwater bass club that would change the location and format of each monthly tournament as a way to compel participants to be more versatile. To get members to fish together who might not otherwise, we would have "draw" tournaments, where you were randomly paired with another angler. Other tournaments would be designed to develop tournament skills. A tournament that lasted 24 hours straight would test your ability to overcome a number of challenges including both physical and mental fatigue as well as having to adapt to fishing in the dark.

If you don't have a boat and are thinking about buying one, a fishing club can be a great resource. Club members with boats are almost always willing to "buddy up" with non-boaters as a way to share expenses. If you are trying to decide on which type of boat to purchase, being in a club can be an efficient way to test drive a number of different boats before actually making the purchase.

Whether you are out to test your angling ability against others, learn new skills, or simply want to enjoy the camaraderie of other fishing enthusiasts, joining a club can foster friendships that create a lifetime of memories.