

# Scouting can be done without harassing fish, anglers, some say



**SCOUTING OR BURNING?** Looking for redfish in practice by motoring through bays is important to tournament redfish anglers, but fly anglers and kayakers in the marsh have complained that some have taken the method too far, disrupting their fishing. Tournament trails have instituted rules to prohibit the practice of “burning the flats.”

## ‘Burning the flats’ spooks fish in marsh

By Craig Nyhus

LONE STAR OUTDOOR NEWS

Scouting practices of some anglers leading up to redfish tournaments have riled local shallow-water anglers in the past, especially kayakers and fly-fishermen wading, poling or drifting a flat for reds.

The technique, called by critics “burning the flats,” involved making quick laps around a marsh pond with the boat’s big engine, scattering the resident fish.

Critics complain that the practice effectively shuts down fishing for those using the marsh, and the running boats may damage underwater vegetation and scar the marsh bottom.

Tournament trails are taking steps to reduce the practice. The Texas Saltwater Series designates 14 days before each tournament as official practice days and institutes penalties, including disqualification.

The series’ rules prohibit harassing redfish, burning shorelines, pushing redfish schools and extensive running in bodies of water, under power, with the intent of locating redfish.

The Redfish Cup defines “burning” as intentionally running a boat on plane with the purpose of locating fish, moving fish, harassing fish or wildlife, or destruction of habitat. The practice is prohibited within 100 yards of any boat (competitor or non-competitor) or shoreline.

Not all tournament anglers agree with all of the changes.

“There were a few guys that did things they shouldn’t,” said Redfish Cup angler Robert Scherer. “People complained, and it took off from there.”

Scherer said the scouting practice is an effective way to eliminate a lot of water in practice, and can be done without harassing the fish or other anglers.

“You can fish maybe a square mile in a day of practice,” he said. “By scouting you can check 10 square miles. The biggest problem is they never should have called it ‘burning’; it should just be called ‘scouting.’”

Some of the complaints have come from other tournament anglers.

“They don’t have a tower boat, and the tower boats have an advantage,” Scherer said. “Keeping your boat 100 yards from all other boats is a good idea. Keeping 100 yards from the shoreline is a bad idea — that will probably need to change.”