

# **Small Boat Planer Boards for the Chesapeake**

## *All Planer Boards are not Equal*

Capt Frank Tuma -Down Time Charters

<http://www.downtimecharters.com/>

Anglers with small boats have not been able to compete with larger vessels pulling **PLANER BOARDS**. **Things Have Changed.**

Over the last 5 years Planer boards have emerged as one of the foremost components for catching fish in the Chesapeake Bay. When used properly, they have many advantages. Most anglers perceive them to be cumbersome and only workable on larger boats. This theory is no longer true.

### **Rigging Planer Boards.**

Setup properly, Planer Boards are can easy to use and very effective, especially for Trophy Stripers that enter the Bay during their Spring Migration.

The design of Boards can vary.

Boards are designed to run as close to parallel to the boat when trolling. In the Bay our trolling speed is generally 2 -3 knots. The further back behind the boat, the less effective they are. The higher the speed the more pull they will have.

Size of the board makes a big difference. 2 board or 3 board models, 6 " , 10" 12" Board depth all cause the boards to run deeper in the water, causing more resistance that maintains the tension on the Board retainer liner.

### **Attaching to Boat**

Boards should be rigged to be attached to the boat at the highest point. Boats with T-Tops or hard tops have an advantage. The Board line will have a bow and may drag the water when out any distance. .

Without a t-top there are planer board poles that serve to raise the level of the board attachment

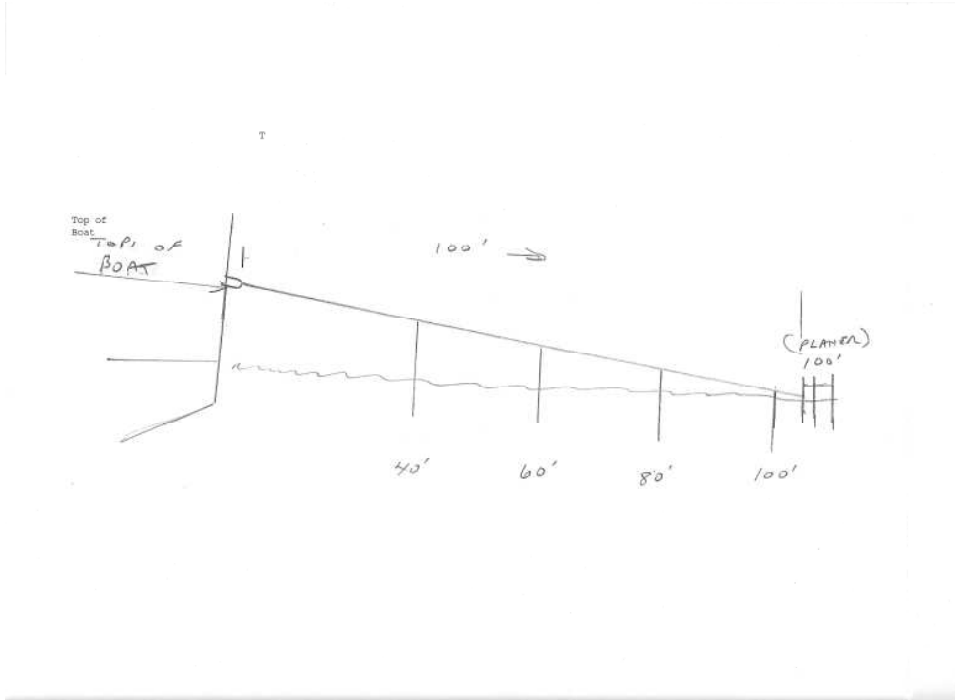
Generally you want the boards to run safely at 75 to 125 feet from the boat and be able to troll 2 to 4 lines.

### **Trolling with Boards**

Boards are used to target fish that are in the top 25 ft of the water column. They are not designed for running deep lines. Generally trolling in the Bay consists of using Umbrella rigs with Parachutes. Bucktail rigs and double rigged rubber lures, Tsunami's, Storms etc.

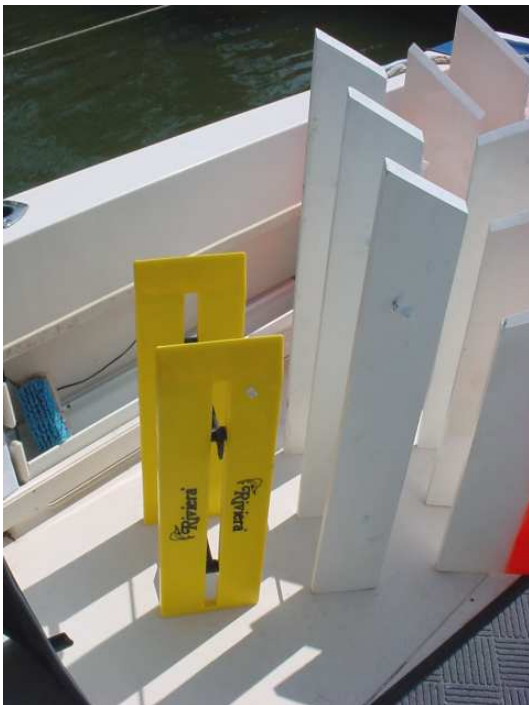
Spoons can be used on Boards, but due to to lures design, tangles may occur.

When attached to the Boards, my trolling rigs are about 20 feet apart and start at about 50 feet from the boat.



### GETTING STARTED

**ALL PLANER BOARDS are not created equal.** Recently I tested and compared several popular models particularly designed for ease of use and small boats. All were effective and had their unique advantages and disadvantages.



Recently took the time to try and compare several planer boards sold or made in the Chesapeake area.

With the popularity of Planer Boards now being used for trolling in the Chesapeake I thought I would try several models and see the differences.

I tested & used three types

- 1) Production 6 inch 2 board set from Riviera
- 2) 6 inch custom 3 board set
- 3) 10 inch 3 board custom set I made from a model we have used for 5 years

I tested all models trolling at 2.5 – 3 knots in a slight chop.

**Production Model from Riviera:**



These boards retail around \$60- \$70 each. They are very light and made with plastic over foam. 2 Board model They are made to fold up for storage – a plus



Setting out in a light chop these boards started to show instability and why these would have a problem in heavy chop

At 100ft – the boards run way back without anything rigged to the line



Started rigging with 1 umbrella and boards started pulling back further



With 1 umbrella @  
100feet, the boards start  
to pitch and pull and were  
close to flipping.



It is good that they fold and stow away .  
That can be where they will stay!

### Custom built 6 inch 3 board set

These were light and easy to carry. They did stack nice vertically. Small eye bolt looked like it would come lose at any time.





Running and setting slow, the boards ran way back and low in water  
At 60-75 feet out almost sunk and way back



Found that if I sped up to about 3 knots, boards started to work better

Setting out 1 Umbrella, caused the boards to sink further and run back.



In slight chop at 100ft – with 1 umbrella the board starts to disappear.



These boards were hard to pull in unless I came to a stop in the water.  
This was probably because they were so far down in the water.  
These may be ok for small 1 or 2 rigs and maybe only 50 to 75 feet out

**Custom 10 inch – 3 boards used by Down Time Charters**



Setting out boards at 100 ft, boards are at a good angle - horizontal to the boat.





Board set out with 1 umbrella in slight chop shows good angle and no tendency to flip.  
I run up to 4 Umbrellas on this setup



### Tips and Tricks

I use a reel to hold planer board line when not in use. Old open face reels work good to store line and keep from getting tangled when retrieving line.

I use 150 foot on each side with boards running out to about 100-125 foot with bow in line. Planer line MUST run to top or highest point on boat and out to Planer



Connecting reel line to running line is easy with a Scotty Clip setup.



**Chesapeake Bay Planer Boards**  
**Written by Capt Frank Tuma Down Time Charters**  
**Plans provided by Skip Zinc and Walt Miller**



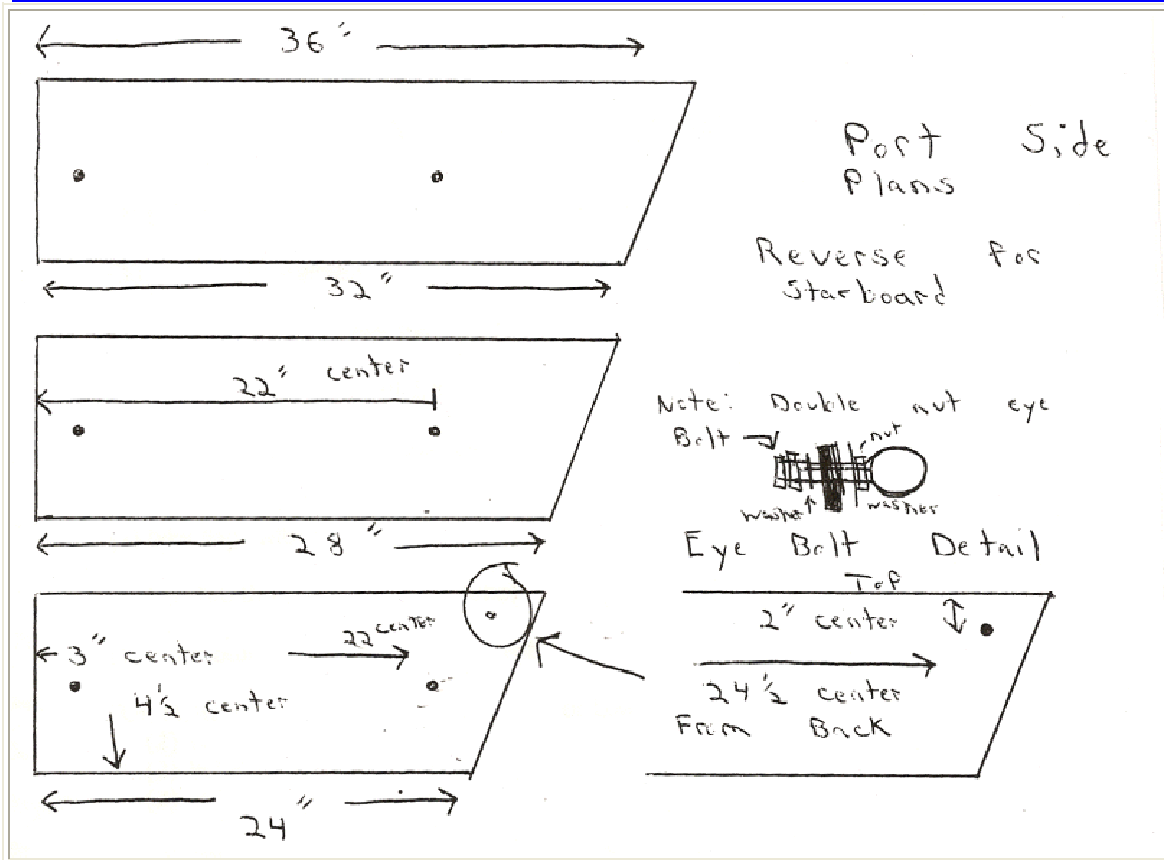
Planer boards used in the Chesapeake need to provide a carrying capacity of 3 to 5 lures pulling substantial weight including large umbrella rigs.

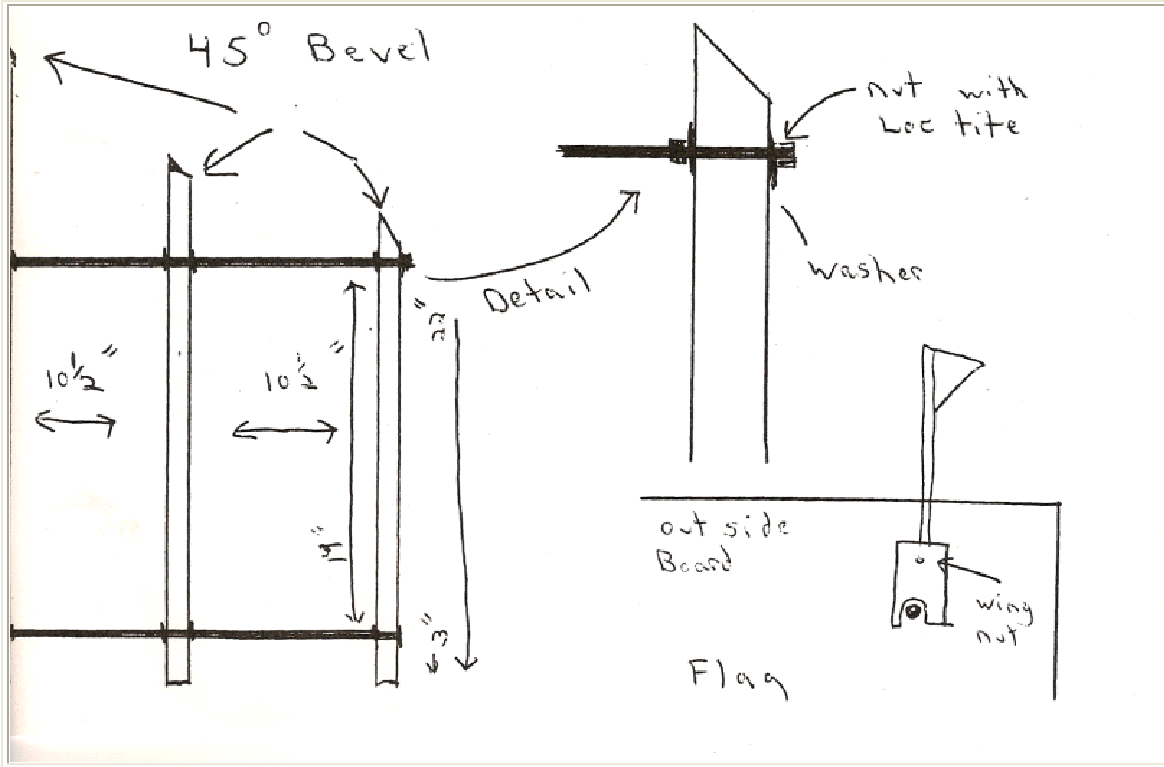
These plans and ideas are meant only as a reference. Each set I have made seem to have its own quirks and dimensions. Have fun and enjoy.

# Plans for 3 Board Planner – Rough Draft below

Detailed plans available at this link

[http://www.downtimecharters.com/Ideas/Planer\\_boards/planner\\_boards-plans2010.pdf](http://www.downtimecharters.com/Ideas/Planer_boards/planner_boards-plans2010.pdf)





## **MATERIAL LIST FOR ONE SET**

(2) 8 foot 1" x 10" #1 Pine - no big knots, try to find straight boards

(30) 3/8" x 16" stainless steel nuts (to fit all-thread rods)

(28) 3/8" x 1 W' stainless steel fender washers (to fit all-thread rods)

(2) eye bolts stainless steel 3/8" - 2 W' - 3" long

(4) 2' long 3/8" x 16" stainless steel all thread (may have to purchase (2) 6' pieces) or

**Alternative: Use pre-cut 3/8" x 24" "All Thread" from Home Depot or local Hardware stores – easier and cheaper than stainless.**

(2) bike flags with bracket or US Flags

(1) Lok Tite thread sealer (small tube)

(1) quart orange paint - oil base is best

**Alternative: paint with white house paint and spray paint with Florescent red**

FOR FLAG - buy separate at Home Depot or Lowes's (2) 1/4" x 1 W' stainless steel bolt

(2) W' stainless steel wing nut

(2) W' stainless steel washer

*NOTE: stainless steel hardware available in lots of qty (100) at Leonard Jed Company 1301 Covington Street, Baltimore, MD 410-685-1482. By purchasing in this large quantity the cost is approximately one third the price at a home discount center or marine store.*

**Alternative: Use galvanized Bolts, nuts and washers - will last 5 to 10 years at half the price and easy to get at any hardware store!**