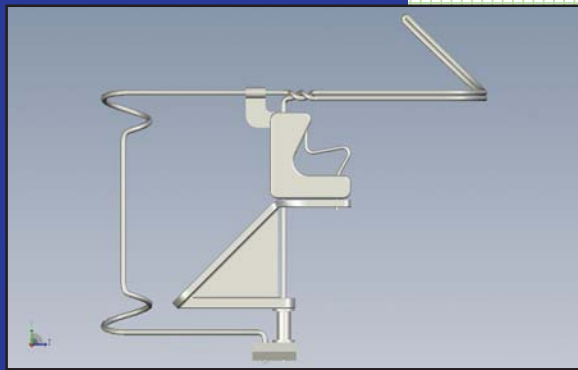




NRRI helps fishing buddies get invention to market

Northern Lights Technology Center makes CAD drawing and prototype



“Fish on!”
“Fish off!”

To catch fish, anglers want to minimize the “off” which means setting the hook and keeping the line tight. This is especially challenging when trolling on deep lakes with a downrigger or a planer board because once a fish strikes there’s a lot of extra line to reel in. Given enough lag line and time, a fish will do its best to shake off the hook.

John Ehlers and Randy Lasky got tired of losing fish because of lag on their lines. So, with the help of NRRI's rapid prototype center, they invented a solution they call the Strike Saver.

"The first thing you learn when you start fishing is 'keep your line tight,'" said Ehlers. "That's what this will do. It sets your hook and keeps your line tight."

First, they came up with a Strike Saver release system for the planer board—a system that allows multiple lines to be fished off the boat at one time. Their patent-pending "hook" release system keeps the line tight on the fish while moving the release and line toward the boat. It worked so well that another system was developed for downrigger fishing. It's a bit more complicated, but does exactly what it's designed to do—set the hook and keep the line tight.

A downrigger is a heavy cable attached to the boat on one end with a 10-pound "cannonball" weight on the other end. The angler's fishing line is attached to the cable with a release, then lowered to a desired depth and trolled along by the boat. When the fish bites, the line is released and angler reels in the fish. The Strike Saver release system moves the fishing line down the downrigger cable with a unique diving and re-surfacing plate. When the fish takes the hook the plate rotates and the current carries it back up the cable to the water surface waiting to be reattached and lowered again. One of the best features is that the heavy cannonball doesn't have to be raised and lowered after a strike.

Ehlers asked Lasky to join him in building a business around the Strike Saver and handle the "business end of things," said Ehlers. "It's been a lot of headaches getting this thing going. It's really eaten into my fishing time!"

But going it is. Their Strike Saver products—the planer board release and the downrigger release—are now on the shelves at Marine General in Duluth and sales are brisk.

"Everyone I show this to buys one," said store owner Russ Francisco. "They tell me it works exactly like they're told it will. It's amazing!"

Ehlers and Lasky credit NRRI's prototype lab director Steve Kossett with helping them make a CAD drawing of their concept and making the first couple of prototypes. Once they had a successful design, Kossett directed the men to Five Star Plastics in Eau Claire, Wisc., to make the mold for their product.

"We both have full-time jobs and developing, making and marketing this product has been very time consuming," said Lasky. "We were grateful for the help we got from NRRI to help us get our idea to market."

Ehlers works at UMD as Facilities Plumbing Supervisor and Lasky is president of Northspan Group, Inc.

Information about NRRI's Northern Lights Technology Center at www.northernlightsrp.com or Strike Saver can be found at www.strikesaver.com.

Lasky and Ehlers with store owner Russ Francisco

