

'Fish for Each Other' program launched to help outdoor businesses

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

While the COVID-19 pandemic has hit everyone hard over the past several weeks, some of those who've been hit the hardest have been local bait and tackle shops, as well as local fishing guides and outfitters.

Following South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster's "home or work" order, many bait shops have chosen to close even though they may be allowed to stay open under the "essential business" definition. The same goes for fishing guides.

Further clarifications from an earlier executive order permitted fishing guides to use public access and/or remain in operation so long as their charter party number remained at two people from the same household and that those people maintained the 6-foot social distance rule from the guide.

Despite the ability to remain operational, many guides, outfitters and outdoors-related businesses have reported up to a 90 percent decline in operations. It's a time like none other seen in a season when fishing is typically good, and these operations depend on spring fishing trips. This situation is not only taking place here in South Carolina, but across the country.

Earlier this week, in an effort to support the fishing industry, a Wisconsin-based public relations group put to-

S.C. EXECUTIVE ORDER 2020-21

CAN I STILL HUNT OR FISH UNDER THE STAY HOME OR WORK ORDER (EXECUTIVE ORDER 2020-21)?

Yes. The Home or Work order does not prohibit outdoor recreation. You may still engage in hunting and fishing activities throughout the state. This order maintains the requirement to maintain a safe distance of at least six feet between all individuals that do not reside together.

SINCE THE STAY HOME OR WORK ORDER ALLOWS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION, DOES THAT OPEN UP ANY OF THE PUBLIC WATER ACCESSSES?

No. This order does not make any changes to previous executive orders that have closed public boat ramps, public beach access, public piers, docks or wharfs or any facilities associated with them.

ARE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS STILL OPEN FOR TURKEY HUNTING?

Yes. The Home or Work order does not further close or limit access to WMAs. Those WMAs closed previously, remain closed. This includes Bald Rock Heritage Preserve and the Sassafras Mountain peak, beach access at Botany Bay and coastal islands used for beaching.

DOES THE HOME OR WORK ORDER AFFECT TURKEY SEASON DATES, LIMITS OR REGULATIONS?

No. The Home or Work order allows for outdoor recreation and does not alter the turkey season, limits or regulations.

DNR.SC.GOV

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources recently clarified that the governor's "home or work" order still allows for continued outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing.

gether a program — Fish for Each Other — aimed at supporting captains, guides, bait shops and other small businesses that are looking for alternative ways to generate income.

The program — which can be found at fishforeachother.com — is the brainchild of active lifestyle marketing agency Gunpowder, which counts a number

of the top outdoors and fishing brands among its clients.

"Our culture, and our livelihood, is rooted in the outdoors and fishing industry," Gunpowder founder Ryan Chuckel said. "They're our clients, our friends and our family. We created Fish for Each Other to provide a centralized location for people, like us, to find ways to help our fishing

brothers and sisters. So many folks are already doing amazing things to support the industry we love. This is simply our way of connecting the dots between those doing good and those who want to help.

"While the future is uncertain, there's no doubt in our minds that, with all of our help, the fishing community will bounce back, stronger and more unified than ever."

The group is seeking out local, independent bait shops, fishing guides and outfitters to register on the site for the purpose of networking to find alternate income solutions.

The organizers behind the site are also asking people in the fishing industry to bring forward other support efforts, funds, news or interesting ideas, which can be submitted directly on the site.

IN OTHER NEWS

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources recently released a publication to help clarify what hunting and fishing activities and locations remain available during the governor's "home or work" order.

While engaging in any outdoor recreation, remember that you must maintain a safe distance of at least 6 feet from all people who don't live with you.

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of a forthcoming podcast radio program "The Outdoors Show with Phillip Gentry & Boat Girl." More information on the show can be found on its Facebook page.

COURTESY OF SCDNR