

in the boat's onboard livewell. Bass are then transferred to the vehicle's livewell with more fish added as stops are made elsewhere. The anglers return to a common weigh-in site before the fish are released into the lake.

As the club gained notoriety for its novel approach to tournament angling, so did skepticism about how the "running" rule violated a state law prohibiting transportation of live gamefish on land from lake to lake. The rumor mill reached the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). The state agency charged with enforcing game and fish laws cornered Caro and his club just two weeks before its Clear Lake State Classic, a two-decade-old event.

"After the DFG heard about our rich history and how passionate we are about fish care, the decision was made to give our club special conditions, specifically for our Clear Lake events," said Caro of the unique permit.

"For our club to receive this special permit to transport live gamefish is a huge accomplishment for this little-but-growing club," he continued. "This will help us grow and educate more people at the entry level of tournament bass fishing."

*Federation Happenings contributors this month were John Neporadny, Tom Meade and Craig Lamb. Please send news of your club or chapter to [bass.times@bassmaster.com](mailto:bass.times@bassmaster.com), or mail to BASS Times, Attn.: Tyler Reed, P.O. Box 10000, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830.*

### ► SPECIAL PERMIT

SONOMA, Calif. — While tournament bass boaters launch their rigs and speed away from the ramp to faraway spots, the 40-plus members of the Sonoma County Belly Boat Bass Club face different challenges when they launch their foot-powered float tubes on massive Clear Lake.

"We can't put in at the same spot and 'blast off' like the boat guys," noted Rich Caro, president and founder of the 23-year-old club in northern California's scenic wine country. "If we launched from the same area, it would create a domino effect with tubers in front of and behind each other paddling to the next spot."

To avoid a belly boat traffic jam on Clear Lake, club members are allowed to "run" by driving in their vehicles and car-top boats to given areas around the lake. The "run" club rule defined by Caro lets contestants transport keeper bass in a DC-powered portable aerated livewell mounted in the vehicle. Contestants launch their belly boat, go fishing and hold keepers



**Belly Boaters can hold their fish in a vehicle-mounted livewell, thanks to California authorities.**

Photo courtesy of Sonoma County Belly Boat Bass Club