



US 20130318855A1

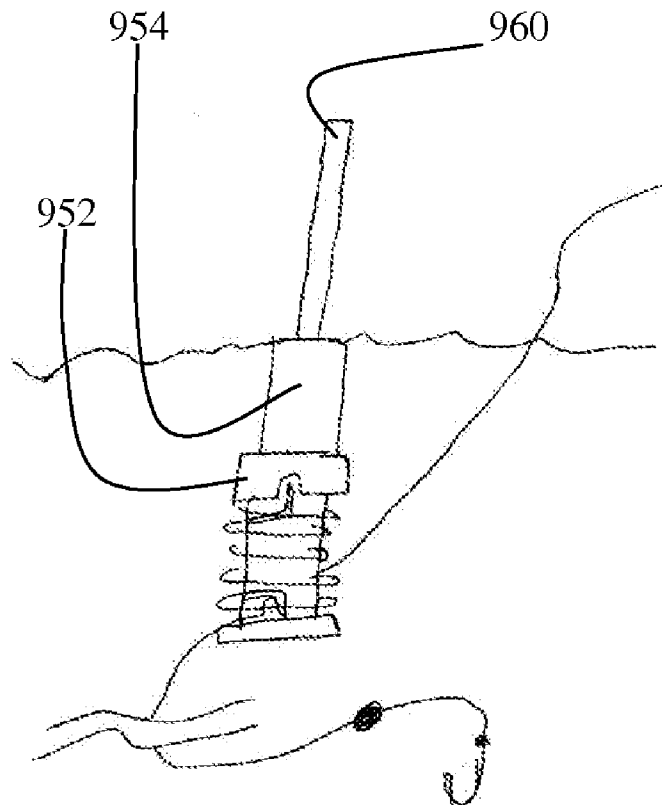
(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Bennis(10) **Pub. No.: US 2013/0318855 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 5, 2013**(54) **STEM GUIDES AND REPLACEABLE
CARTRIDGES****Publication Classification**(71) Applicant: **Gary Bennis**, Eau Claire, WI (US)(72) Inventor: **Gary Bennis**, Eau Claire, WI (US)(21) Appl. No.: **13/961,677**(22) Filed: **Aug. 7, 2013**(51) **Int. Cl.**
A01K 93/02 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **A01K 93/02** (2013.01)
USPC **43/17; 43/44.91; 43/17.5**(57) **ABSTRACT**

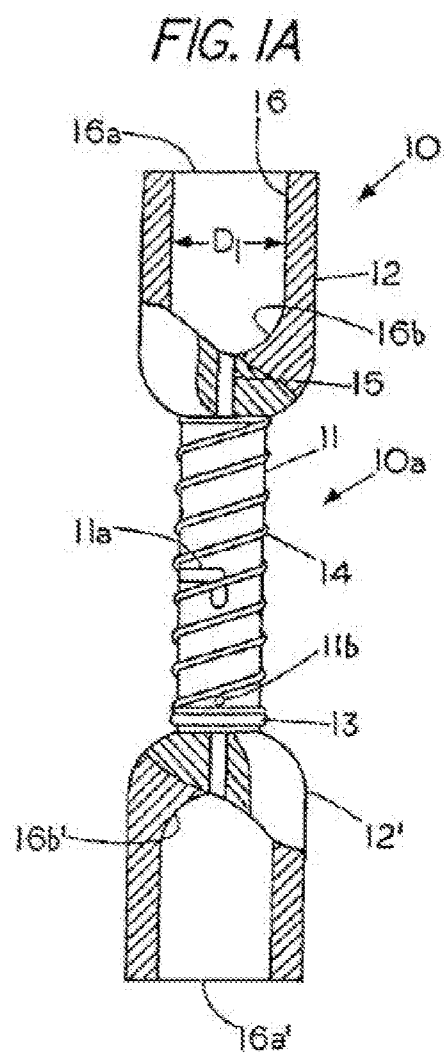
The invention relates to a method for adjusting the buoyancy of a fishing bobber. The method includes providing a buoyant member and a stem guide configured to receive the buoyant member, mounting the buoyant member to the stem guide and cutting the buoyant member. The buoyant member is made of a material capable of being severed by a cutting device and having first length, a lower end, and an upper end. The stem guide receives the buoyant member and a fishing line with fishing tackle. The buoyant member is cut such that the buoyant member has a second length shorter than the first length. The buoyant member is cut to a second length such that the buoyancy of the buoyant member when cut to a second length is enough to oppose the tendency of the stem guide and fishing tackle to submerge the buoyant member such that a top surface of the cut buoyant member is adjacent to the surface of the water when the stem guide, buoyant member, fishing line and any fishing tackle are placed in the water.

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 13/760,020, filed on Feb. 5, 2013, Continuation-in-part of application No. 12/970,929, filed on Dec. 16, 2010, Continuation-in-part of application No. 12/774,710, filed on May 5, 2010, now abandoned, Continuation-in-part of application No. 12/336,696, filed on Dec. 17, 2008, now Pat. No. 7,797,877, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 11/707,251, filed on Feb. 15, 2007, now abandoned.

(60) Provisional application No. 61/175,653, filed on May 5, 2009.





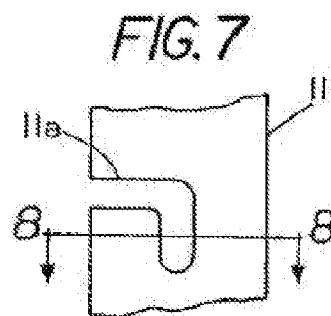
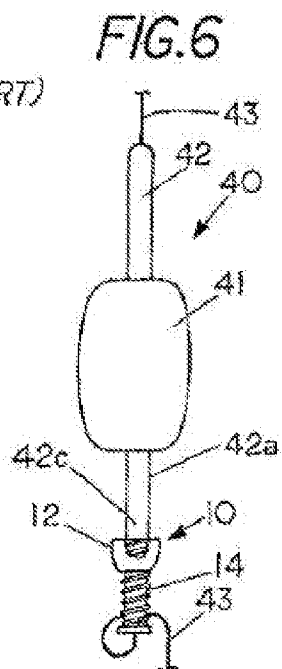
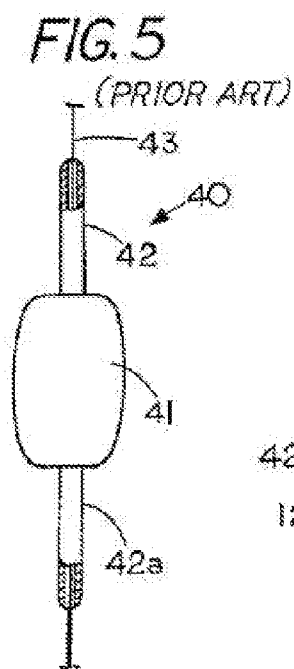
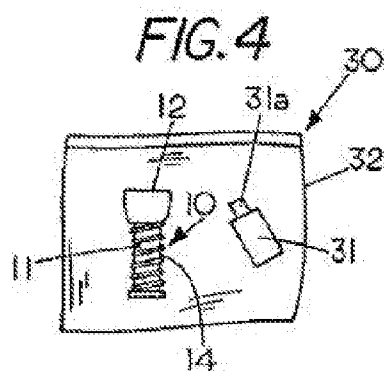
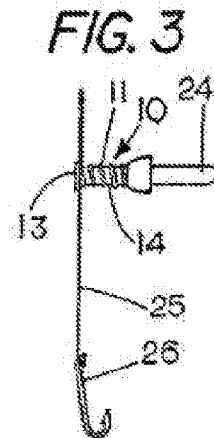
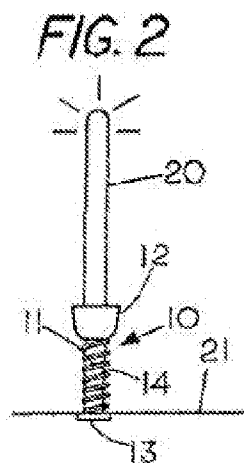
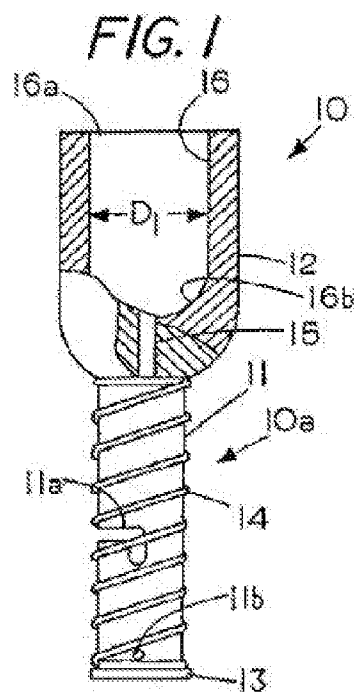


FIG. 8

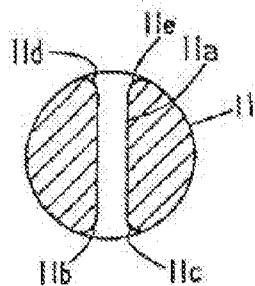


FIG. 9

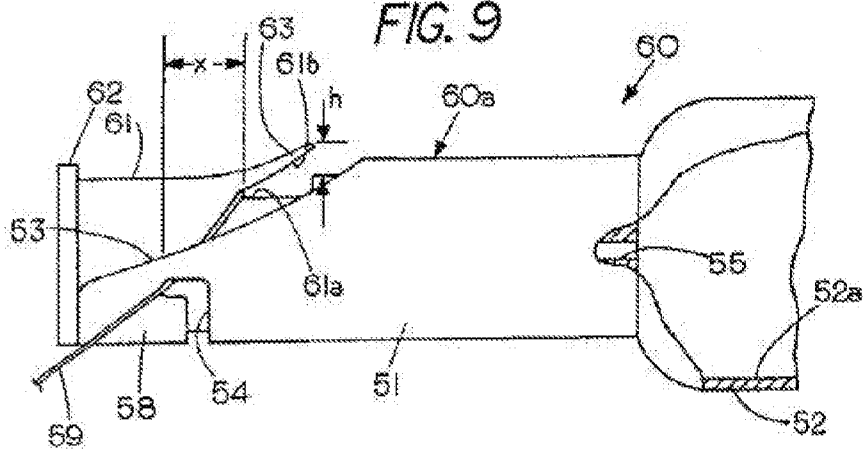
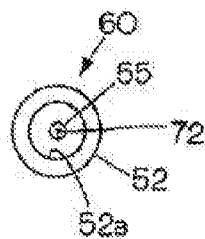
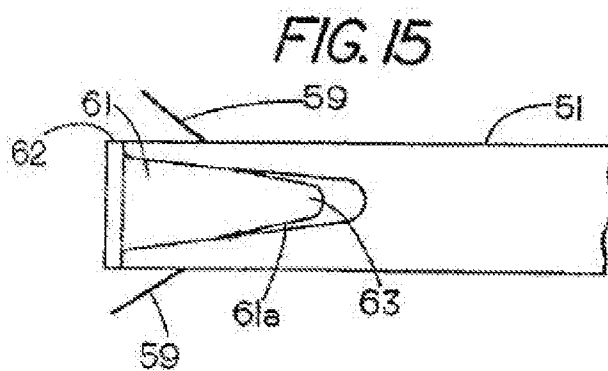
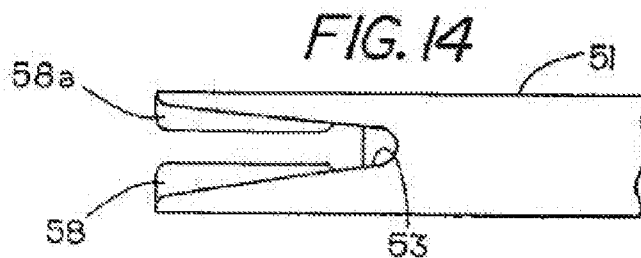
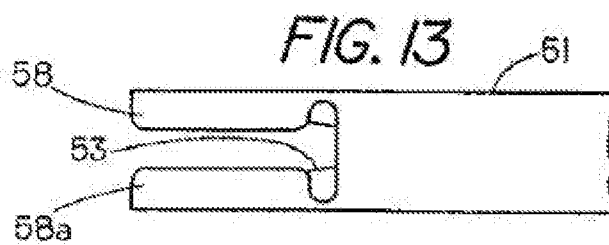
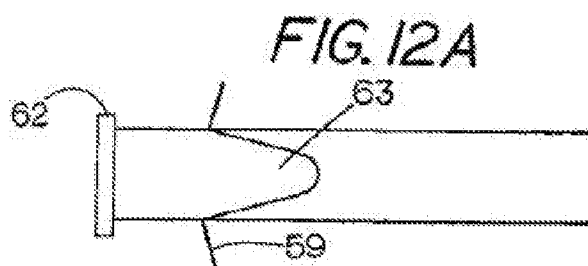
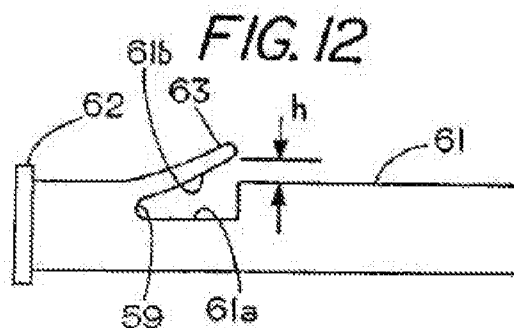
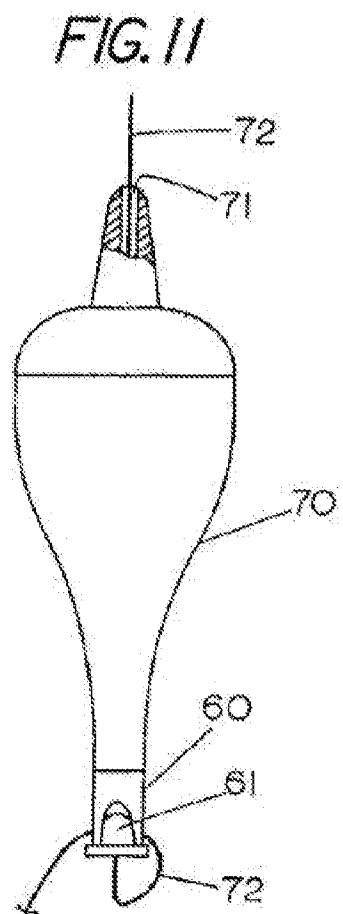


FIG. 10





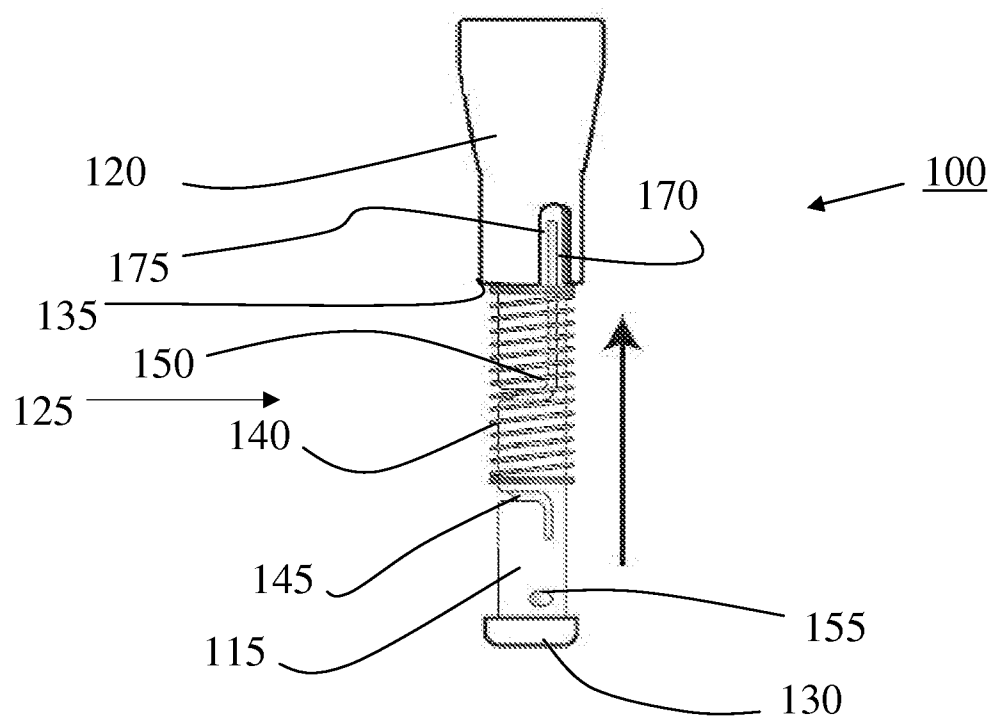


FIG. 16

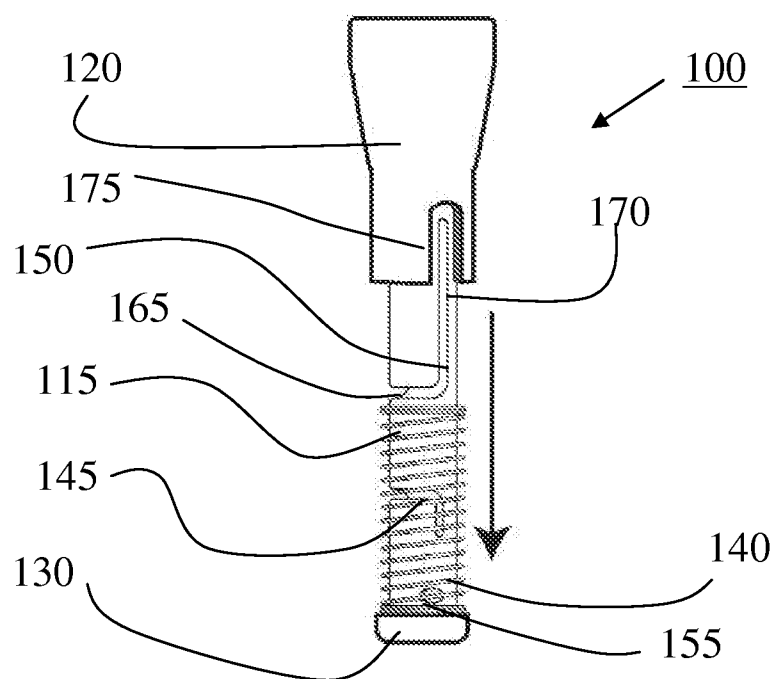


FIG. 17

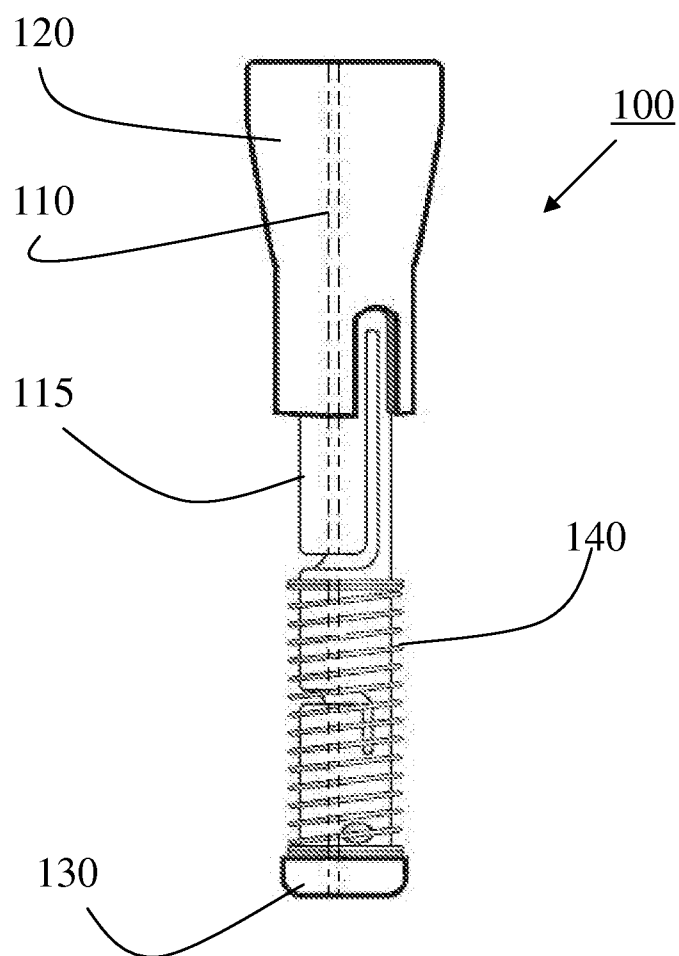


FIG. 18

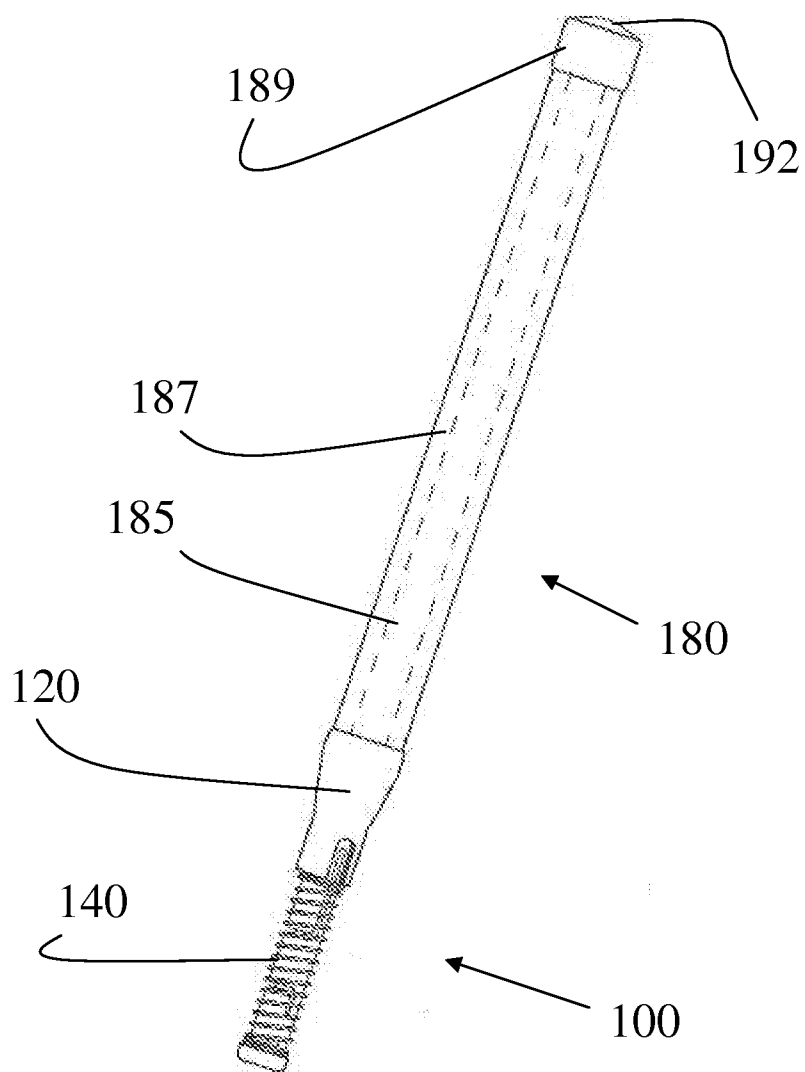


FIG. 19

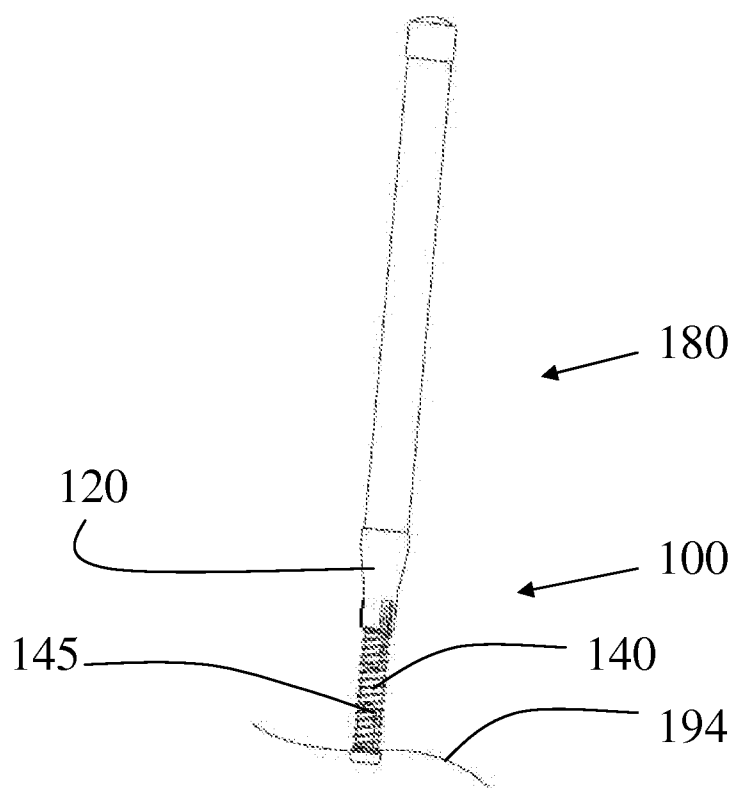


FIG. 20

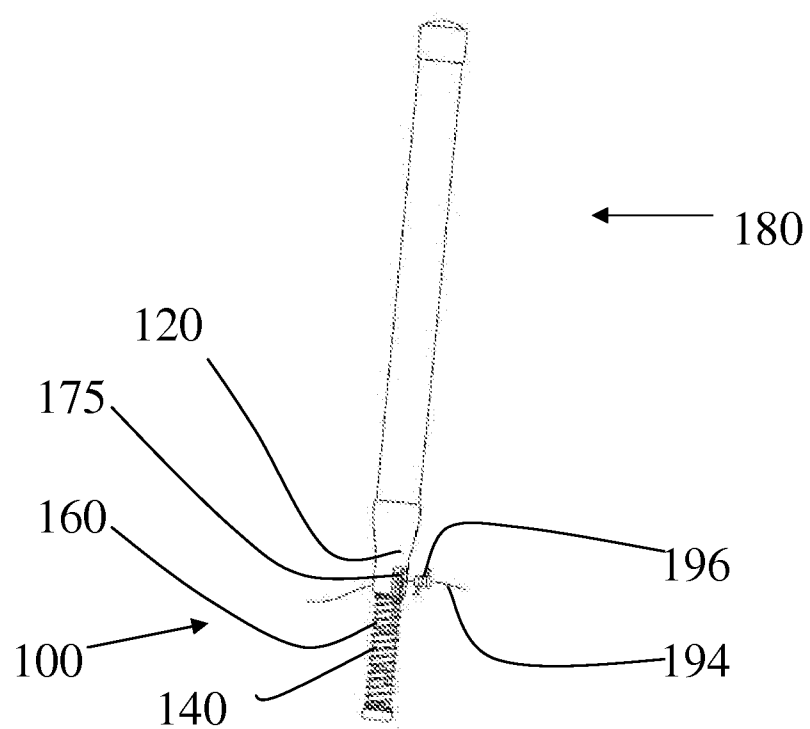


FIG. 21

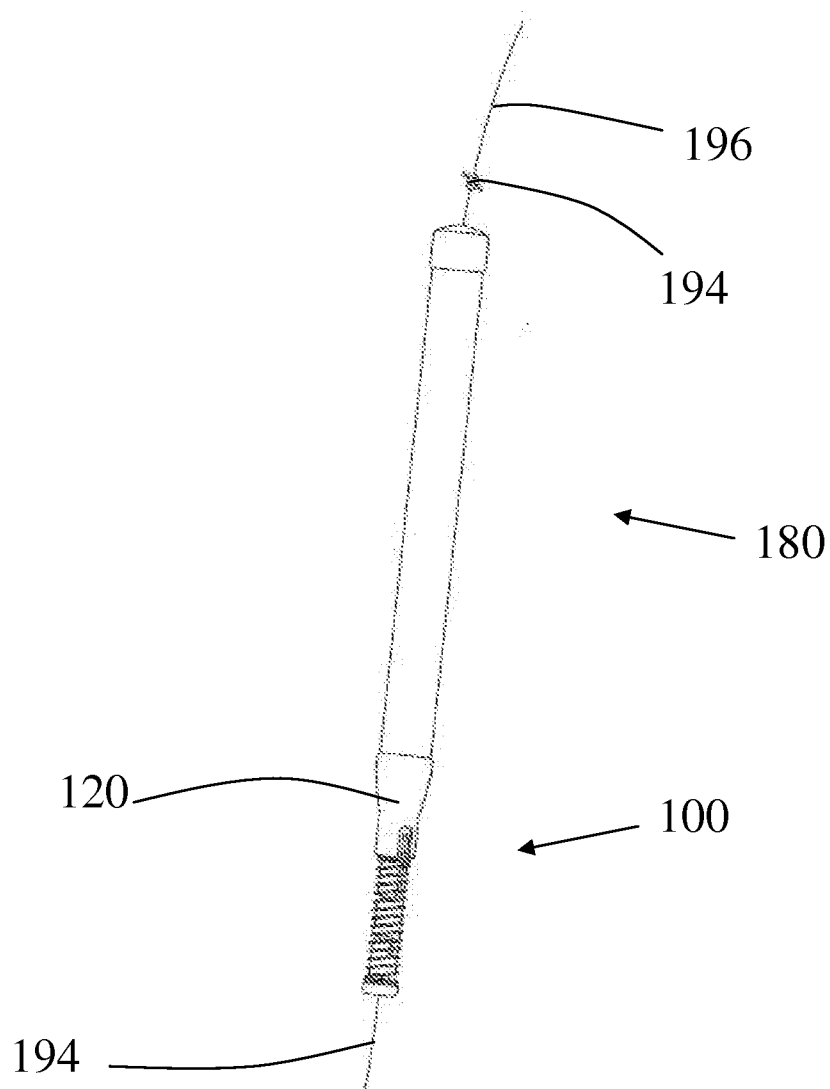


FIG. 22

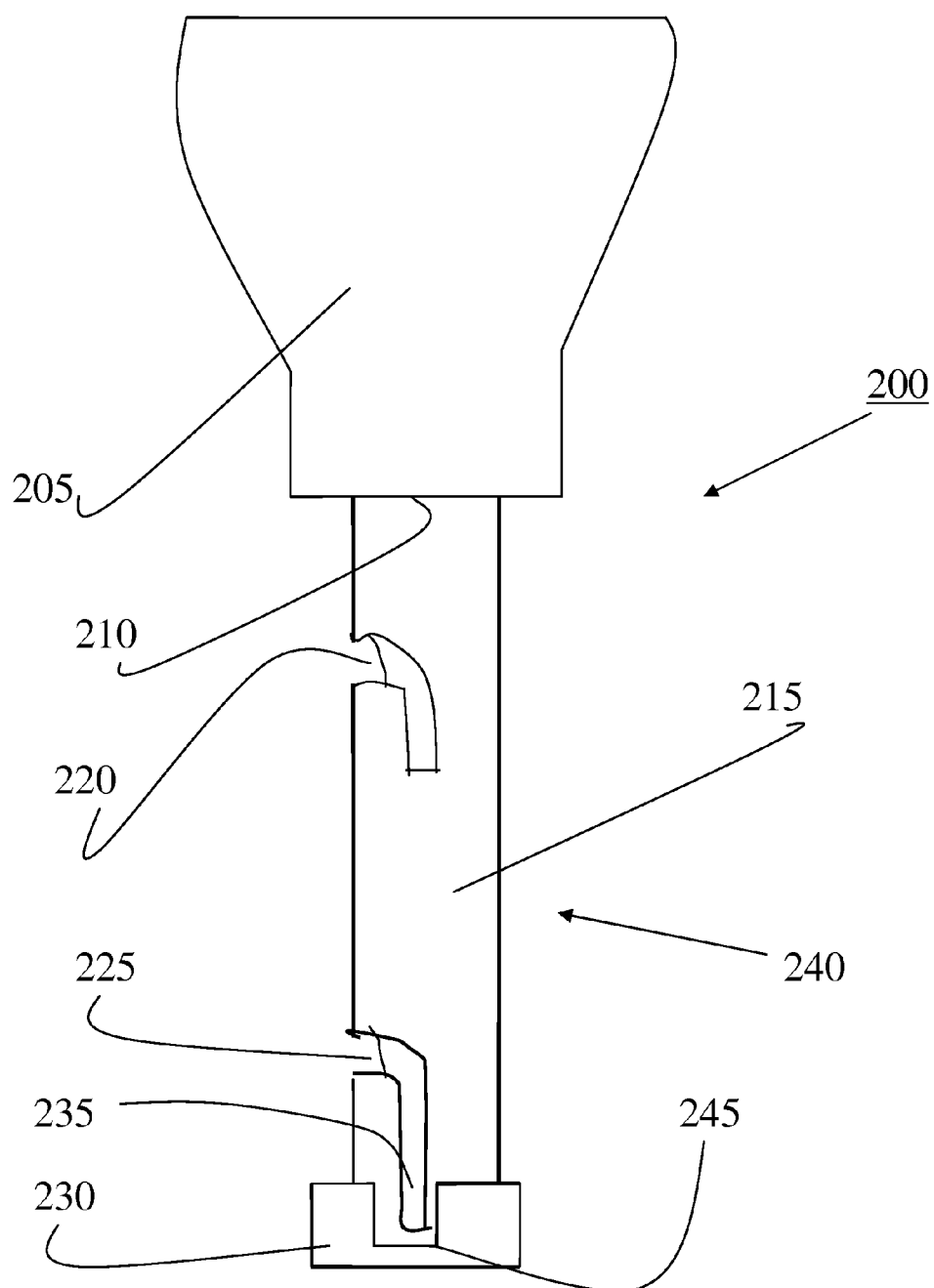


FIG. 23

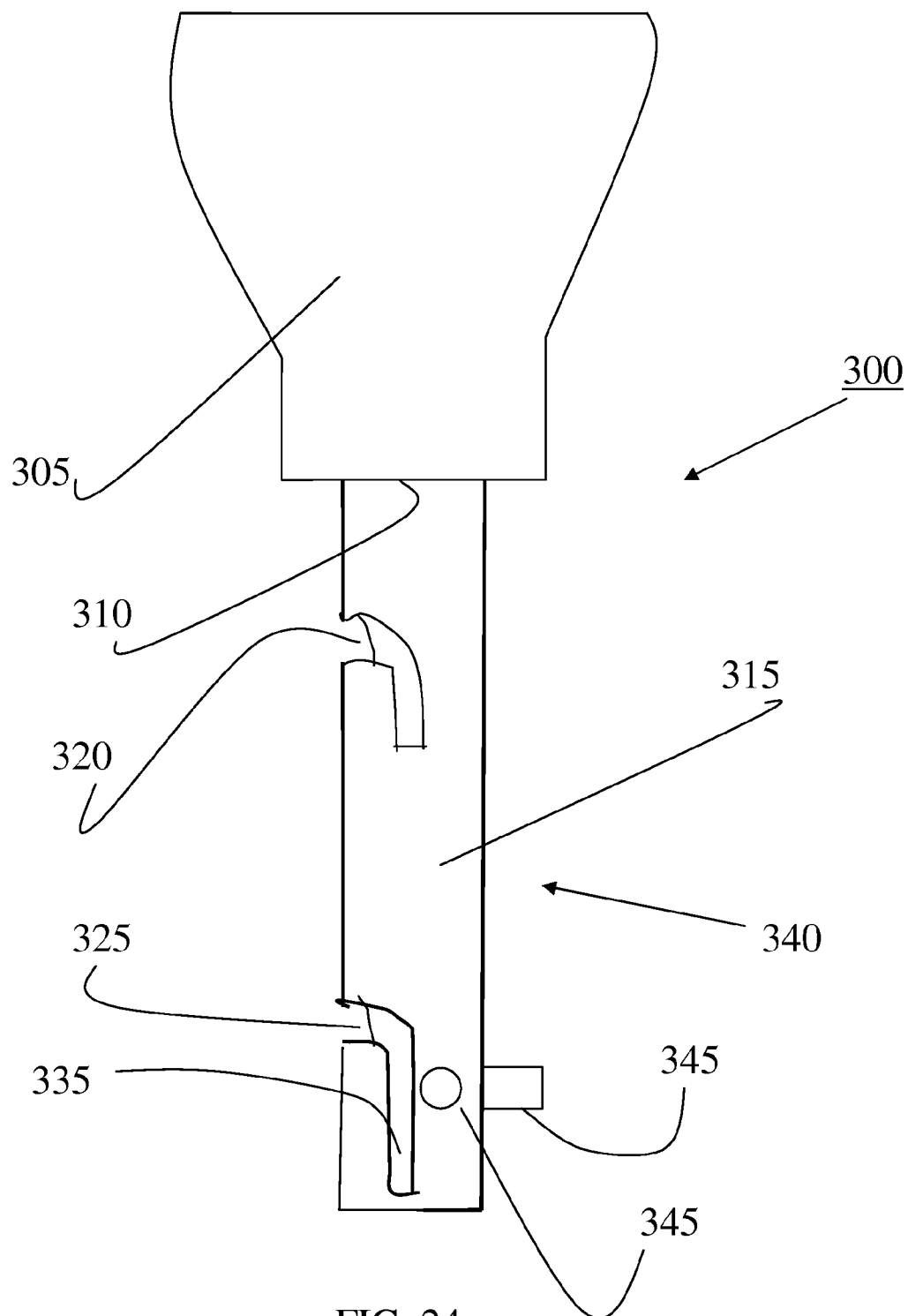


FIG. 24

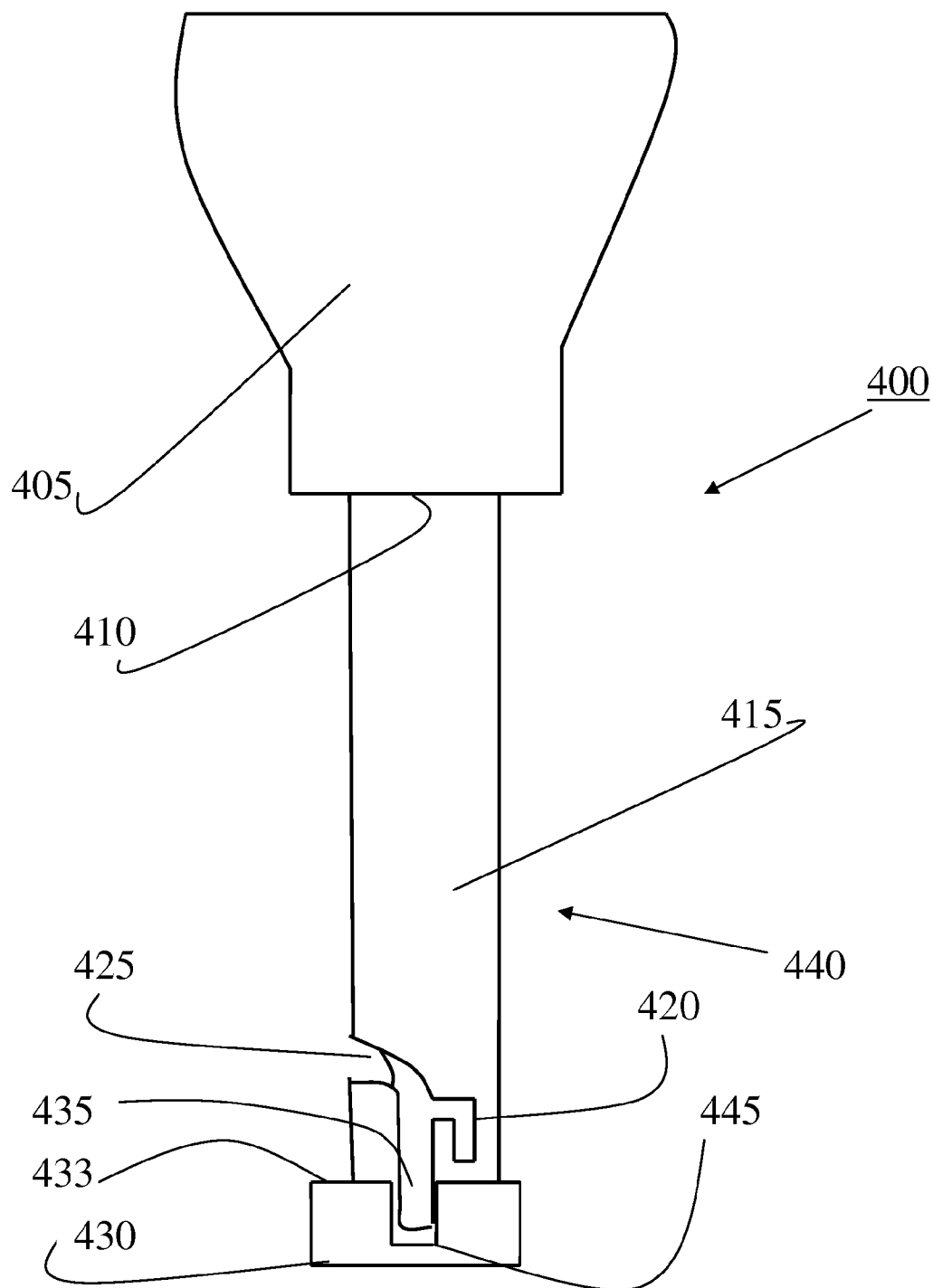


FIG. 25

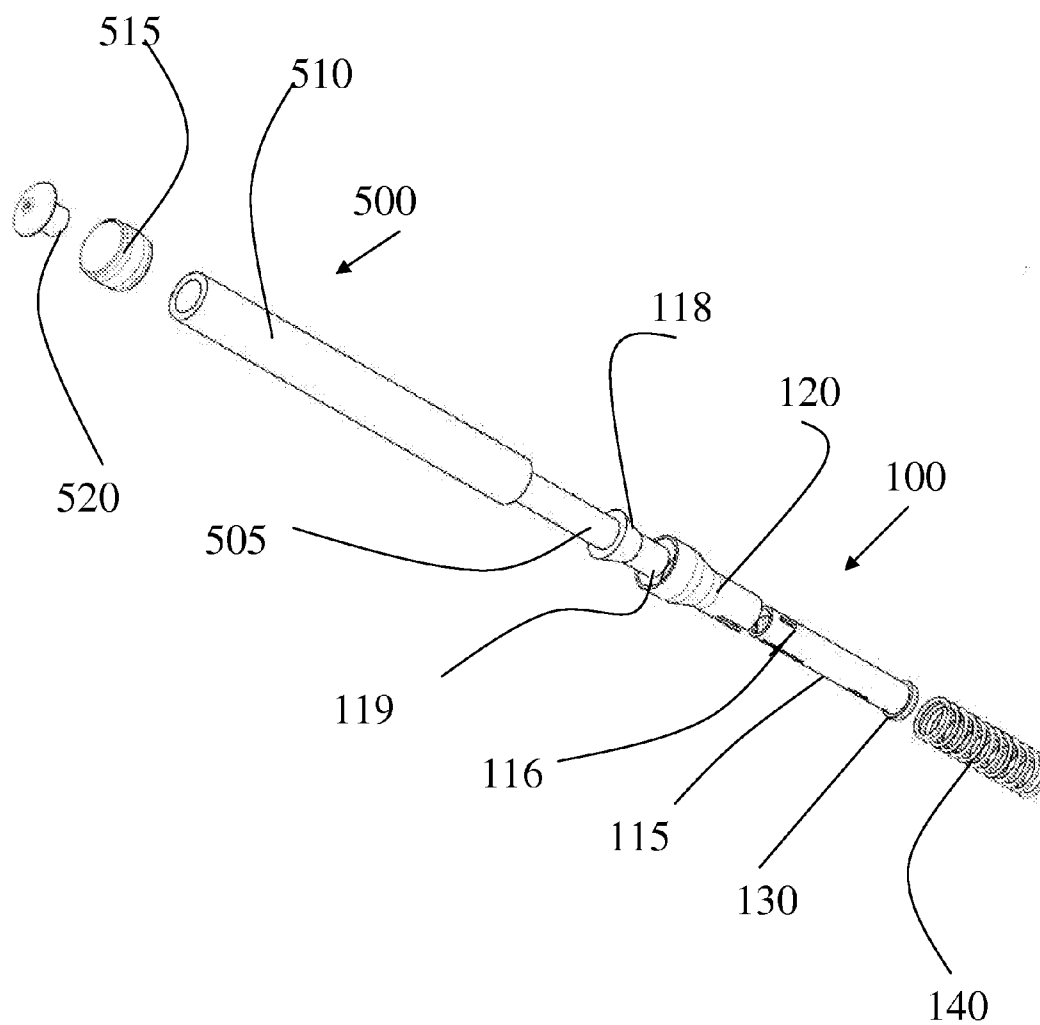


FIG. 26

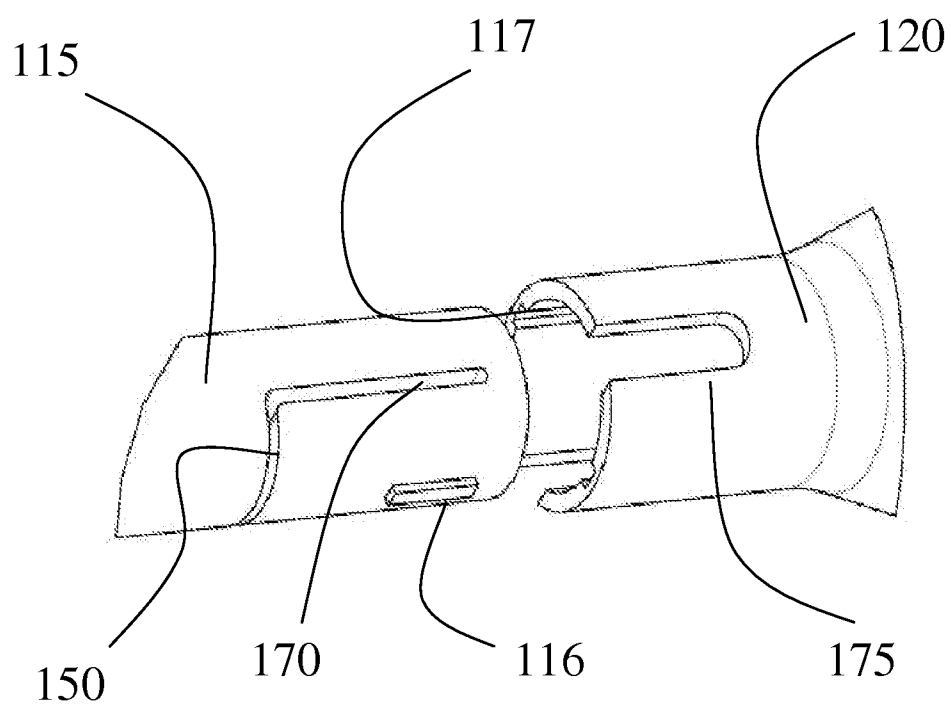


FIG. 27

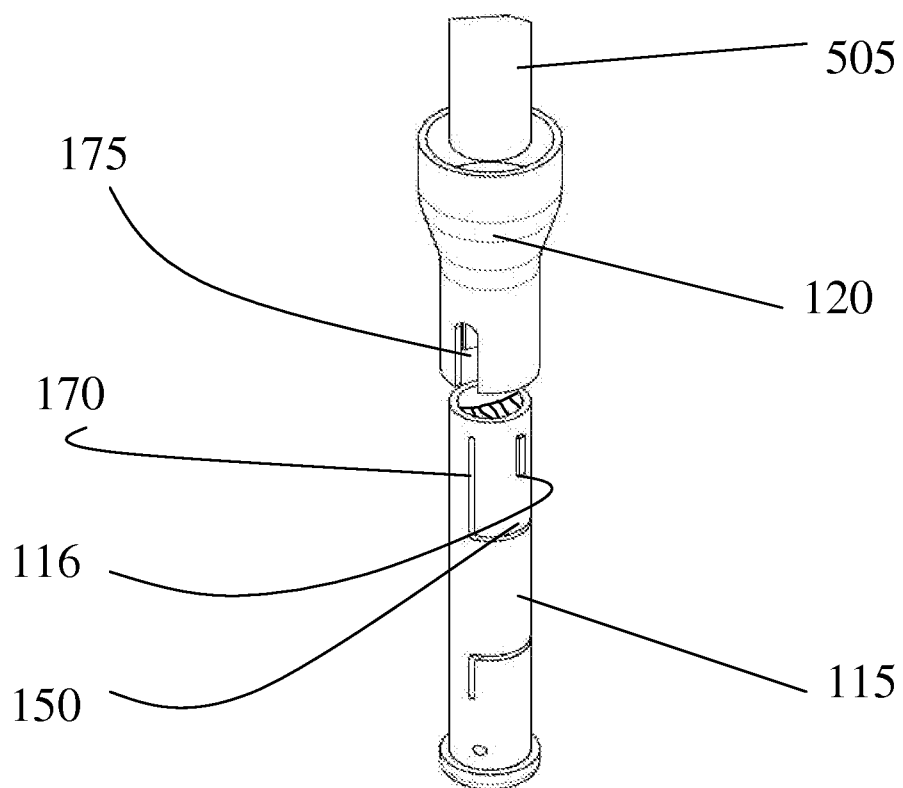


FIG. 28

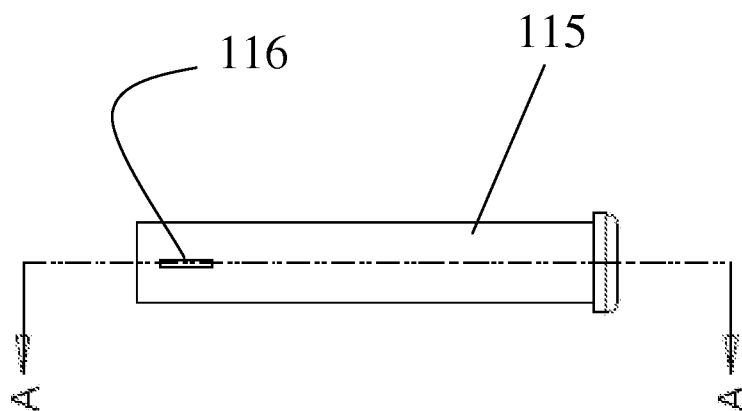


FIG. 29

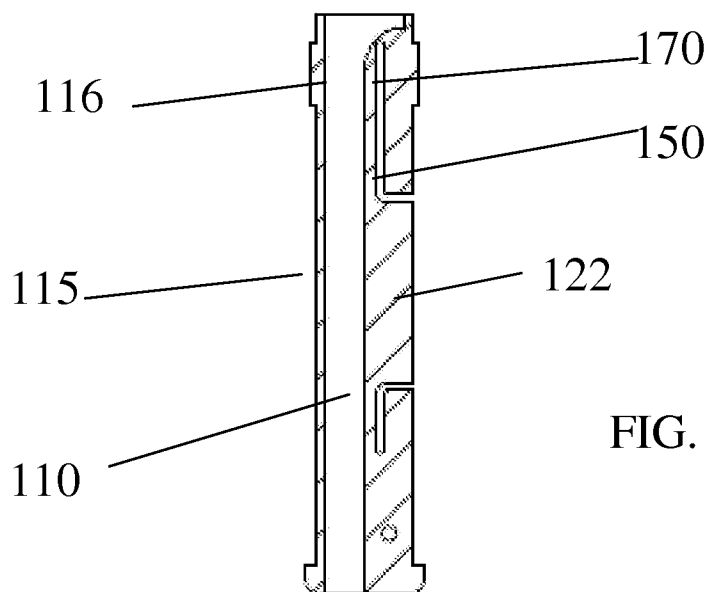


FIG. 30

SECTION A-A

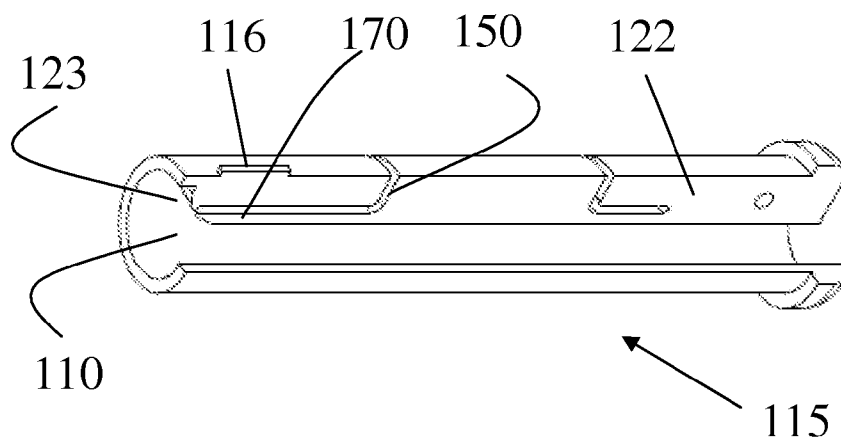


FIG. 31

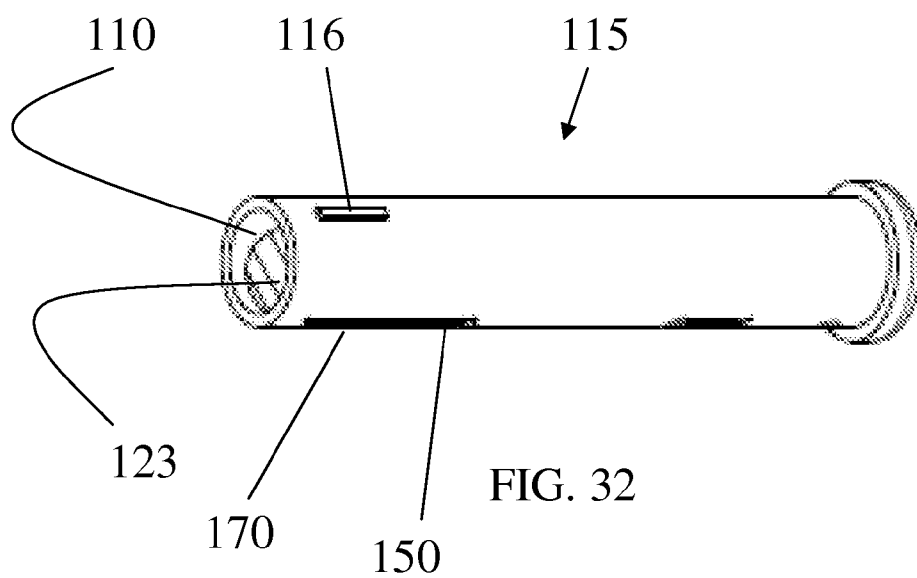


FIG. 32

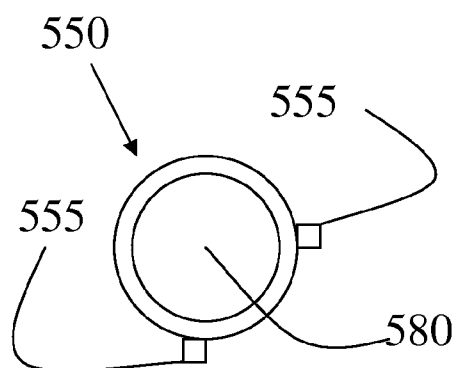


FIG. 34

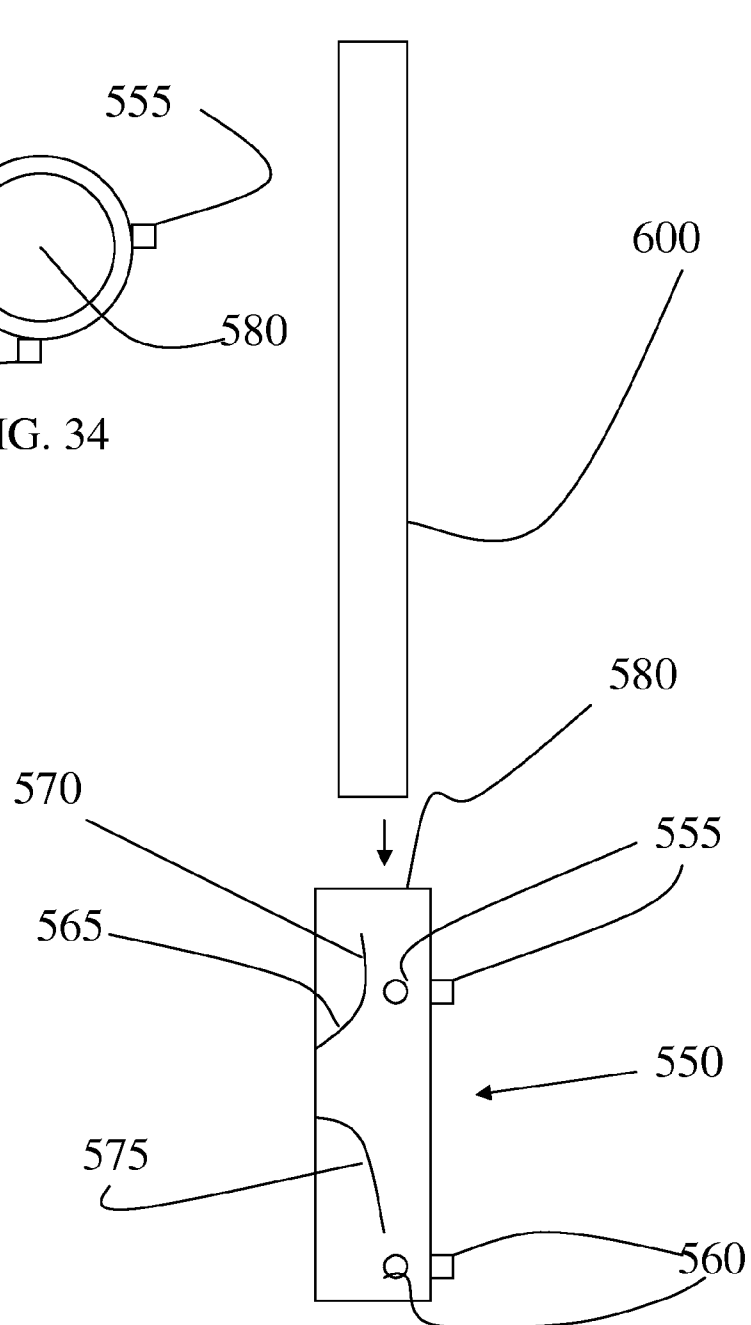


FIG. 33

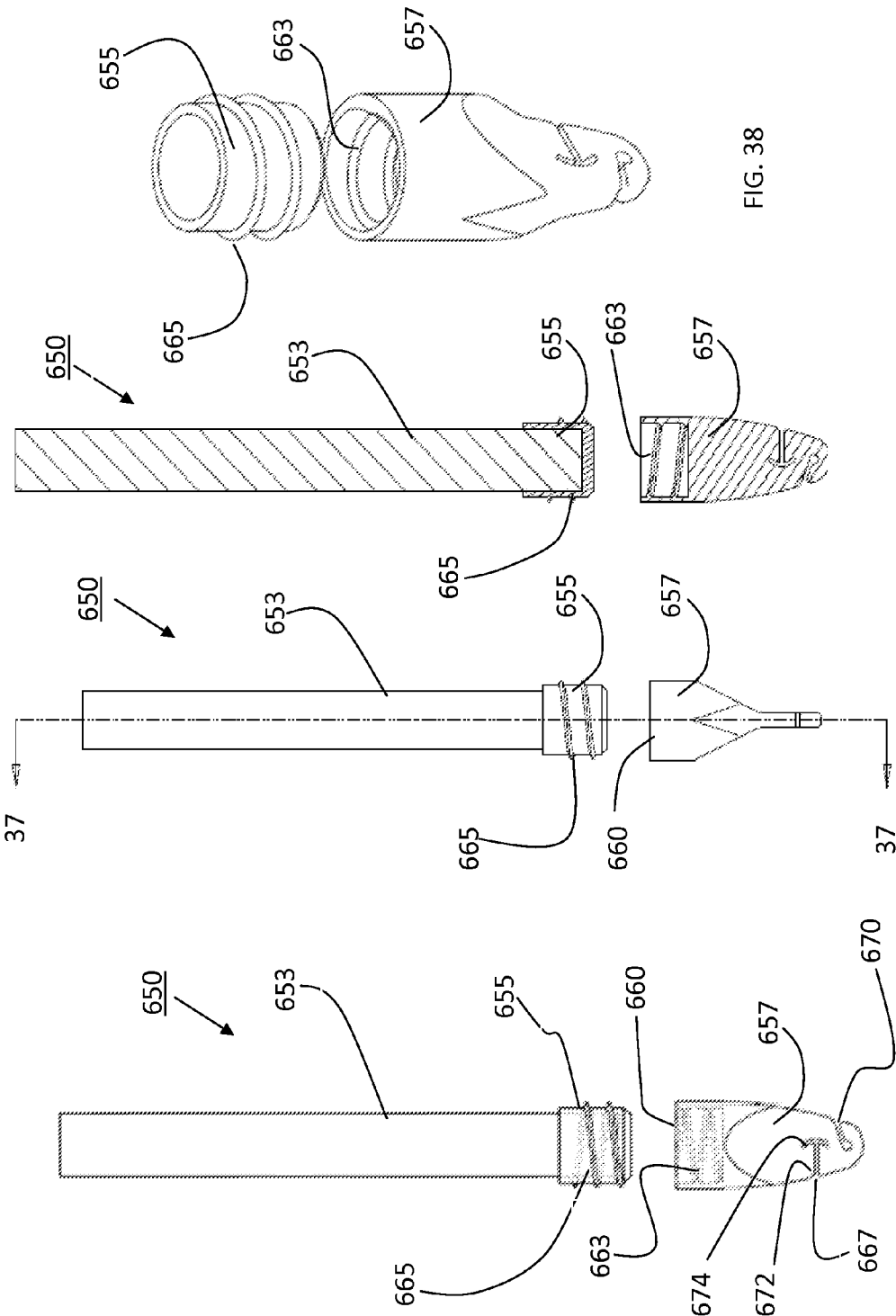
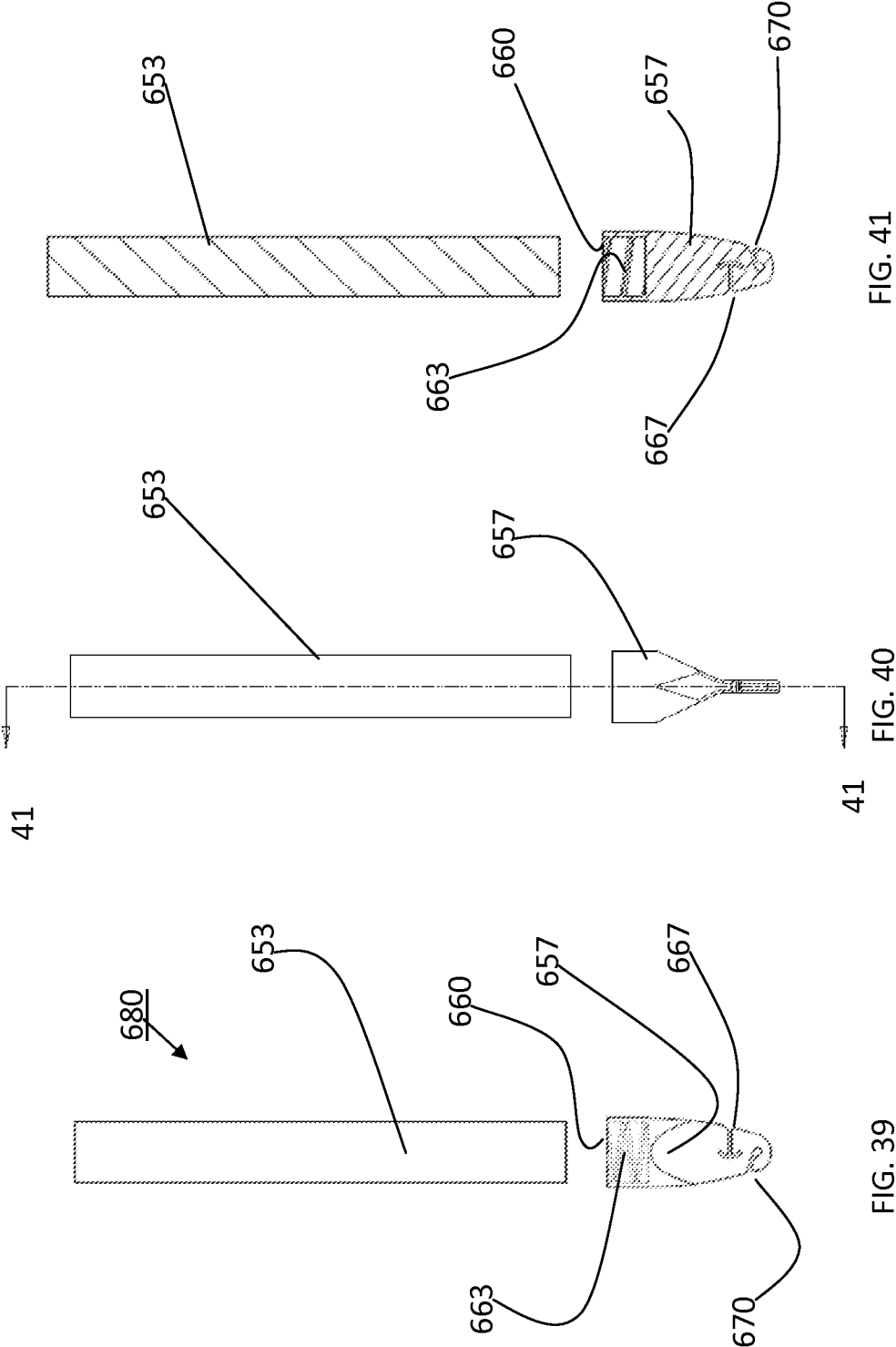


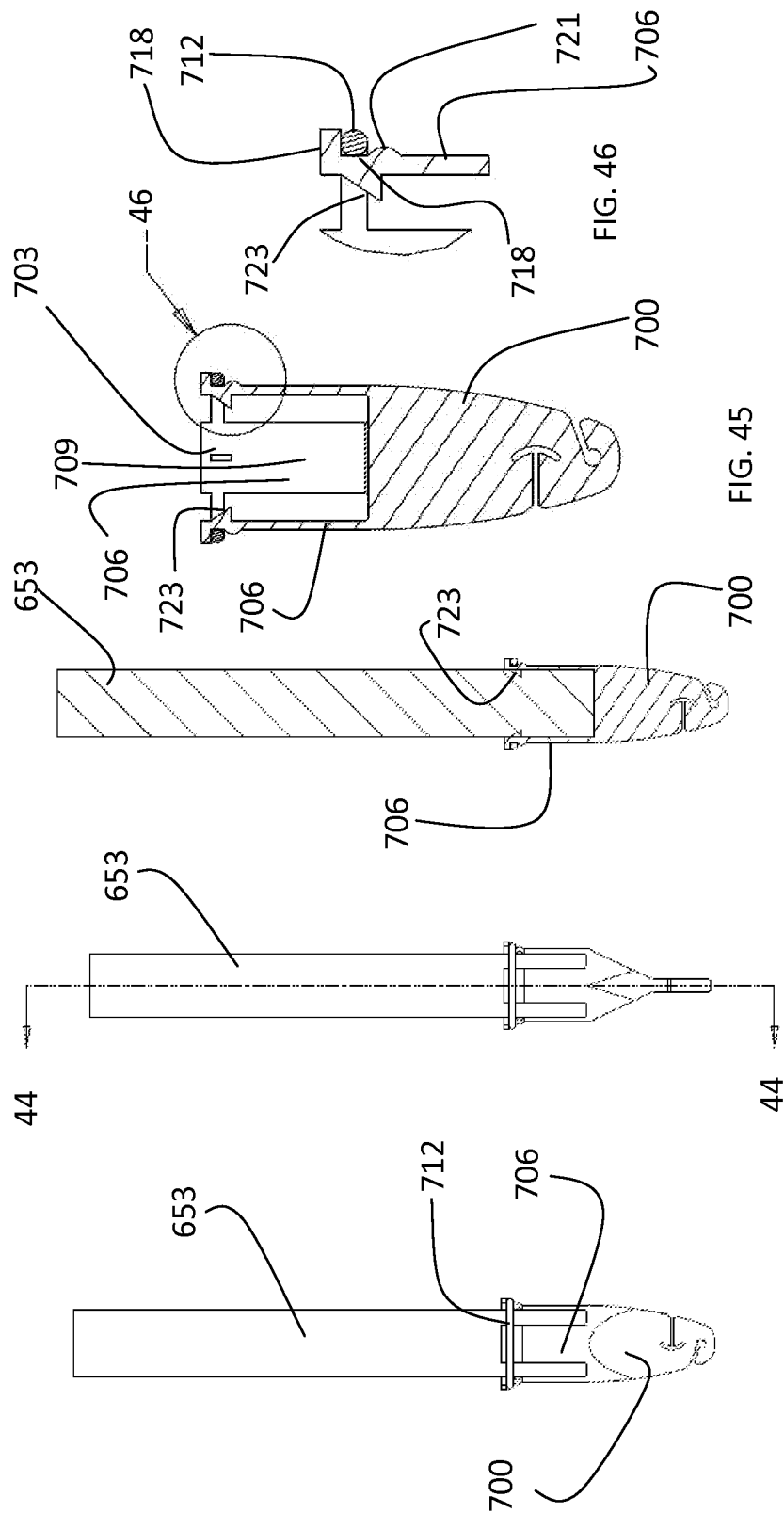
FIG. 38

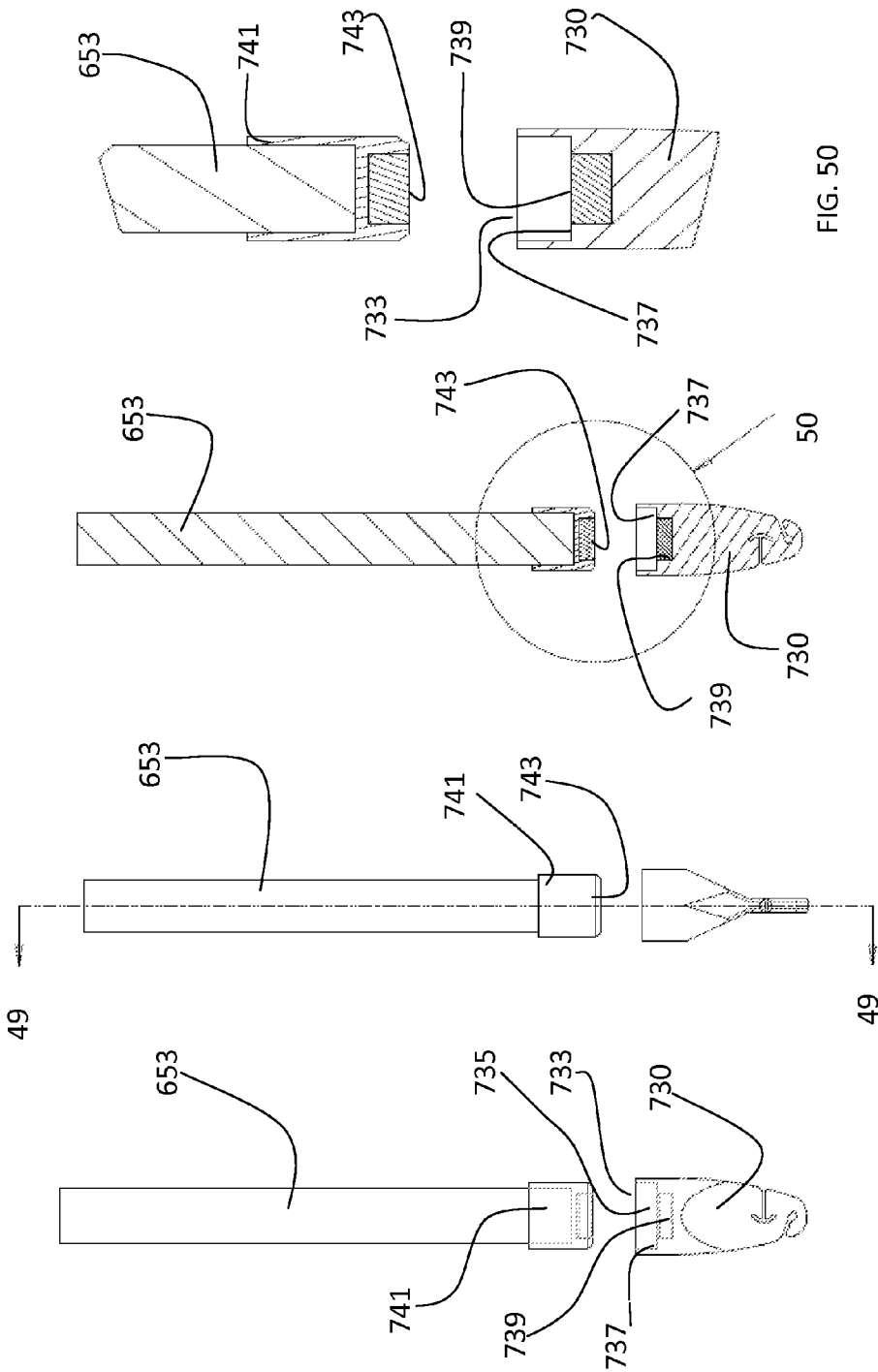
FIG. 37

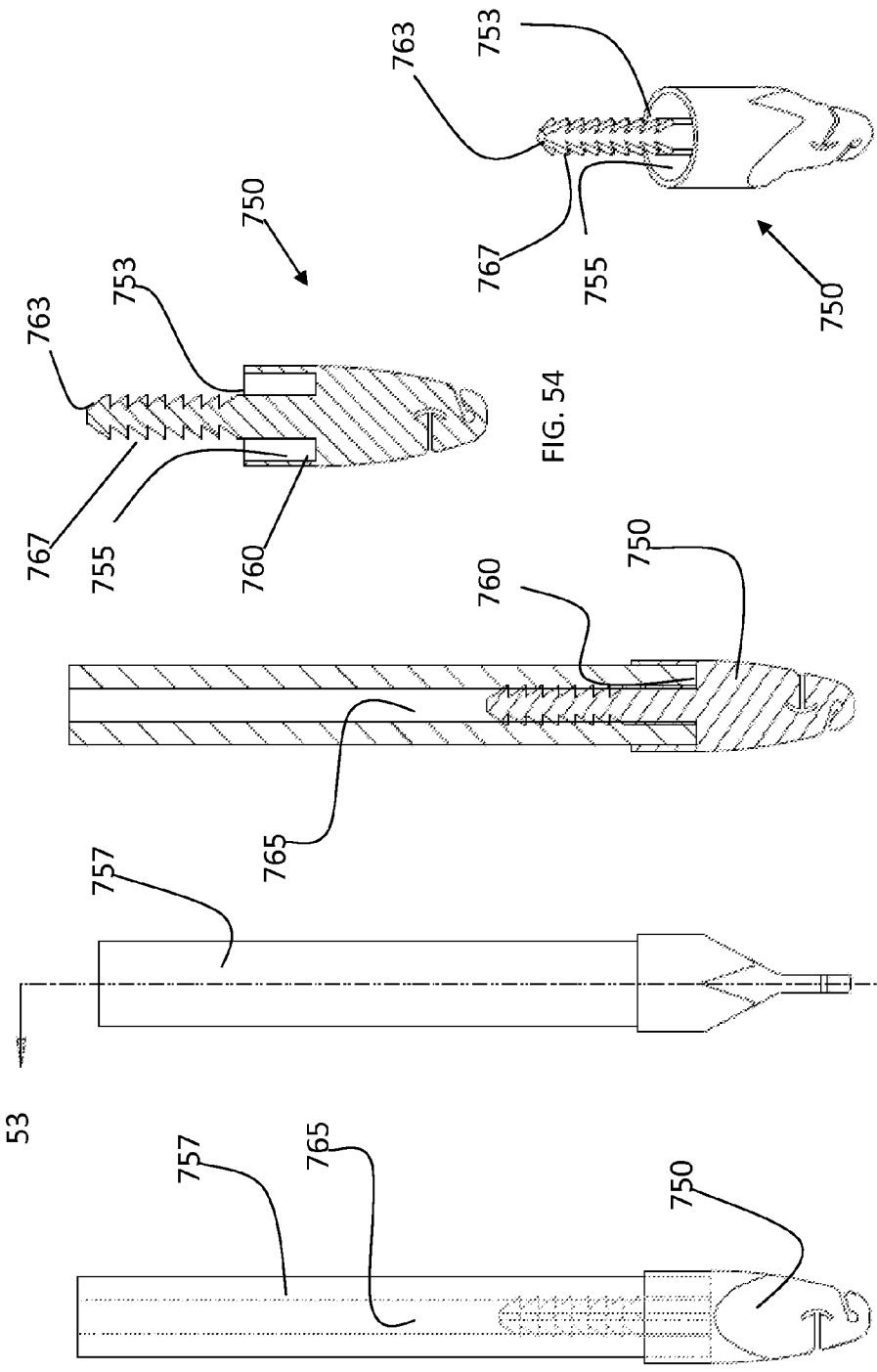
FIG. 36

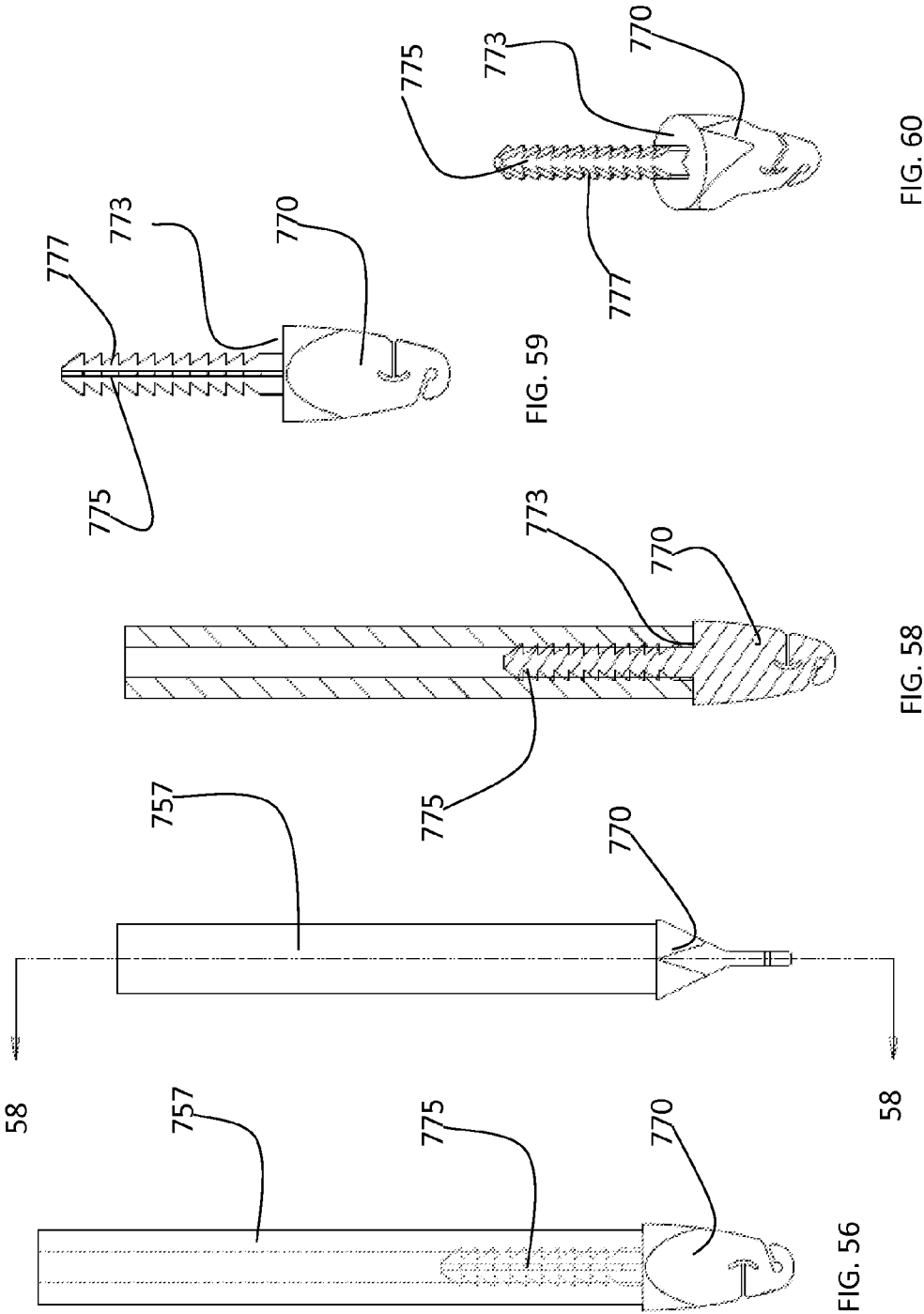
FIG. 35











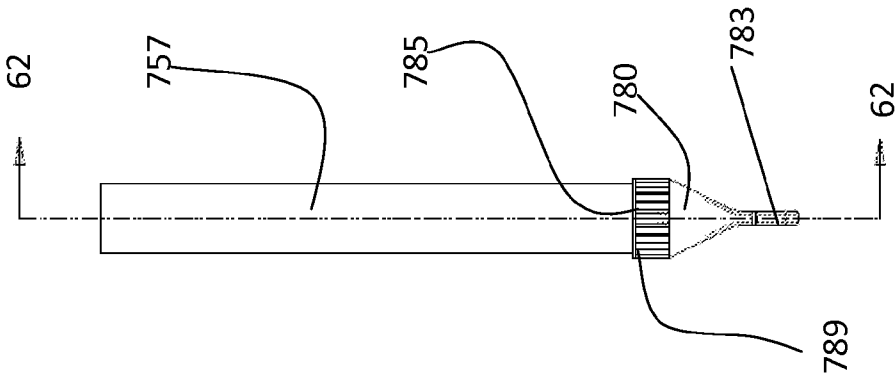


FIG. 61

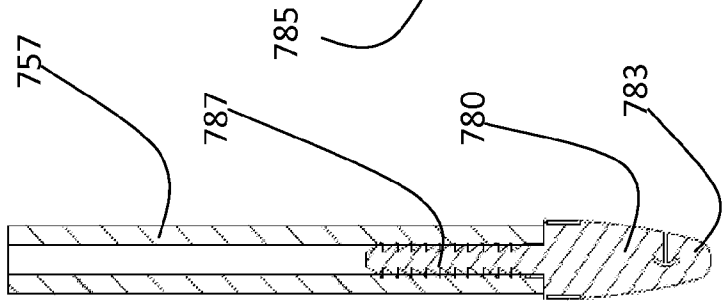


FIG. 62

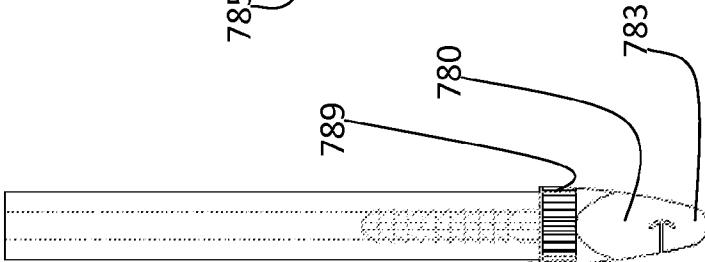


FIG. 63

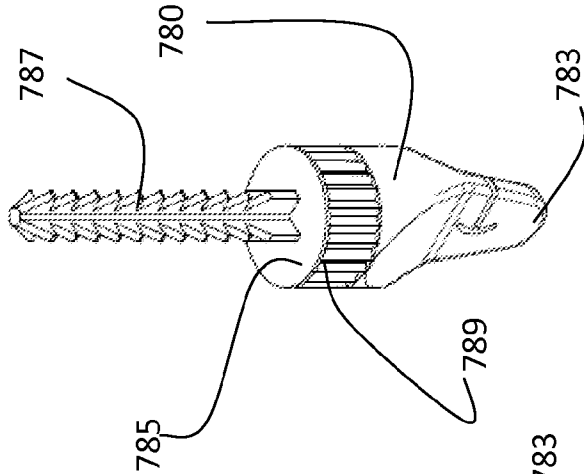


FIG. 64

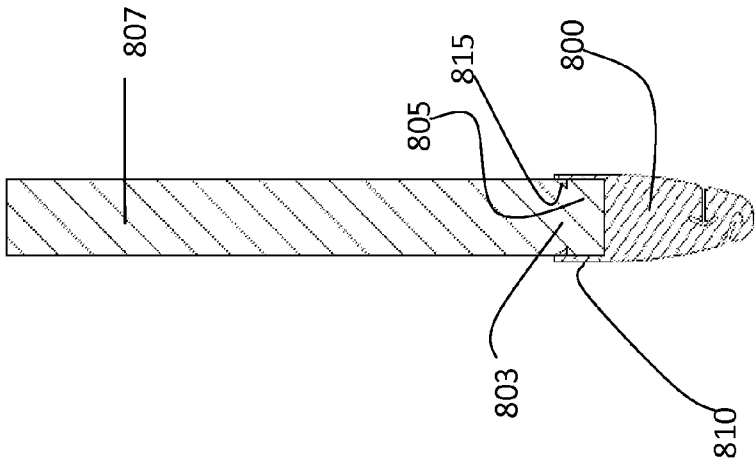


FIG. 67

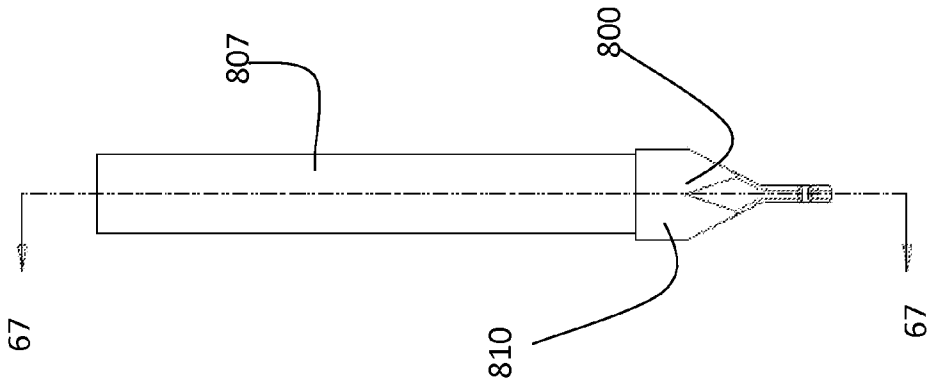


FIG. 66

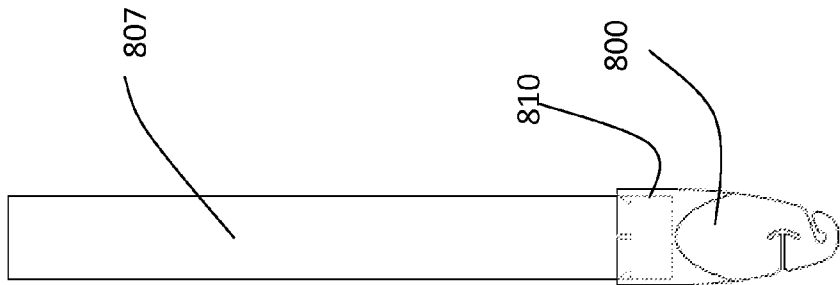


FIG. 65

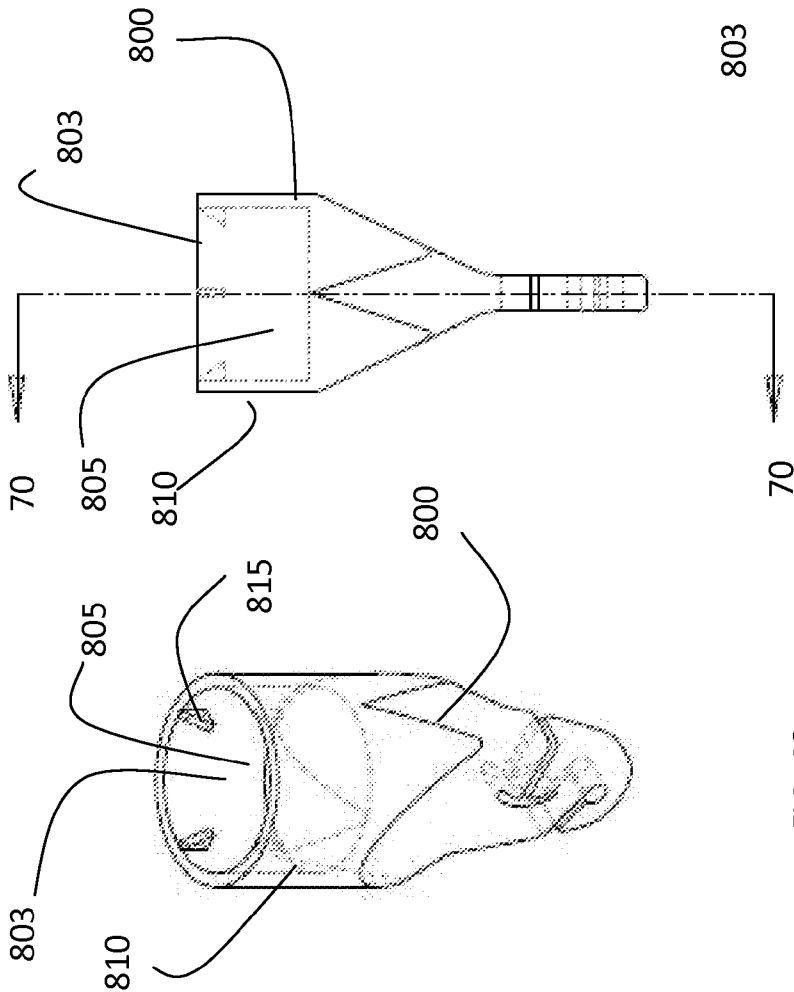
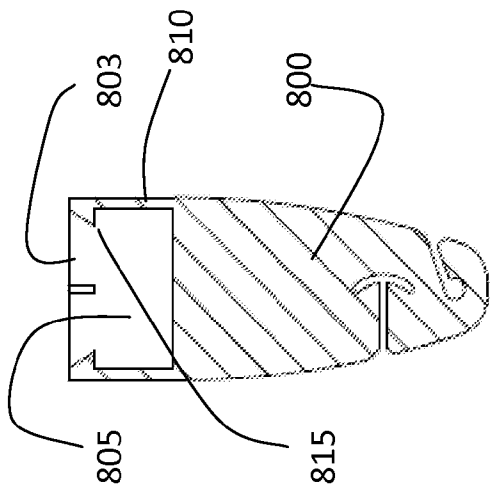


FIG. 68

FIG. 70

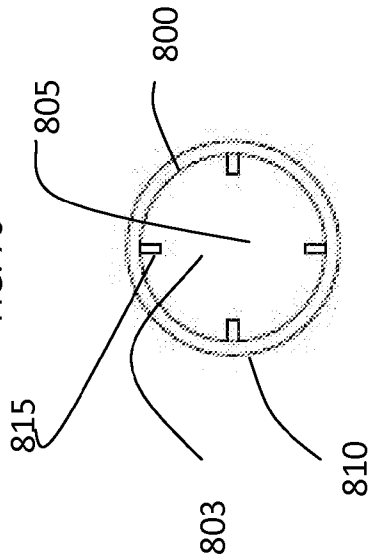


FIG. 69

FIG. 71

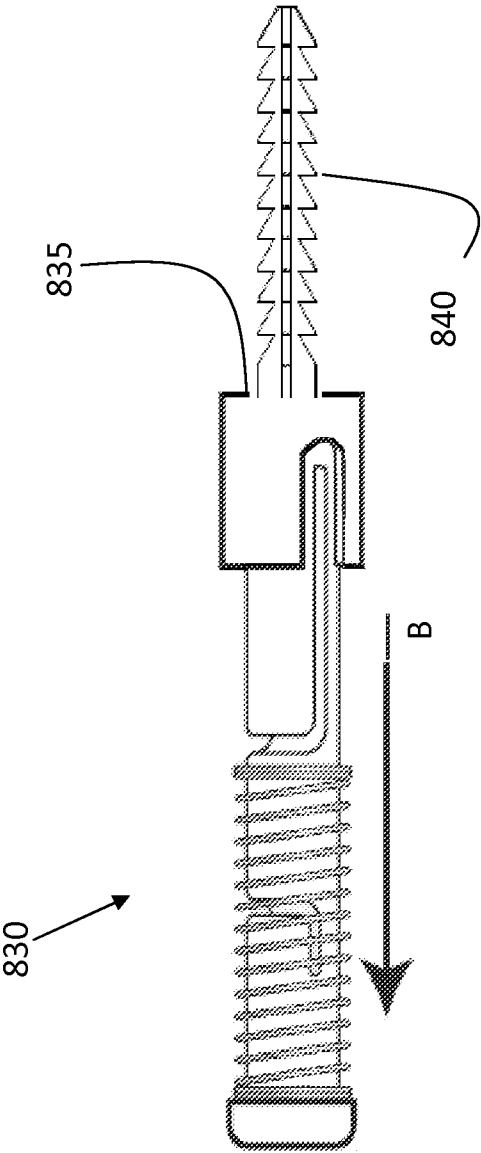


FIG. 72

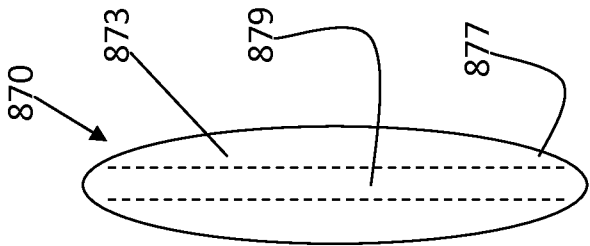


FIG. 73c

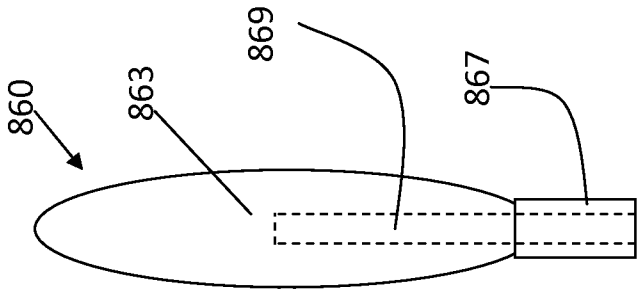


FIG. 73b

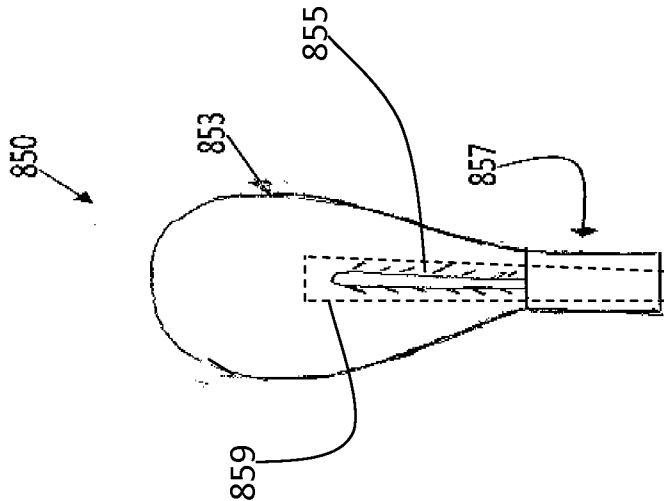


FIG. 73a

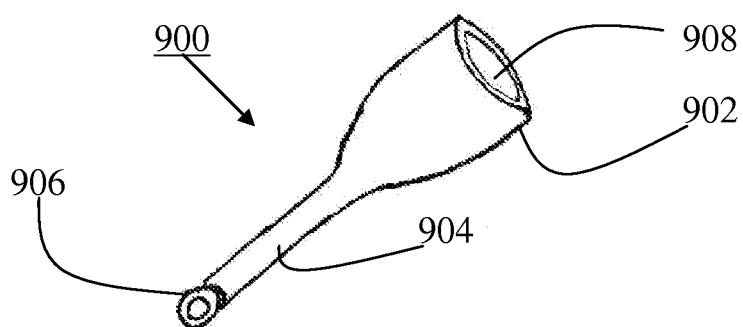


Fig. 74a

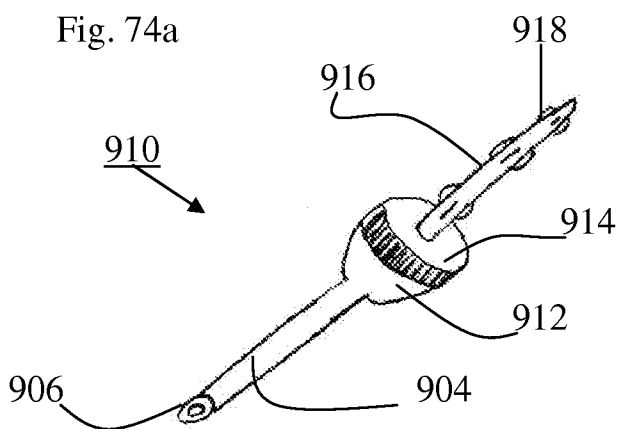


Fig. 74b

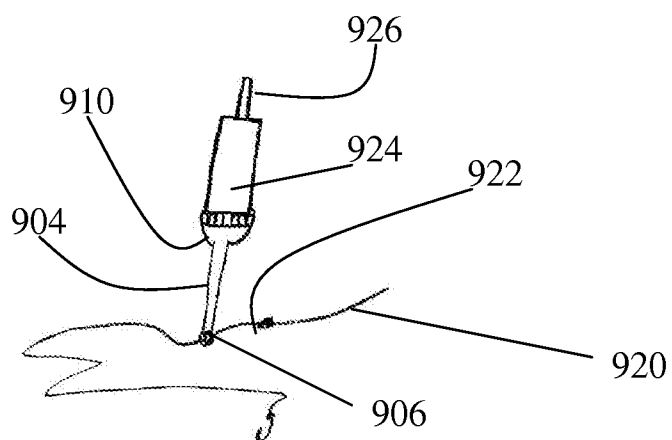


Fig. 74c

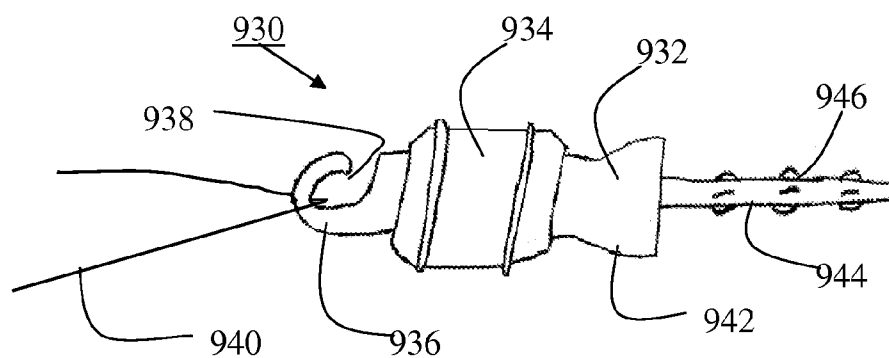


Fig. 75a

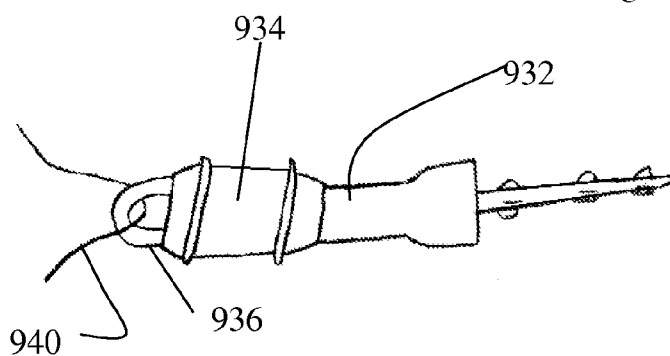


Fig. 75b

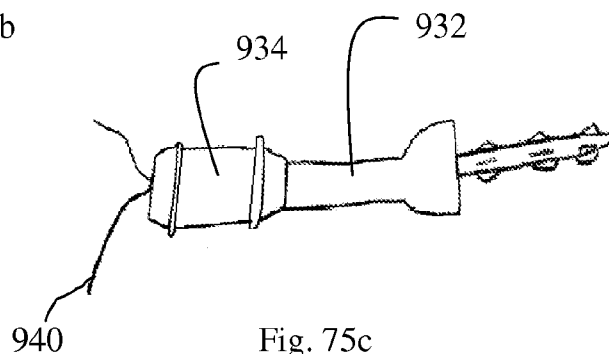


Fig. 75c

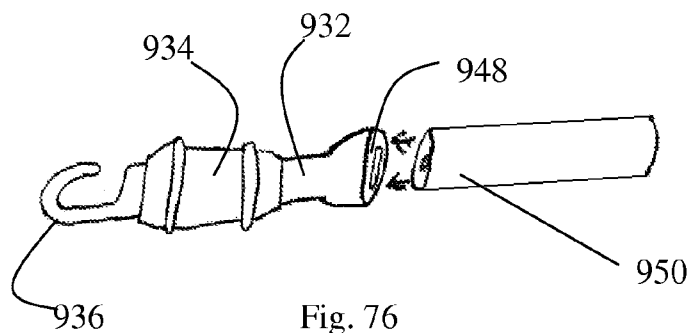


Fig. 76

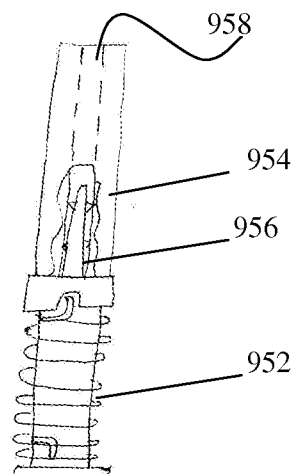


FIG. 77a

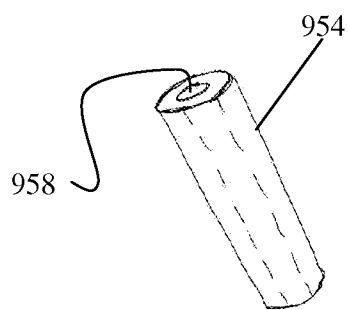


FIG. 77b

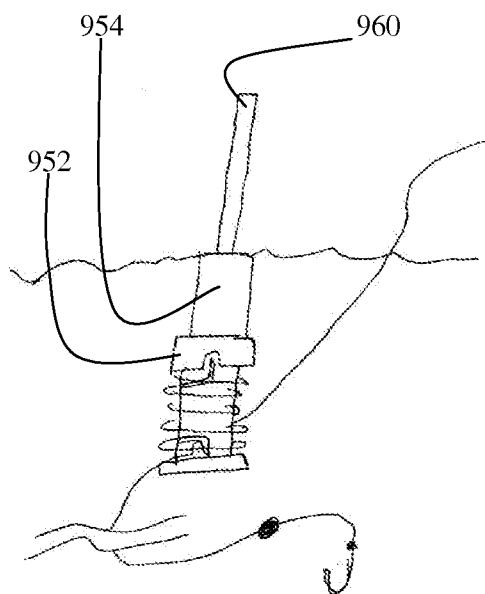


FIG. 77c

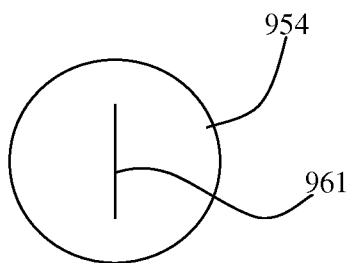


FIG. 77d

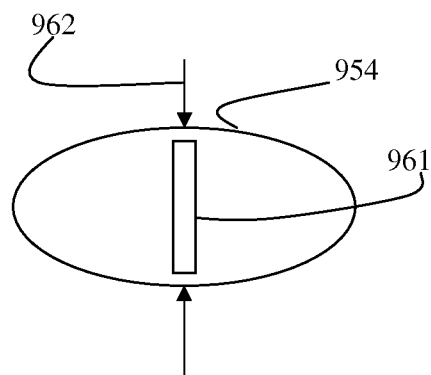


FIG. 77e

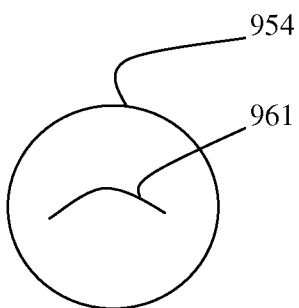


FIG. 77f

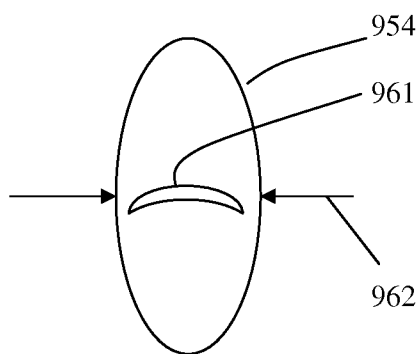


FIG. 77g

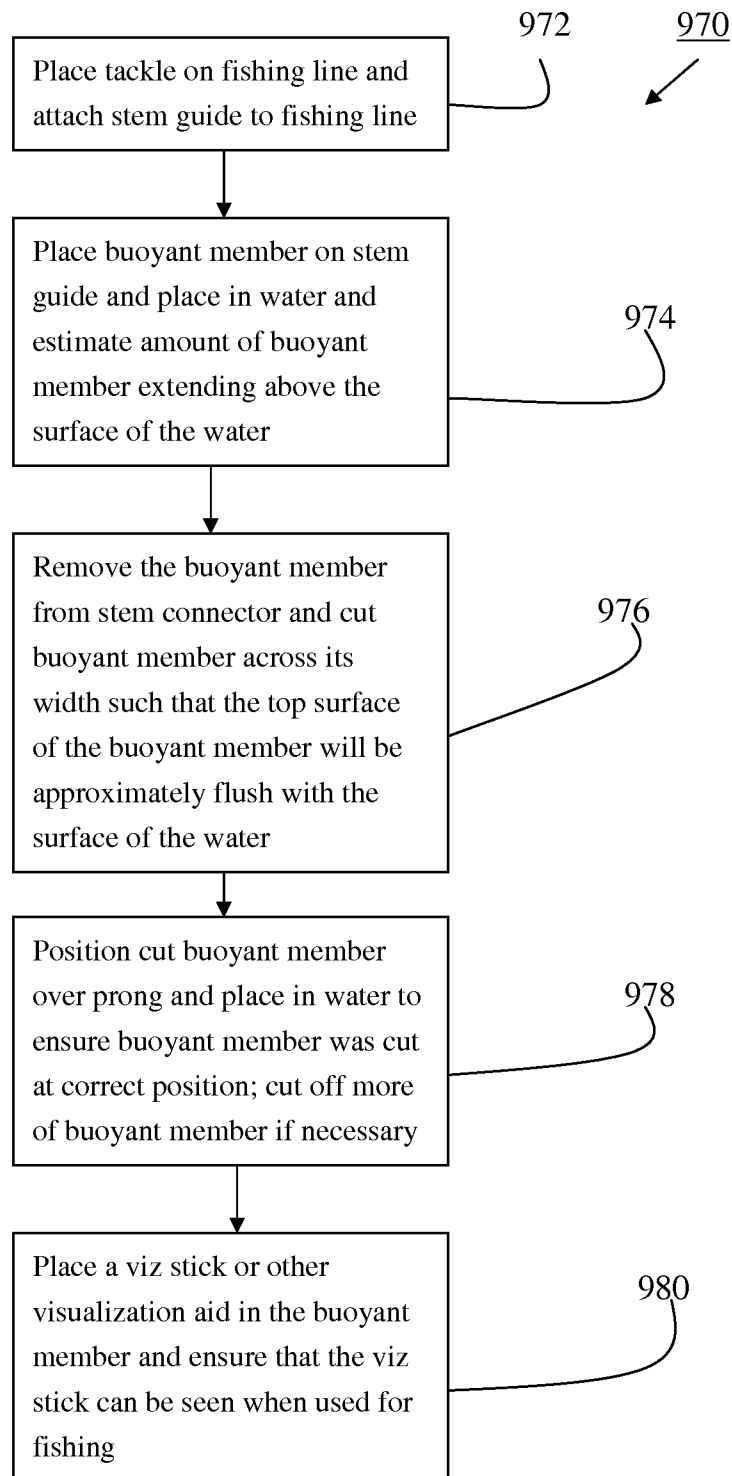


FIG. 78

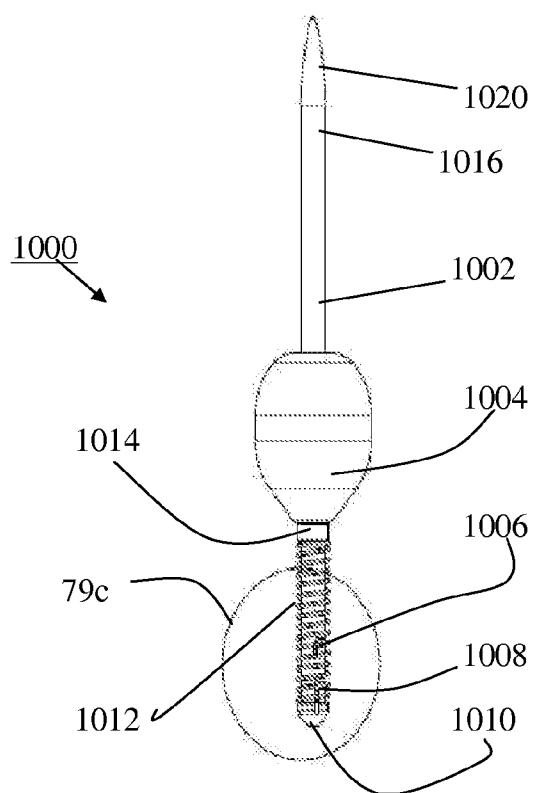


FIG. 79a

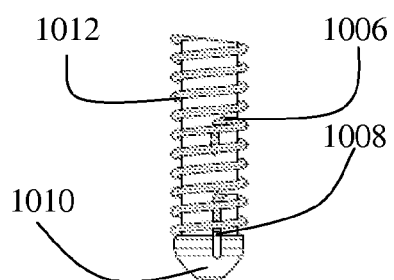


FIG. 79c

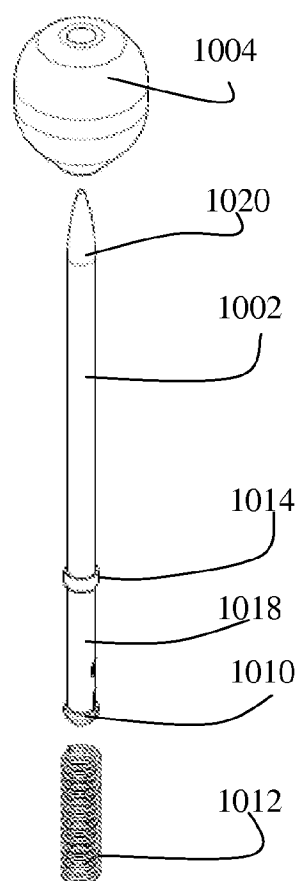


FIG. 79b

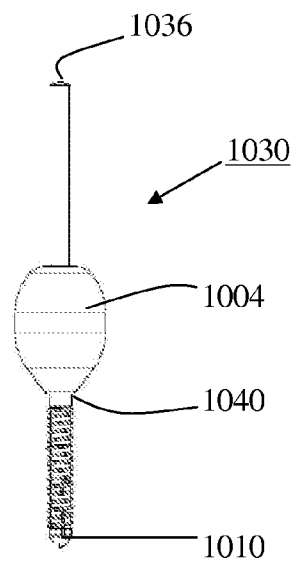


FIG. 80a

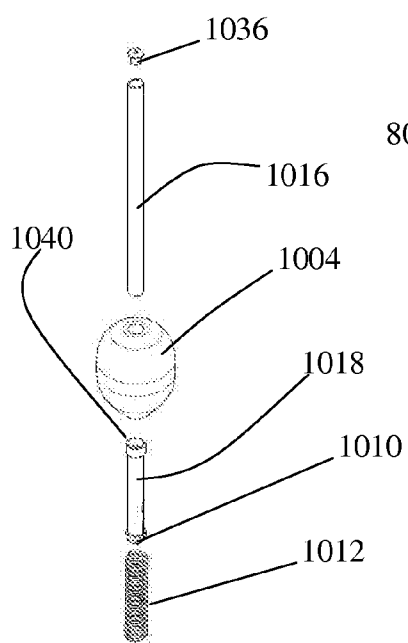


FIG. 80b

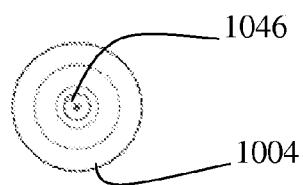


FIG. 80d

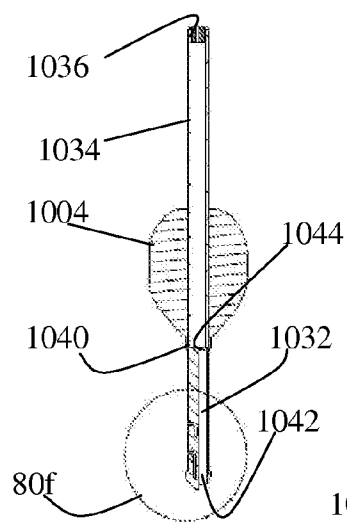


FIG. 80c

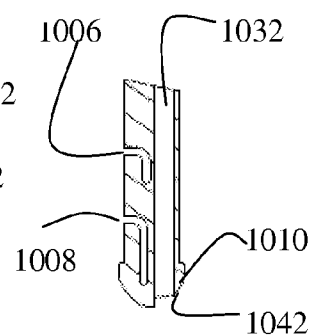


FIG. 80f

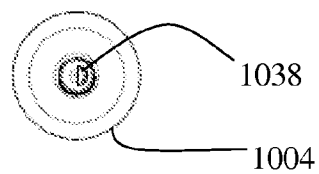


FIG. 80e

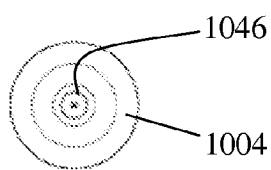


FIG. 81c

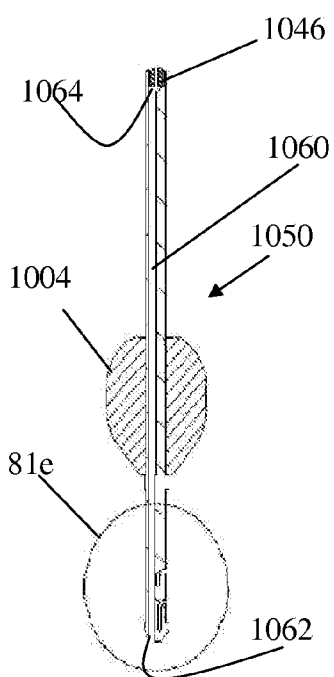


FIG. 81d

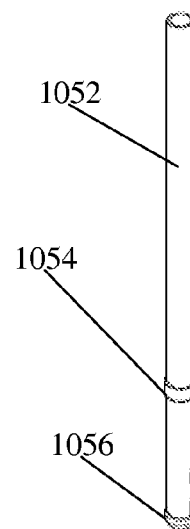
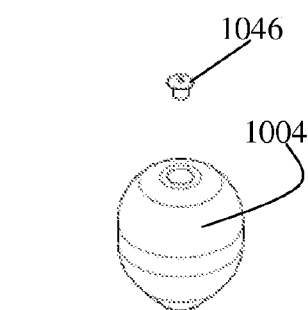


FIG. 81f

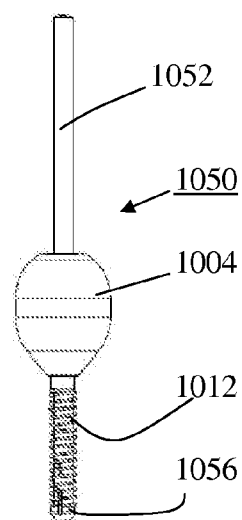


FIG. 81a

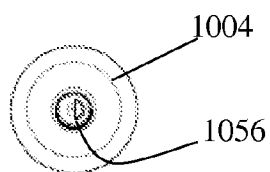


FIG. 81b

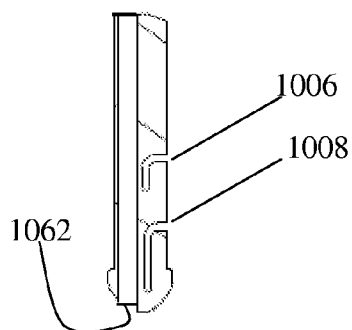


FIG. 81e

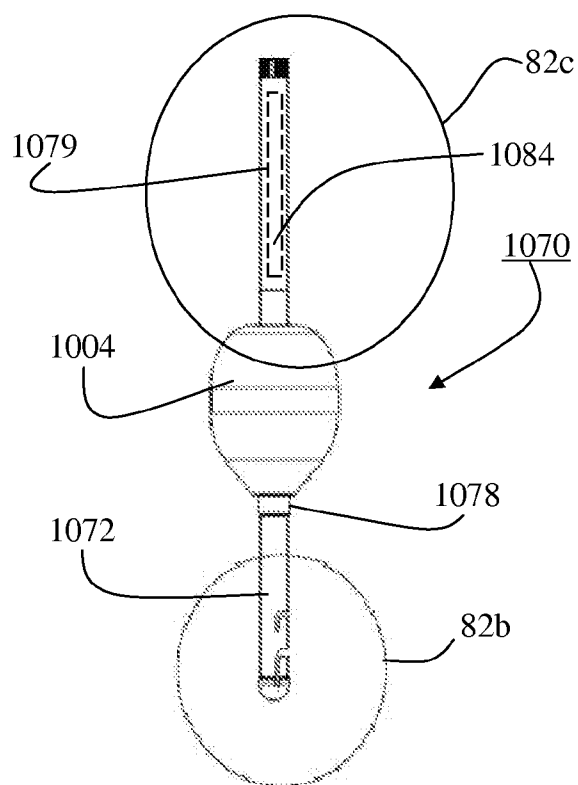


FIG. 82a

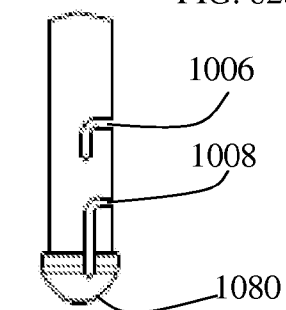


FIG. 82b

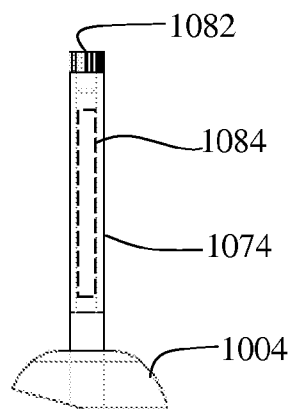


FIG. 82c

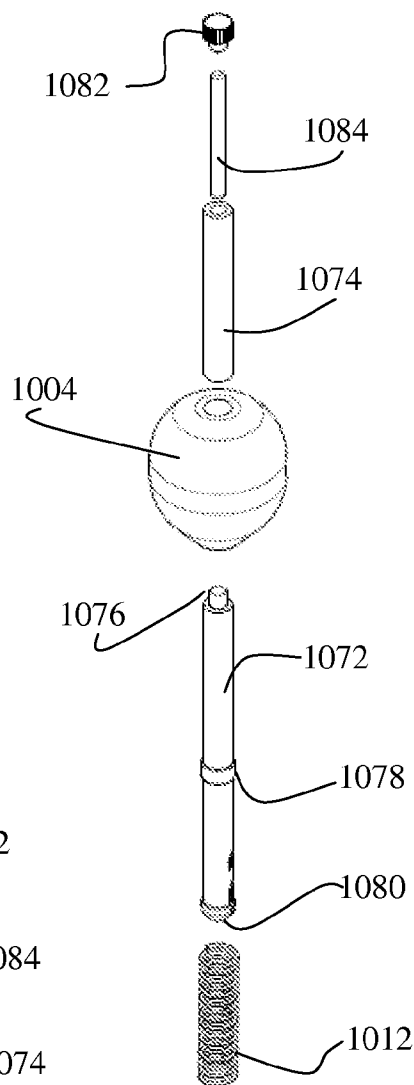


FIG. 82d

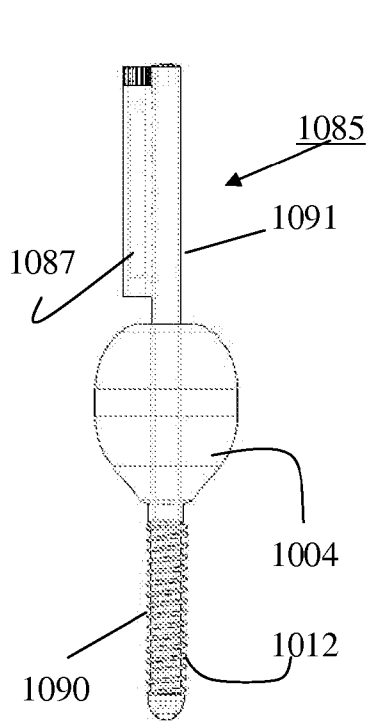


FIG. 83a

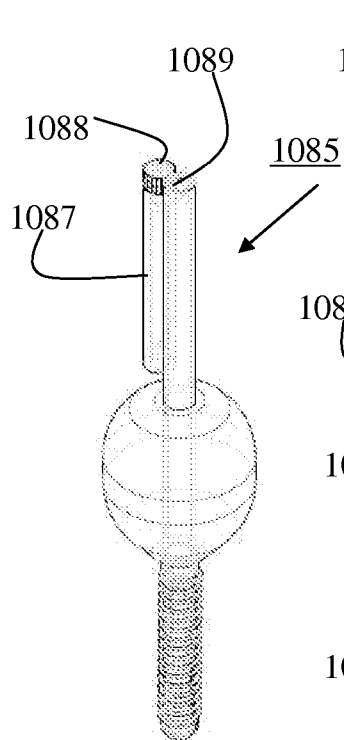


FIG. 83b

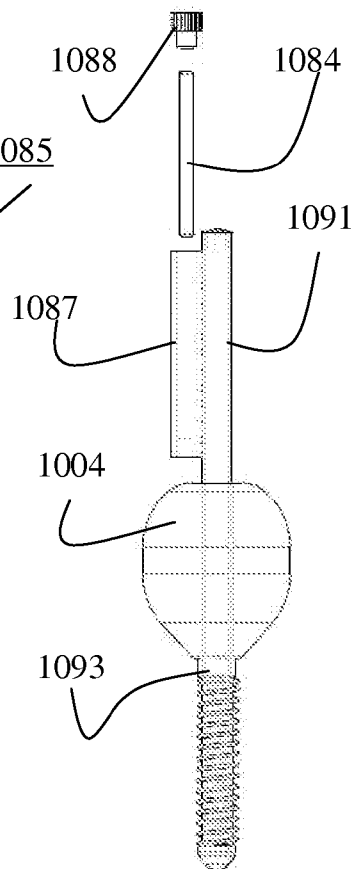


FIG. 83c

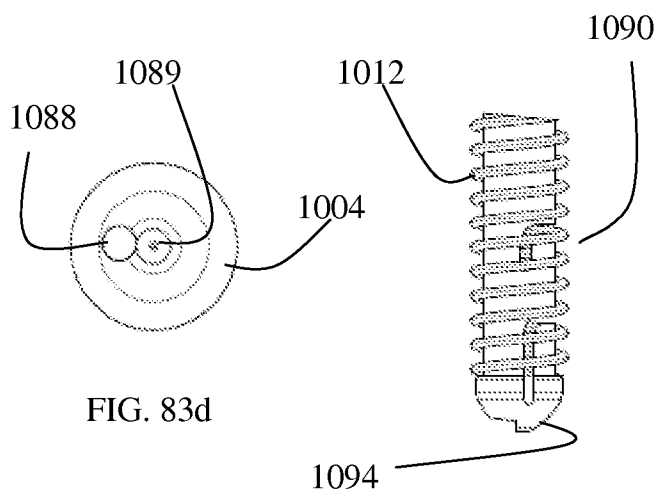


FIG. 83d

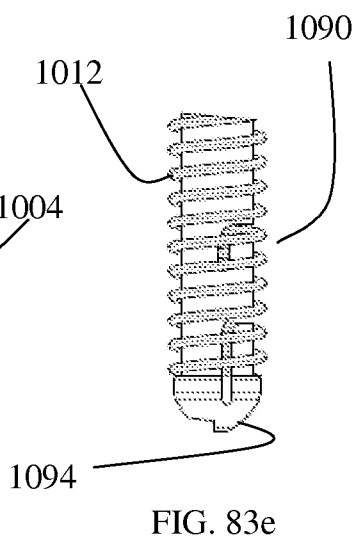


FIG. 83e

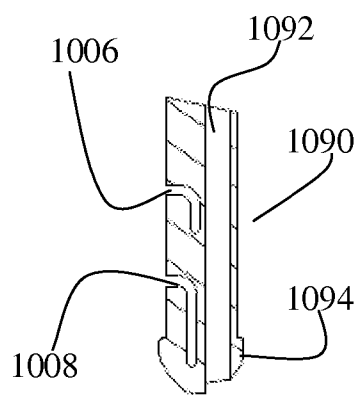


FIG. 83f

STEM GUIDES AND REPLACEABLE CARTRIDGES

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority under 35 USC §120 as a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/760,020 filed on Feb. 5, 2013, which claims priority as a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/970,929 filed on Dec. 16, 2010, which claims priority to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/707,251 filed on Feb. 15, 2007; U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/336,696, filed on Dec. 17, 2008; and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/365,596, filed on Feb. 3, 2009, and under 35 USC §119 from EP09179460.2, filed on Dec. 16, 2009, the contents of which are incorporated herein in their entirety by reference. This application also claims priority from U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/774,710, filed on May 5, 2010 and claiming priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/175,653, filed on May 5, 2009, the contents of which are incorporated herein in their entirety by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates generally to stem guides that are configured to accept removable and replaceable cartridges, such as bobbers, floats, light sticks and scent sticks for fishing.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The concept of fishing tackle such as fishing bobbers that can be used either as a slip bobber or a fixed line bobber is known in the art. Typically, in the slip bobber mode the fishing line extends freely through a tube in the fishing float. A string stop in the form of a knot is tied onto the fishing line. Usually a bead, which can slide along the fishing line, is placed on the fishing line with the knot forming a stop for the bead and the bead having a larger outside diameter than the tube to form a stop for the fishing bobber. The knot being small can pass through the eyes of the fishing rod and the fishing reel to allow the line with the knot to be wound up on the fishing reel. As one casts the line with the slip bobber and the bead the hook with the bait sinks allowing the fishing line to slide through the slip bobber until the bead engages the knot, which prevents further sliding of the bead along the fishing line. In addition, since the bead cannot pass through the tube in the fishing float it also stops the fishing float from sliding past the knot thus limiting the depth of the hook.

[0004] The slip bobbers, which are well known in the art, are also often used to fish in a fixed line mode, that is, the bobber is temporarily attached to the fishing line with a spring clamp that slides over a fishing line that extends through a saw cut on the hollow stem in the fishing float. Unfortunately, the fishing float stems with saw cuts in the hollow stem have sharp edges which can weaken and cut the soft flexible fishing lines. In addition to harshness to the fishing line by the saw cut in the stem of a fishing float the placement of a saw cut in the stem of the fishing bobber weakens the stem, which can cause the stem to break during use. One such fishing float with a spring and saw cut hollow stem is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 7,082,711. Another such fishing float with a saw cut stem is sold by Carlson Tackle Company Inc. of Cortland Ohio under the trademark Wing-it™.

[0005] An improved line stop is found in a fishing bobber sold under the name Lucky Jack™ by ROD-N-BOBB'S of Eau Claire Wis. The improved line stop includes a compression spring located around a hollow stem, which is an integral portion of the fixed/slip bobber. The line guide shoulders in the stem of the bobber include rounded or radiused corners to protect the fishing line from nicks and cuts that would weaken the fishing line thus causing the line to break unexpectedly. While the improved line stop is useful as part of a slip bobber it has limited application to slip bobbers.

[0006] Although the improved line stop can protect the fishing line from abrasion the spring forms a moving part that can become stuck. In order to avoid a spring that can stick it would be desired to have a line stop for use on fishing tackle that has no moving parts and can be used on slip bobbers as well as other types of fishing tackle.

[0007] Oftentimes a fisher person may want to create his or her own tackle, such as a line light or a scent stick that can be quickly attached or detached from a fishing line. Unfortunately, devices for attaching a fishing line to a piece of tackle include extraneous items that render it impractical to use the device, consequently, people who use line lights or scent sticks attach the devices to a fishing line using a rubber band or the like.

[0008] It is known in the art to adjust a bobber during fishing if the bobber configuration is not suitable for the fishing conditions. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 6,079,147 describes a foam rubber buoyant member, or float, that is mounted in a hook member and can be adjusted by the angler. The float of the '147 patent is adjusted not by replacing the float in the hook member with a different float but by instead using a knife to cut the float to have a different length. This is different from removing and replacing the float.

[0009] Similarly, U.S. Pat. No. 6,655,073 describes an adjustable buoyant member, or float, that is made of a plastic foam attached to a hook member. The plastic foam can be cut to adjust the length of the float and thereby make an adjustable bobber system with adjustable buoyancy. The bobber system also includes a weight that encircles the float and can be adjusted along the length of the float. This weight appears to be similar to the known plastic bands that are movable along the length of the float to allow the angler to better visualize the position and movement of the float in the water. Again, like the '147 patent, the '073 patent appears to adjust the buoyancy of the float by cutting the float to a shorter length rather than removing and replacing the float in the hook member. For example, the '073 patent describes the float as being secured in a cavity by use of glue, adhesive or other mechanical securing means. This does not disclose or teach that the float can be removed and replaced or removed and used again. Instead, the examples given for securing in the cavity demonstrate that the float and hook member would likely be damaged in its removal and unsuitable for use again.

[0010] Further, with respect to the mounting of the buoyant member to the stem guide, in general the stem guides are rigid while the buoyant member is flexible. Therefore a mounting of the buoyant member to the stem guide involves a temporary deformation of the buoyant member rather than a permanent or temporary deformation of the stem guide. As a result, the buoyant member is retained to the stem guide on the basis of the compressive tendency of the buoyant member against the stem guide rather than any force imparted by the stem guide against the buoyant member. As an analogy, the floats herein may be stretch over the prong to mount to the prong and

therefore be in a slightly expanded state around the prong and exerting a compressive force against the prong. Similarly, when inserted into a cavity in the stem guide, the buoyant member is compressed and then one released within the cavity, the buoyant member exerts an expansive force against the cavity to retain the buoyant member in the cavity.

[0011] The stem guides disclosed herein permit the angler to attach and remove the stem guide from the line without cutting the line. The stem guide may have a float, scent stick or light stick temporarily attached to the stem guide such that the float, scent stick or light stick may be easily attached and removed from the fishing line without cutting the line or damaging the stem guide and potentially not damaging the float, scent stick or light stick.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] In one general aspect, there is provided a method for adjusting the buoyancy of a fishing bobber. The method includes providing a buoyant member, providing a stem guide, mounting the buoyant member to the stem guide and cutting the buoyant member. The buoyant member is made of a material capable of being severed by a cutting device. The buoyant member has a first length, a lower end, an upper end and an internal channel passing between the two ends. The stem guide is configured to receive the buoyant member and a fishing line with fishing tackle.

[0013] The stem guide includes a cartridge receiving end and a fishing line engaging end. The cartridge receiving end has a cartridge attachment means configured for receiving and retaining the fishing cartridge to the stem guide in a manner that permits the fishing cartridge to be removed from the stem guide without causing an amount of damage to the stem guide which prevents the stem guide from being used again. The fishing line engaging end is at an end of the stem guide that is opposite the cartridge receiving end and is configured for receiving a fishing line through an opening in the receiving end. The opening is configured to limit the ability of the line to become separated from the stem guide while allowing the fishing line to pass through the stem guide.

[0014] The buoyant member is cut such that the buoyant member has a second length shorter than the first length, whereby the buoyant member is cut to a second length such that the buoyancy of the buoyant member when cut to a second length is enough to oppose the tendency of the stem guide and fishing tackle to submerge the buoyant member such that a top surface of the cut buoyant member is adjacent to the surface of the water when the stem guide, buoyant member, fishing line and any fishing tackle are placed in the water.

[0015] Embodiments of the method may include one or more of the following features. For example, the top surface of the cut buoyant member may be above the surface of the water, below the surface of the water, or generally flush with the surface of the water.

[0016] The cartridge attachment means may be a prong and mounting the buoyant member to the cartridge attachment means includes inserting the prong into the channel in the buoyant member.

[0017] The method may further include mounting a visualization aid to the buoyant member. Mounting a visualization aid to the buoyant member may include inserting the visualization aid into the hollow channel of the buoyant member. The visualization aid may be one or more of a viz stick and a light stick.

[0018] The method may further include applying an adhesive to the buoyant member or the stem guide to retain the buoyant member to the stem guide. The method may further include applying an adhesive to either the buoyant member or the visualization aid to retain the visualization aid to the buoyant member.

[0019] The buoyant member may be made of polyethylene, such as extruded polyethylene.

[0020] In another general aspect there is provided a method for adjusting the buoyancy of a fishing bobber. The method includes providing a buoyant member, providing a stem guide, mounting the buoyant member to the stem guide and cutting the buoyant member. The buoyant member is made of a material capable of being severed by a cutting device. The buoyant member has a first length, a lower end, and an upper end. The stem guide is configured to receive the buoyant member and a fishing line with fishing tackle.

[0021] The stem guide includes a cartridge receiving end and a fishing line engaging end. The cartridge receiving end has a cartridge attachment means configured for receiving and retaining the fishing cartridge to the stem guide in a manner that permits the fishing cartridge to be removed from the stem guide without causing an amount of damage to the stem guide which prevents the stem guide from being used again. The fishing line engaging end is at an end of the stem guide that is opposite the cartridge receiving end and is configured for receiving a fishing line through an opening in the receiving end. The opening is configured to limit the ability of the line to become separated from the stem guide while allowing the fishing line to pass through the stem guide.

[0022] The buoyant member is cut such that the buoyant member has a second length shorter than the first length, whereby the buoyant member is cut to a second length such that the buoyancy of the buoyant member when cut to a second length is enough to oppose the tendency of the stem guide and fishing tackle to submerge the buoyant member such that a top surface of the cut buoyant member is adjacent to the surface of the water when the stem guide, buoyant member, fishing line and any fishing tackle are placed in the water.

[0023] Embodiments of the method may include one or more of the following features. For example, the top surface of the cut buoyant member may be above the surface of the water, below the surface of the water, or generally flush with the surface of the water.

[0024] The cartridge attachment means may be a prong and mounting the buoyant member to the cartridge attachment means includes inserting the prong into the buoyant member.

[0025] The method may further include mounting a visualization aid to the buoyant member. Mounting a visualization aid to the buoyant member may include inserting the visualization aid into the buoyant member. The visualization aid may be one or more of a viz stick and a light stick. The buoyant member may be polyethylene, such as extruded polyethylene.

[0026] In another general aspect, a fishing bobber system includes a stem guide and one or more replaceable cartridges mountable in the stem guide. The stem guide includes an open end exposing an open cavity at one end and at an opposite end a first slot within the inside of the stem guide and passing between opposite sides of the stem guide and connected to an outer surface of the stem guide by a second slot passing from the first slot to the outer surface of the stem guide and configured to receive a fishing line. The one or more replaceable

cartridges are made of plastic foam and configured to be inserted into and removed from the open cavity in the stem guide without damaging to the stem guide.

[0027] In another general aspect, a fishing bobber system includes a stem guide and one or more replaceable buoyant members mountable in the stem guide. The stem guide has a first end and a second end. The first end has a surface and a prong extending outwardly from the surface and at the second end a first slot passing through the stem guide between opposite sides of the stem guide and connected to an outer surface of the stem guide by a second slot passing from the first slot to the outer surface of the stem guide. The first slot and second slot are configured to receive a fishing line. The one or more replaceable buoyant members have a first end, a second end and a longitudinal channel passing between openings at the first end and the second end, are made of a plastic foam and configured to be inserted onto the prong of the stem guide and removed from the prong without damaging the stem guide.

[0028] In another general aspect, a method of fishing includes providing a fishing float and mounting the fishing float to a stem guide. The fishing float has a first end, a second end and a longitudinal channel passing between openings at the first end and the second end. The fishing float is made of an extruded polyethylene foam, the fishing float being provided in a kit with multiple fishing floats.

[0029] In another general aspect, a fishing tackle stem guide is configured to receive a replaceable fishing cartridge and a fishing line. The stem includes a cartridge receiving end and a fishing line engaging end. The a cartridge receiving end has a cartridge attachment means configured for receiving and retaining the fishing cartridge to the stem guide in a manner that permits the fishing cartridge to be removed from the stem guide without causing an amount of damage to the stem guide which prevents the stem guide from being used again. The fishing line engaging end is at an end of the stem guide that is opposite the cartridge receiving end and is configured for receiving a fishing line through an opening in the receiving end, the opening being configured to limit the ability of the line to become separated from the stem guide while allowing the fishing line to pass through the stem guide.

[0030] Embodiments of the stem guide may include one or more of the following features. For example, the cartridge attachment means may include a base and at least one prong extending from the base. The prong may be a surface configured to restrain removal of the cartridge from the prong. The surface may include protrusions extending outwardly from the prong.

[0031] The stem guide may further include a wall encircling at least a portion of the base to define a channel configured to receive the cartridge when the cartridge is mounted to the prong.

[0032] The stem guide may include a textured surface at the cartridge receiving end for gripping the stem guide to attach to or remove the cartridge from the stem guide.

[0033] The cartridge attachment means may include a channel defined by a wall having an inner surface with protrusions extending from the inner surface into the channel. In this manner, inserting a cartridge into the channel results in an interference fit between the cartridge and the protrusions.

[0034] The protrusions may include a threaded surface configured to receive a cartridge having a threaded end. The threaded end of the cartridge may be a tube positioned around an end of cartridge, the tube having a wall defining a channel for receiving the cartridge, the wall having an internal surface

and an external surface and the threaded end of the cartridge comprising threads on the external surface. The threads on the external surface of the tube may be configured to be threadably mated with the threaded surface of the stem guide.

[0035] The cartridge receiving end may include a magnet such that mounting a cartridge having a magnet to the cartridge receiving end will cause the cartridge to be magnetically mated to the stem guide.

[0036] The cartridge receiving end may include a base, multiple flaps extending longitudinally from the base to form a channel, and a ring in contact with the flaps and encircling at least a portion of the channel. In this manner the flaps have an inward bias such that a cartridge inserted into the channel will be retained within the channel by at least an interference fit between the cartridge and the flaps.

[0037] The multiple flaps may have an inner surface defining the channel and at least one of the flaps may have an inner surface from which one or more protrusions extend into the channel.

[0038] The stem guide may further include a cartridge configured to be removably attached to the stem guide. The cartridge may be one or more of a float, light stick, scent stick and combinations thereof.

[0039] The stem guide may further include a fishing line engaging end for releasably engaging a fishing line.

[0040] In another general aspect there is provided a fishing kit that includes at least one stem guide, as described above, and one or more cartridges configured to be removably attached to the stem guide. The stem guide includes a cartridge receiving end having a cartridge attachment means for attaching the cartridge to the stem guide in a manner that the cartridge can be removed from the stem guide without causing an amount of damage to the stem guide which prevents the stem guide from being used again. The one or more cartridges comprise an attachment end configured to be removably attached to the cartridge attachment means of the stem guide.

[0041] Embodiments of the fishing kit may include one or more of the following features or those described above with respect to the stem guide. For example, the cartridge may include one or more of a float, light stick, scent stick and combinations thereof. The stem guide may further include a fishing line engaging end for releasably engaging a fishing line.

[0042] In another general aspect there is provided a method of attaching and removing a fishing cartridge on a fishing stem guide. The method includes providing at least one stem guide as described above, providing one or more cartridges, mounting the cartridge to the stem guide and removing the cartridge from the stem guide. The stem guide includes a cartridge receiving end having a cartridge attachment means for attaching the cartridge to the stem guide in a manner that the cartridge can be removed from the stem guide without causing an amount of damage to the stem guide which prevents the stem guide from being used again. Each cartridge includes an attachment end configured to be removably attached to the cartridge attachment means of the stem guide. Mounting the cartridge to the stem guide includes mounting the attachment end of the cartridge to the cartridge attachment means of the stem guide. Removing the cartridge from the stem guide includes separating the attachment end of the cartridge from the attachment means of the stem guide, wherein the cartridge is removed from the stem guide without causing an amount of damage to the stem guide which prevents the stem guide from being used again.

[0043] Embodiments of the method of using the stem guide and replaceable cartridge may include one or more of the following features or those described above with respect to the stem guide. For example, the method may further include mounting a second cartridge to the stem guide after the first cartridge has been removed. The cartridge may include one or more of a float, scent stick, light stick and combinations thereof.

[0044] In another general aspect, a replaceable fishing cartridge for attaching to a stem guide includes a generally tubular member having a first end and a second end, the first end having an attachment means for attaching the cartridge to the stem guide in a manner that the cartridge can be removed from the stem guide without causing an amount of damage to the stem guide which prevents the stem guide from being used again.

[0045] Embodiments of the replaceable fishing cartridge may include one or more of the features described above or following. For example, the cartridge includes one or more of a float, light stick, scent stick and combinations thereof.

[0046] The stem guide, replaceable cartridges, kit and method of use the stem guide and replaceable cartridges offers advantages to the angler. Traditionally an angler must remove the fishing line from the float, light stick or scent stick and attach a new float, light stick or scent stick to the fishing line. The stem guide, replaceable cartridges, kit and method may permit the angler to merely remove, for example, one float and replace it quickly with a second float that is more suitable for the need at hand. This convenience also can be accompanied by the ability to have a high quality stem guide that can be used with a range of floats, e.g., that vary by length, color, diameter, weight, etc. to cover most fishing conditions. The stem guide, replaceable cartridges, kit and method offer similar convenience to scent stick and light stick cartridges.

[0047] The cartridge attachment means may be a prong and mounting the buoyant member to the cartridge attachment means includes inserting the prong into the channel in the buoyant member, whereby at least portions of an inner diameter of the channel are increased when the prong is inserted into the buoyant member and the compressive force of the buoyant member against the prong retains the buoyant member to the prong.

[0048] The cartridge attachment means may include an open cavity in the stem guide and mounting the buoyant member to the cartridge attachment means includes compressing an outer diameter of the buoyant member, inserting the buoyant member into the open cavity, and releasing the outer diameter of the buoyant member from compression to allow the buoyant member to expand against the open cavity.

[0049] In another general aspect, a fishing bobber system includes a stem guide and one or more replaceable buoyant members mountable in the stem guide. The stem guide has a first end and a second end. The first end has a surface and a prong extending outwardly from the surface and at the second end a first slot passing through the stem guide between opposite sides of the stem guide and connected to an outer surface of the stem guide by a second slot passing from the first slot to the outer surface of the stem guide. The first slot and second slot are configured to receive a fishing line.

[0050] The one or more replaceable buoyant members having a first end, a second end and a longitudinal channel passing between openings at the first end and the second end, being made of a plastic foam and configured to be inserted onto the prong of the stem guide and removed from the prong

without damaging the stem guide. At least a portion of an inner diameter of the channel is increased when the prong is inserted into the channel in the buoyant member and the compressive force of the buoyant member against the prong retains the buoyant member to the prong.

[0051] Embodiments of the fishing bobber may include one or more of the features described herein or one or more of the following features. For example, the plastic foam may be an extruded closed cell polyethylene foam. The channel through the plastic foam buoyant member may be closed along a portion of the length of the plastic foam when the prong is not inserted into the channel. The fishing bobber may further include multiple buoyant members in a separate package.

[0052] In another general aspect a method of fishing includes providing a fishing float and mounting the fishing float to a stem guide. The fishing float has a first end, a second end and a longitudinal channel passing between openings at the first end and the second end. The fishing float is made of an extruded polyethylene foam. The fishing float is provided in a kit with multiple fishing floats. Mounting the fishing float to the stem guide includes changing the inner or outer diameter of the fishing float and the fishing float is retained to the stem guide solely or partially by a force exerted by the fishing float against the stem guide.

[0053] Embodiments of the method may include one or more of the features described herein or one or more of the following features. For example, the method may further include providing additional fishing floats with the stem guide or separately from the stem guide.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0054] FIG. 1 is front view, partially in section, showing the fishing tackle stem guide for temporarily attaching a fishing line thereto;

[0055] FIG. 1A is a fishing tackle stem guide with for temporarily attaching a fishing line thereto and with dual stem cups;

[0056] FIG. 2 shows the fishing tackle stem guide of FIG. 1 with a light stick therein;

[0057] FIG. 3 shows the fishing tackle stem guide of FIG. 1 with a scent stick therein attached to a fishing line;

[0058] FIG. 4 shows the fishing tackle stem guide of FIG. 1 as a kit with an adhesive to allow a person to secure the fishing tackle stem guide to various types of fishing tackle;

[0059] FIG. 5 shows a prior art slip bobber partially in cross section;

[0060] FIG. 6 shows the stem guide of FIG. 4 secured to the end of the stem of the prior art float of FIG. 5;

[0061] FIG. 7 shows a partial view of the rod in the fishing tackle stem guide of FIG. 1;

[0062] FIG. 8 shows a cross sectional view taken along lines 8-8 of FIG. 7;

[0063] FIG. 9 shows a side view of another embodiment of fishing tackle stem guide secured to fishing line;

[0064] FIG. 10 shows a top view of the fishing tackle stem guide of FIG. 9;

[0065] FIG. 11 shows the fishing tackle stem of FIG. 9 formed as an integral portion of a slip bobber;

[0066] FIG. 12 shows a side view of a portion of slotted stem in fishing tackle stem guide of FIG. 9;

[0067] FIG. 12A shows a top view of the slotted stem of FIG. 12;

[0068] FIG. 13 shows a top view of a sleeve that fits around the slotted stem of FIG. 12;

[0069] FIG. 14 shows a bottom view of the sleeve of FIG. 13; and

[0070] FIG. 15 shows an assembled top view of the stem of FIG. 12 and the sleeve of FIG. 13.

[0071] FIG. 16 is a front view of a multi-season stem guide in which a spring is compressed upwardly for fixed bobber fishing.

[0072] FIG. 17 is a front view of the multi-season stem guide in which a spring is compressed downwardly for winter slip bobber fishing.

[0073] FIG. 18 is a front view of the multi-season stem guide showing a cross-sectional view of a channel passing through the stem guide.

[0074] FIG. 19 is a front view of the multi-season stem guide of FIG. 16 showing a float attached to the stem guide.

[0075] FIG. 20 is a front view of the multi-season stem guide of FIG. 19 configured for fixed bobber fishing.

[0076] FIG. 21 is a front view of the multi-season stem guide of FIG. 19 configured for winter slip bobber fishing.

[0077] FIG. 22 is a front view of the multi-season stem guide of FIG. 19 configured for summer slip bobber fishing.

[0078] FIG. 23 is a front view of a second implementation of a multi-season stem guide.

[0079] FIG. 24 is a front view of a third implementation of a multi-season stem guide.

[0080] FIG. 25 is a front view of a fourth implementation of a multi-season stem guide.

[0081] FIG. 26 is an exploded assembly view of a multi-season stem guide and stick bobber.

[0082] FIGS. 27 and 28 are perspective and front views respectively, showing the alignment of the stem cup to the elongated rod.

[0083] FIG. 29 is a side view of the elongated rod.

[0084] FIG. 30 is a cross-sectional side view of the elongated rod of FIG. 29 taken along section lines AA.

[0085] FIG. 31 is a perspective, cut away side view of the elongated rod of FIG. 29.

[0086] FIG. 32 is a perspective side view of the elongated rod of FIG. 29 showing the increase in channel diameter.

[0087] FIG. 33 is a front view of a stem guide and a fishing article for inserting into an open end of the stem guide.

[0088] FIG. 34 is a top view of the stem guide of FIG. 33.

[0089] FIG. 35 is a front hidden line view of a stem guide and a removable and replaceable cartridge.

[0090] FIG. 36 is a side view of the stem guide and replaceable cartridge of FIG. 35.

[0091] FIG. 37 is a cross sectional front view of the stem guide and replaceable cartridge of FIG. 35 taken along section lines 37-37.

[0092] FIG. 38 is a perspective view of the stem guide of FIG. 35 and a cartridge attachment means for replaceably attaching a cartridge to the stem guide.

[0093] FIGS. 39-41 are front, side and cross-sectional side views, respectively, of a second implementation of a stem guide and removable and replaceable cartridge.

[0094] FIGS. 42-44 are front, side and cross-sectional side views, respectively, of a third implementation of a stem guide and removable and replaceable cartridge.

[0095] FIG. 45 is a cross-sectional side view of the stem guide of FIGS. 42-44.

[0096] FIG. 46 is an enlarged view of the cross-sectional side view of the stem guide taken at enlarged section 46 of FIG. 45.

[0097] FIGS. 47-49 are front, side and cross-sectional side views, respectively, of a fourth implementation of a stem guide and replaceable cartridge using magnetic attraction.

[0098] FIGS. 50 is an enlarged view of the stem guide and replaceable cartridge of FIGS. 47-49 taken at enlarged section 50 of FIG. 49.

[0099] FIGS. 51-53 are front, side and cross-sectional side views, respectively, of a fifth implementation of a stem guide and replaceable cartridge using a prong to retain the cartridge to the stem guide.

[0100] FIG. 54 is a cross-sectional side view of the stem guide of FIGS. 51-53.

[0101] FIG. 55 is a perspective view of the stem guide of FIGS. 51-53.

[0102] FIGS. 56-58 are front, side and cross-sectional side views, respectively, of a sixth implementation of a stem guide and replaceable cartridge using a prong to retain the cartridge to the stem guide.

[0103] FIG. 59 is a cross-sectional side view of the stem guide of FIGS. 56-58.

[0104] FIG. 60 is a perspective view of the stem guide of FIGS. 56-58.

[0105] FIGS. 61-63 are side, cross-sectional front and front views, respectively, of a seventh implementation of a stem guide and replaceable cartridge using a prong to retain the cartridge to the stem guide.

[0106] FIG. 64 is a perspective view of the stem guide of FIGS. 61-63.

[0107] FIGS. 65-67 are front, side and cross-sectional front views, respectively, of an eighth implementation of a stem guide and replaceable cartridge.

[0108] FIGS. 68 and 69 are perspective front and side views of the stem guide of FIGS. 65-67.

[0109] FIG. 70 is cross-sectional side view of the stem guide of FIG. 69 taken along section line 70.

[0110] FIG. 71 is a top view of the stem guide of FIGS. 68 and 69.

[0111] FIG. 72 is a front view of a modified stem guide configured to removably receive a replaceable cartridge.

[0112] FIGS. 73a-c are front views of three replaceable cartridges having different shapes.

[0113] FIGS. 74a-c are perspective view of a modified stem guide for replaceable cartridges having an eyelet for retaining a fishing line.

[0114] FIGS. 75a-c and 76 are side views of a modified stem guide for replaceable cartridges having a hook and sleeve for retaining a fishing line.

[0115] FIG. 77a is a front view of a stem guide having an adjustable buoyant member mounted to the stem guide.

[0116] FIG. 77b is a perspective view of an adjustable buoyant member.

[0117] FIG. 77c is a front view of the stem guide and adjustable buoyant member of FIG. 77a in which the buoyant member has been cut and a fishing line with fishing tackle has been mounted to the stem guide.

[0118] FIGS. 77d-g are end views showing additional configurations of the adjustable buoyant member of FIG. 77a.

[0119] FIG. 78 is a flow chart describing a method of using the stem guide with adjustable buoyant member of FIG. 77a.

[0120] FIG. 79a is a front view of a single stem fishing float assembly for slip and fixed bobber fishing.

[0121] FIG. 79b is a front view of the disassembled components of the fishing float assembly of FIG. 79a.

[0122] FIG. 79c is an enlarged view of a pair of line shoulders and spring at a lower end of the stem of FIG. 79a.

[0123] FIG. 80a is a front view of a dual stem fishing float assembly for slip and fixed bobber fishing.

[0124] FIG. 80b is a front view of the disassembled components of the fishing float assembly of FIG. 80a.

[0125] FIG. 80c is a cross-sectional side view of the fishing float assembly of FIG. 80a.

[0126] FIG. 80d and e are top and bottom views, respectively, of the fishing float assembly of FIG. 80a.

[0127] FIG. 80f is an enlarged view of a pair of line shoulders and spring at a lower end of the stem of FIG. 80a.

[0128] FIG. 81a is a front view of a single stem fishing float assembly for slip and fixed bobber fishing.

[0129] FIGS. 81b and c are top and bottom views, respectively, of the fishing float assembly of FIG. 81a.

[0130] FIG. 81d is a cross-sectional side view of the fishing float assembly of FIG. 81a.

[0131] FIG. 81e is an enlarged view of a pair of line shoulders and spring at a lower end of the stem of FIG. 81a.

[0132] FIG. 81f is a front view of the disassembled components of the fishing float assembly of FIG. 81a.

[0133] FIGS. 83a-f are views of a fishing float assembly that permits summer and winter slip bobber fishing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0134] FIG. 1 is front view, partially in section, showing a molded fishing tackle stem guide 10 for temporarily attaching a fishing line thereto. Stem guide 10 includes an elongated rod 11 having a stem connector 12 on one end and a line stop 10a on the other end with the line stop 10a including an annular spring stop 13 on the opposite end. Line stop 10a includes a first L shaped line shoulder 11a for engaging a fishing line and a second circular line shoulder 11b for engaging fishing line that is inserted therethrough. Both line shoulders are characterized by having rounded corners by molding the stem connector 12 rather than extruding the stem connector 12 to thereby avoid sharp edges found with extruded articles that can cut or abrade the fishing line. The molded rounded shoulder 11a on the rod 11 is illustrated in FIG. 7 and FIG. 8 by reference numerals 11b, 11c, 11d and 11e which show the radius rather than abrupt corners where the fishing line rests on when the fishing line is held in a fixed condition in the line stop 10a.

[0135] A sleeve comprising a cylindrical compression spring 14 is retained on rod 11 by the stem connector 12 and the annular spring stop 13 to enable a fishing line to be restrained from sliding along the line shoulder 11a or 11b by the frictional engagement of the line between the sleeve 14 and the rod 11 as the line is held in a non linear condition within the confines of the compression spring 14. This type of line stop with compression spring and radius shoulders is found as an integral part of the Lucky Jack™ Bobber sold by ROD-n-BOBB'S of Eau Claire Wis.

[0136] Extending axially through the stem guide 10 is a tube 15 or central line guide that allows a fishing line to slide freely therethrough. A purpose of the tube or central line guide 15 is to allow the stem connector 12 to be secured to a hollow stem of a slip bobber to convert the slip bobber to a fixed bobber.

[0137] In the embodiment shown the stem connector 12 forms an open-ended stem cup that has a large opening 16a on one end and has a closed end 16b penetrated by the tube 15.

The stem cup 12 has an inner cylindrical securement surface 16 that can be attached to the user's fishing tackle either through a friction fit or a more permanent attachment using an adhesive, molding or the like. The stem connector 12 and the rod 11 are molded from a polymer plastic such as Nylon or Polycarbonate to provide a one-piece unit that together with the compression spring sleeve 14 can be secured to any number of different types of fishing tackle by insertion of a portion of the fishing tackle into the open-end 16a of stem cup 12. In the embodiment shown the stem cup 12 has an inner diameter D_1 on the upper portion of the stem cup. If desired the stem cup can be provided with bands of different inner diameter on the upper portion of the stem cup to permit the stem cup to engage different diameter end sections on various types of fishing tackle. Thus the stem guide provides a means to secure various sizes of fishing tackle to a fishing line. As one example, a float or a stem of a float can be inserted into the cup and adhered with an adhesive.

[0138] FIG. 1A shows another embodiment of the stem guide wherein the stem guide 10 is shown with a second stem cup 12' having a base secured to the stem guide 10 with the second stem cup 12' identical to the stem cup 10 and having an open end 16a' and a closed end 16b' with the central passage 15 extending therethrough. With the embodiment of FIG. 1A one can attach two items to the fishing line. For example, one might attach a scent stick in one stem cup and a light stick in the other stem cup or one might have scent sticks or light sticks in both cups.

[0139] FIG. 2 illustrates the stem guide 10 connected to a commercially available light stick 20, which is often used in fishing floats or the like. In the present application the stem guide 10 engages the sidewalls of the light stick to frictionally hold the light stick 20 therein while the spring 14 and stem 11 coact to form a line stop to hold the fishing line 21 thereto. When used in this manner the stem guide 10 enables a fisherman to know where the fishing line is located. Once the light stick 20 is spent the light stick can be removed and replaced with a fresh light stick. In addition the light stick 20 can be removed and replaced with a light stick that generates a different colored light thus giving the fisherman the option of selecting the proper light.

[0140] FIG. 3 illustrates still another use of the stem guide 10 showing a scent stick 24 secured to the fishing line 10 with the scent stick located on the fishing line 25 and proximate the fish hook 26. A scent stick can comprise a stick of material that is an attractant to fish. The fisherman can place the bait on the hook 26 and in addition can attach the stem guide 10 with the scent stick 24 proximate the fishing hook to act as an attractant to bring the fish to a position where it can spot the bait on the hook 26. Thus the stem guide can be used to hold scent attractants proximate a hook on a fishing line.

[0141] A further use of the stem guide is to hold items such as buoy markers so that one can mark off an area.

[0142] FIG. 4 shows a fisherman's stem guide kit 30 that comprising a transparent envelope or pouch 32 having a stem guide 10 therein together with a tube of an adhesive 31 having a cap 31a thereon. To use the kit 30 the user opens pouch 30 and removes the stem guide 10 and the tube of adhesive from the pouch 30 and places a drop of adhesive from the tube of adhesive 31 on the inside of the stem connector 12. To illustrate the use of the stem guide kit reference should be made to FIG. 5 which shows a prior art extruded slip bobber 40 comprising a float 41 having a hollow upper stem 42 and a lower

hollow stem **42a** with a fishing line **43** slideable extending through the stems and the float.

[0143] Another popular prior art bobber is a fixed stick bobber. The fixed stick extruded bobbbers generally have a solid stem and lack the hole through the stem to enable the bobber to be used as a slip bobber. In order to reduce manufacturing costs the stick bobbbers are extruded. Although the stick bobbbers can be manufactured relatively inexpensive the stick bobbbers suffer when uses as a fixed bobber. That is, to make the extruded bobber a fixed bobber a saw cut is made part way into the stem of the stick bobber. The saw cut is then used to hold the line to prevent the line from slipping. Unfortunately, the saw cut in the stem of the bobber has sharp edges which can cause the fishing line to break. To alleviate the problem of line weakening while maintaining low cost in bobber manufacture the molded stem guide **10** of the present invention can be incorporated onto the existing stem of a fixed bobber or slip bobber to a line-friendly bobber. While the stem guide **10** is shown in use with the slip bobber **40**, the stem guide can also be used with a fixed bobber. For example, one may want to eliminate the saw cut on the fixed bobber and replace an end portion of the stem with the stem guide **10** having the rounded line shoulders obtainable by molding to thereby placing a line friendly line stop on the fixed bobber.

[0144] FIG. 6 shows the prior art conventional extruded slip bobber **40** that has been converted to a combination slip bobber/fixed bobber during a fishing outing by the placement of the stem cup **12** of the stem guide **10** on the end of the lower hollow stem **42a** of the fishing bobber **40** by engaging the sidewalls **16** of the stem cup **12** with the outer surface of the lower stem **42a**. By use of an adhesive or the like the user has fixedly secured the stem guide **10** to the fishing float **40** thus making the slip bobber **40** a combination slip bobber/fixed bobber. A feature of the present invention is that it reduces the cost of making a fishing bobber that is not harsh on the fishing line. Conventional bobbbers are generally formed through an extrusion molding process and sawing process that result in sharp edges that can abrade the fishing line during use. To mold the bobber and the line stop in one piece increases the cost of the bobber; however, by molding only the stem guide which holds the fishing line **43** and the fishing bobber **40**, and then securing the stem guide to the stem of a stick float one can create a fishing bobber that is not harsh on the fishing line but one can also reduce the cost of making the fishing bobber since the costs of molding an entire fishing bobber is more costly than molding only the stem guide for the bobber. Thus the bobber comprises two distinct portions: an extruded body portion and a molded end portion that can hold the fishing line in a manner that inhibits or prevents abrasion of the fishing line. By molded it is meant that the surfaces can be formed by allowing the molten plastic to set within the confines of a mold. Consequently, one can introduce smooth surfaces into the article and thus avoid sharp edges that are inherent in an extrusion process.

[0145] As shown in FIG. 6 the fishing line **43** extends through the hollow tube and through the stem guide **10** and can be temporarily secured to the stem **11** though the compression spring **14** thus providing fixed bobber operation. Thus, the kit **30** can convert a slip bobber to a fixed line bobber but more significantly the operation can on-the-go provide a slip bobber with a line stop that does not weaken or cut the fishing line. That is, by inserting the inner surface **16** into engagement with the exterior cylindrical surface of the hollow stem **42a** one can fasten the stem guide **10** to available slip

bobbbers. A further use of the stem guide **10** is that even with fish slip bobbbers/fixed bobbbers that have a harsh line stop such as a saw cut stem one can replace a harsh line stop with the stem guide **10** with the radiused corners by severing the end of the stem in the float that contains the saw cut and securing the stem guide **10** to the float stem to reduce line abrasion.

[0146] FIG. 9 shows another embodiment of a fishing tackle stem guide **60**. Fishing tackle stem guide **60** includes a molded stem connector **52** on one end and a molded line stop **60a** on the opposite end for temporarily securing fishing line thereto. Fishing tackle stem guide **60** includes a stem connector **52** having an inner cylindrical surface **52a** for connecting to a fishing float, a scent stick, a light stick or other types of fishing tackle such as stem guide **10**. A tube **55** extends axially through a cylindrical rod **61** to enable the stem guide **60** to be attached to an end of a slip bobber to convert the slip bobber to a fixed stop bobber. Rod **61** includes an annular end stop **62** that maintains a cylindrical sleeve **51** in a working relationship with stem **61** although other methods of holding the sleeve **51** on the rod such as by pinning or adhesively securing the sleeve thereto could be used.

[0147] The line stop stem rod **61** is shown in isolated side view in FIG. 12 and in an isolated top view in FIG. 12A revealing the lip **63** that has been formed in stem rod **61** with the lip projecting a distance “h” above the stem rod **61**. Lip **63** has an undersurface **61b** and a shoulder **61a** that forms a v-shaped groove that allows a fishing line to be wedged between undersurface **61b** and shoulder **61a** by axially pulling the fishing line toward the annular end **62**. To illustrate the wedging action, a fishing line **59** is shown in a wedged condition in FIGS. 12 and 12A.

[0148] FIG. 9 shows the stem rod **61** of line stop **60a** including a cylindrical sleeve **51** having an edge **53** defining an opening in the sleeve that exposes the upward projecting line lip **63**. Line lip **63** projects a distance “h” above the rod **61** to enable a fishing line **59** to be slid axially along the stem connector **52** toward the annular end stop **62** and in doing so cause the fishing line to be guided under the lip **63** and onto the shoulder **61a** under the lip **63** where the fishing line is secured therein by the coaction of the undersurface **61b** and the shoulder **61a**. Once the fishing line engages the shoulder **61a** the fishing line **59** is wrapped partially around the rod by slipping the fishing line between the sleeve **51** and the rod **61** and then out the L-shaped line shoulder **54** in sleeve **51** as shown in FIG. 9. Thus, the end portion forms a first ear **58** that enables the fishing line **59** to be held around a portion of rod **61**. Similarly, the opposite side of sleeve **51** includes an ear **58a** (see FIG. 13), which allows the fishing line **59** to be held around a further portion of rod **61**. The use of a molded stem guide allows one to make rounded shoulder on the line stop so as to minimize abrasion to the fishing line. A further feature of the embodiment of FIG. 9 is that the line stop is all plastic and includes no metal springs so as to further reduce line abrasion. Thus, the fishing line **59** is wedged beneath the lip **63** and extends at least partially around the elongated rod **61** and the sleeve includes a set of ears **58** and **58a** to hold the fishing line beneath the lip with the lip spaced from an line shoulder or eye **54** in the sleeve **51** and an identical line shoulder or eye in the opposite side of sleeve **51** to hold the fishing line **59** in an offset condition to prevent slippage of the fishing line therein.

[0149] FIGS. 13 and 14 show an isolated view of the cylindrical sleeve **51** showing the V shaped edge **53** that forms an opening therein to allows projection of the lip **63** therethrough as well as the ears **58** and **58a** that extend around rod **61** to

hold a fishing line therebetween in a nonlinear condition so that a pulling force on the line brings the fishing line into wedged engagement between surface **61b** and shoulder **61a**. **[0150]** FIG. 9 shows the fishing line **59** is held a spaced distance x from the bottom of the v-shaped grove between lip **63** and shoulder **61a** so that a pulling force on line **59** causes the fishing line to be pulled tighter into the v-shaped groove thus inhibiting or preventing the fishing line from sliding in the line stop **60a**.

[0151] FIG. 15 shows an isolated top view of the sleeve **51** and rod **61** with the line **59** held between the inner surface of sleeve **51** and the outer surface of rod **61** to maintain line **59** in the wedged condition between surface **61b** and shoulder **61a**. That is, by having the line held around the rod **61** by the ears **58** and **58a** it causes the fishing line to be wedged between the surface **61b** and shoulder **61a** to frictionally hold the line in position beneath the lip **63** as a pulling force is applied to the fishing line. Thus, the embodiment of FIG. 9 eliminates the point contact on the fishing line found in line stops with springs since the contact with the fishing line in the line stop of FIG. 9 is over an extended area under lip **63** and between the rod **61** and the sleeve as illustrated in FIGS. 9 and 15. Thus the embodiment of FIG. 9 allows one to hold a fishing line therein through elimination of the spring as shown in the embodiment of FIG. 1.

[0152] FIG. 11 shows a lighted fishing slip bobber, which contains a light source therein (not shown) with the line holder **60** shown in FIG. 9 integrally formed to bobber **70**. In this embodiment of the lighted fishing bobber the line stop of FIG. 9 has been integrally formed onto the end of the bobber **70**. Bobber **70** is a slip bobber and includes a tube **71** with a line **72** extending therethrough. Although the lighted bobber **70** is a slip bobber the bobber **70** can also function as a fixed line bobber since the cylindrical sleeve **60** and the rod **61** coact to frictionally grip the line as illustrated and described with respect to FIG. 9. Thus in the embodiment of FIG. 11 the use of a compression spring as the sleeve has been eliminated with the use of the line stop of FIG. 9.

[0153] The invention includes a method of securing an item of fishing tackle to a fishing line by engaging a first end of a stem connector **10** or **60** with an item of fishing tackle and inserting a fishing line into a line stop on the second end of the stem connector to secure a fishing line thereto to thereby secure both the stem connector and the item of fishing tackle to the fishing line. For example, if one engages the stem connector **10** or **60** with an end of a slip bobber **40** as shown in FIG. 5 one can provide fixed bobber operation to the slip bobber. If desired, one can integrally form the stem connector **60** to a slip bobber as shown in FIG. 11 to provide fixed bobber operation of the slip bobber.

[0154] The invention also includes a method of inserting a fishing line into a line stop of the fishing tackle line guide of FIG. 9 by extending a fishing line between an outer surface of a rod in the line stop and an inner surface of a sleeve **51** on the rod to secure the fishing line therebetween as well as extending the fishing line beneath a lip **63** on the line stop **60a** to at least partially secure the fishing line therein.

[0155] Further methods of attachment include the step of securing a light stick a scent stick or other items of fishing tackle to a stem cup in the stem connector. In addition if desired the stem cup could be a rod or the like to provide a male fitting rather than a female fitting.

[0156] The inventor also has developed a multi-season fishing tackle stem guide that is configured for one or more of

winter slip fishing, summer slip fishing, and fixed fishing. The stem guide has a line stop system that can be varied to permit one or more of the following: (a) position the fishing line within a first opening or shoulder that is used for fixed, e.g., fixed bobber, fishing, (b) position the fishing line within a second opening or shoulder that is used for winter slip, e.g., slip bobber, fishing, and (c) position the fishing line within a third opening that is used for summer slip, e.g., slip bobber, fishing. References herein to slip or fixed bobber fishing also should be interpreted to be understood to include slip of fixed fishing with a light stick, scent stick and the like because the stem guide can be attached to fishing articles other than a bobber.

[0157] The stem guide is configured to permit winter slip bobber fishing by positioning the fishing line under the water when the stem guide is in the water such that freezing air does not cause water on the line to freeze the line against a surface on the bobber. Because the fishing line will pass through and be positioned within the stem guide entirely under the water, the fishing line will not freeze against a surface of the bobber. The stem guide is configured to do this by causing the fishing line to be positioned in a slot or opening that is not enclosed, surrounded or otherwise in frictional contact by a sleeve, spring or compression means during winter slip bobber fishing. In some implementations, the sleeve may be compressed in one lengthwise direction for one type of fishing and compressed in an opposite direction for another type of fishing.

[0158] The stem guide offers other advantages, as described in part with respect to FIG. 1. The stem guide includes an elongated rod with one or more shoulders to receive a fishing line. In the prior art fishing bobbles the angler had limited options to have an optimal fishing bobber. For summer slip bobber fishing, the stem of the fishing bobber typically is an extruded tube through which an axial channel runs. The fishing line passes through this channel for slip bobber fishing. An advantage of extruded tube is that it is relatively inexpensive to produce. But this type of slip bobber fishing will not work at temperatures below freezing where the exposed portion of the line extending out of the elongated rod and water will freeze to the rod. Further, to attempt to make this extruded tube useful for fixed bobber fishing requires cuts to be made into the tube to form shoulders to receive the fishing line. These cuts are undesirable because they are sharp and can cut or weaken the line when the line is pulled against the sharp edge of the cut. Instead, some companies attempt to mold the elongated rod to contain the shoulders. A molded, full-length elongated rod to use as a stem for a stick bobber is relatively expensive because each piece is separately molded.

[0159] The multi-season fishing tackle stem guide for winter slip bobber fishing, summer slip bobber fishing, and fixed bobber fishing differs from the stem guide of FIG. 1 generally by the inclusion of a means similar to the shoulder for fixed bobber fishing. Instead of being used for fixed bobber fishing the means permits winter slip bobber fishing without the nicks and saws cuts that can damage a soft, flexible fishing line because the stem or elongated rod is molded to have smooth or radiused edges. In some embodiments, the molded rod has two shoulders—each having smooth or radiused edges. In other embodiments, the molded rod has one shoulder that then extends into two shoulders—each having smooth or radiused edges. For both embodiments, the molded rod may have a channel extending between both ends of the rod. Because the rod is molded, the channel is not necessarily

round or centered along the central axis. The diameter of the channel should be sufficiently large to permit a fishing line to easily pass through for summer slip bobber fishing. The shoulders should be formed during the molding, e.g., injection molding, such that they are entirely or primarily positioned within the solid portion of the rod. By placing the stem from a stick bobber into the stem cup, an angler can pass a fishing line into the bottom end of the channel in the elongate rod and into the axial channel passing through the stick bobber, as shown in FIG. 6.

[0160] FIGS. 16, 17 and 18 are front views of a multi-season fishing tackle stem guide 100 for temporarily attaching a fishing line. The stem guide 100 includes an elongated rod 115 having a stem connector 120 on one end and a line stop system 125 on the other end. A channel 110 extends the length of the elongated rod 115 and opens in the stem connector 120 to form a stem cup for receiving a fishing article. The channel is shown in FIG. 18 to illustrate the placement of the fishing line. The channel 110 can be wider than illustrated in FIG. 18 and may vary in diameter over the distance of the rod and stem connector. The line stop system 125 includes a flange or annular sleeve stop 130 on one end and the stem connector 120 on the opposite end. The line stop system 125 further includes a first L shaped line shoulder 145, a second L-shaped line shoulder 150 and an optional circular line shoulder 155. Each of the line shoulders are used to engage a fishing line that is inserted there through. Each line shoulder also has a smoothed or radiused edge without cuts or nicks and is configured to prevent damage to the fishing line. This generally is accomplished by making the rod using molding, e.g., injection molding.

[0161] A sleeve 140 encircles at least a portion of the rod 115 and can be moved along the length of the rod between the annular sleeve stop 130 and the stem connector 120. The sleeve 140 may be a spring. A base 135 of the stem connector 120 acts as an upper stop for the upper movement of the sleeve while the annular sleeve stop 130 acts as a lower stop of the downward movement of the sleeve. The stem connector 120 also includes a pair of notched or cut out sections 175 that extend upward from the base 135 and surrounds a portion 170 of the second L-shaped shoulder 150. The pair of notched sections 175 is used such that a fishing line can pass freely through the rod 115 by entering one notched section 175 and passing out of the rod through a second notched section 175.

[0162] In general, the sleeve 140 will extend the length of the rod between the stem connector 120 and the sleeve stop 130. In FIGS. 16 and 17, the arrows adjacent to the rod 115 are used to indicate the compression of the sleeve in one direction or the other. In FIG. 16 the sleeve 140 is compressed up on the rod against the stem connector 120 such that the sleeve encircles a portion of the shoulder 150 while exposing the shoulders 145 and 155. However, the portion 170 of the shoulder 150 remains unencircled by the sleeve because the sleeve cannot extend beyond the base of the stem connector 120. In contrast to the configuration illustrated in FIG. 16, in FIG. 17 the sleeve 140 is compressed down on the rod against the annular sleeve stop 130 such that the sleeve encircles the shoulders 145 and 155 while exposing the shoulder 150.

[0163] By use of the shoulders 145 and 150, the multi-season fishing tackle stem guide 100 can be used for multiple types of bobber fishing, e.g., slip bobber fishing, fixed bobber fishing, and multi-season fishing, e.g., summer fishing and winter fishing. In winter fishing where the outside temperature is below freezing, the angler with a slip bobber must

ensure that the fishing line passing through the bobber does not become frozen against a surface of the bobber. For example, as illustrated in FIG. 18, if the fishing line was to pass through the longitudinal channel 110 in the rod 115 and the stem connector 120, the water on the line in the bobber above the water would freeze the line to the channel 110 and prevent movement of the line in the channel. To counter this problem, the angler using the stem guide 100 in winter slip bobber fishing pulls the sleeve 140 down as illustrated in FIG. 17 and passes a fishing line through the upper shoulder 165 and up into slot extension 170. Upon releasing the sleeve 140 such that it is extended between the annular sleeve stop 130 and the base 135, the fishing line is trapped within the notched section 175. In this position, the fishing line can slide through the slot portion 170.

[0164] It should be noted that the position of the channel 110 within the rod can vary but generally will not be positioned such that the shoulders 145 and 150 extend into the channel. However, in some embodiments, a portion of the shoulders may extend into the channel 110.

[0165] As illustrated in FIG. 16, to use the stem guide 100 in fixed bobber fishing, the sleeve 140 is pulled up and the fishing line is passed into the lower shoulder 145. Upon releasing the sleeve 140 such that it is extended between the annular sleeve stop 130 and the base 135, the fishing line is trapped within the lower shoulder 145 and under the sleeve 140. Specifically, the fishing line passes between the annular sleeve stop 130 and the base of the sleeve 140 and then between the sleeve and the rod 115 before passing through the lower shoulder 145. The fishing line then passes out of the lower shoulder 145, between the sleeve and the rod, and finally between the sleeve stop 130 and the base of the sleeve 140. In this configuration, the fishing line is trapped in place and unable to slide through the lower shoulder 145.

[0166] Referring to FIG. 19, a fishing bobber rig 180 is assembled from the stem guide 100 attached to a foam stem 185 through which a channel 187 passes. The channel 187 is in connection with the channel 110 in the stem guide 120 such that a fishing line can pass through the fishing bobber rig 180 if used for slip bobber fishing in warmer weather. The sleeve 140 can be compressed downward to use the bobber for slip bobber for slip bobber fishing in freezing weather or compressed upward to the bobber for fixed bobber fishing in the warmer weather. The foam stem 185 can be replaced with other types of fishing components. For example, a light rod can be substituted for the foam stem. As described elsewhere herein, the foam stem 185 or light rod can be friction fit within the stem cup or held in place with an adhesive. Similar to the configuration illustrated in FIG. 6, the stem guide 100 can be attached to the stem of a stick bobber. In general, the stem cup can be interfaced with any mating fishing article using a friction fit, adhesive or other attachment means. In this manner, most fishing articles can be optimized for winter slip bobber fishing, summer slip bobber fishing and fixed bobber fishing merely by attaching them to the stem cup of the stem guide 100.

[0167] Referring to FIG. 20, the fishing bobber rig 180 is shown configured for fixed bobber fishing. To use the fishing bobber rig for fixed bobber fishing, the user compresses the sleeve 140 upwardly and passes a fishing line 194 through the lower shoulder 145. Upon releasing the sleeve 140, the fishing line 194 is fixed in position against the rod 115. When the user casts the fishing bobber rig 180, the interaction between the

sleeve 140, rod 115 and fishing line 194 keeps the fishing bobber rig from sliding along the line 194.

[0168] Referring to FIG. 21, the fishing bobber 180 is shown configured for slip bobber winter fishing, in particular when the air temperature is at or below freezing and there is a need to prevent the water on the fishing line from freezing to a surface on the fishing bobber rig 180. To use the fishing bobber rig for slip bobber winter fishing, the user compresses the sleeve 140 downwardly and passes a fishing line 194 through the upper shoulder 165. Upon releasing the sleeve 140, the fishing line 194 is trapped in a slidable configuration within the portion 170 in the rod 115. When the user casts the fishing bobber rig 180, the fishing bobber rig can slide along the line 194. For example to cast, the user reels in the fishing line until the hook or other fishing apparatus at the end of the line is adjacent to the bobber rig 180. As illustrated in FIG. 21, a knot 196 is tied onto the fishing line 194. The knot 196 is of a size small enough to be reeled in and through the eyelets on the fishing rod (not shown) but large enough such that the knot will not pass through the shoulder 165 or the portion 170.

[0169] Upon casting out, the hook, weights or other gear attached to the end of the fishing line will sink into the water while the buoyancy of the fishing bobber keeps it floating on the surface. The fishing line 194 will continue to pass through the portion 170 until the knot 196 reaches the portion 170. Certain portions of the fishing bobber 180 will be above the water line and other portions below the water line. In particular, the portion 170 will be positioned below the water surface such that the fishing line 194 will not freeze against the bobber.

[0170] The use of the slip bobber configuration illustrated in FIG. 21 for winter fishing can be contrasted against the slip bobber configuration illustrated in FIG. 22 for summer fishing. In FIG. 22, the fishing line passes through the inner channels 110 and 185. When the user casts the fishing bobber rig 180, the fishing bobber rig can slide along the line 194. For example to cast, the user reels in the fishing line until the hook or other fishing apparatus at the end of the line is adjacent to the bobber rig 180. As illustrated in FIG. 22, the knot 196 is tied onto the fishing line 194. The knot 196 is of a size small enough to be reeled in and through the eyelets on the fishing rod (not shown) but large enough such that the knot will not enter and pass through the channels 110 and 185.

[0171] Upon casting out, the hook, weights or other gear attached to the end of the fishing line 194 will sink into the water while the buoyancy of the fishing bobber 180 keeps it floating on the surface. The fishing line 194 will continue to pass through the channels 110 and 180 until the knot 196 reaches the top of the bobber. Like the winter bobber configuration illustrated in FIG. 21, certain portions of the fishing bobber 180 will be above the water line and other portions below the water line. Unlike winter fishing, in summer fishing there is no concern that the water on the fishing line will freeze to the bobber. If the configuration in FIG. 22 was to be used in winter fishing where the temperature is below freezing, the water on the line 194 would cause the line to freeze to the bobber at least along the top of the bobber because the top of the bobber would be exposed to the sub-freezing temperatures.

[0172] As can be expected the stem guide 100 can be used to attach to fishing tackle other than a bobber. For example, the fishing tackle can be a light stick or a scent stick. The bobber, light stick or scent stick can be attached to the stem

guide 100 according to any of the methods described above, such as one or more of a friction fit, a twist lock attachment, or an adhesive.

[0173] Similarly, the stem guide 100 can be an integral part of any piece of fishing tackle. The stem guide can be formed such that the stem cup or connector is a portion of the bobber or float and a further stem extends from the opposite end of the bobber or float. The stem guide 100 can be manufactured such that a foam float portion of a bobber is slid along the elongated stem adjacent to the line shoulders. In other words, the stem guide 100 can be a separate piece that is an after market attachment to an article of fishing tackle or it can be configured as an integral part of an article of fishing tackle.

[0174] The principle of the multi-season stem guide 100, namely the ability to slip bobber fish and fixed bobber fish in any season using one bobber, can be applied in other configurations of a stem guide as well. For example, referring to FIG. 23, a multi-season stem guide 200 includes an elongated rod 215 having a stem connector 205 on one end and a line stop system 240 on the other end. The line stop system 240 includes a flanged or annular sleeve stop 230 on one end and the stem connector 205 on the opposite end. A sleeve (not shown) is in compression between the annular sleeve stop 230 and a base 210 of the stem connector 205. As described above, the sleeve may be a spring or other compression means. The line stop system 240 further includes an upper L shaped line shoulder 220 and a lower L-shaped line shoulder 225. Each of the line shoulders are used to engage a fishing line that is inserted there through. The annular sleeve stop 230 includes a notched or cut-out section 245 into which an extension 235 of the lower line shoulder 225 is positioned.

[0175] The stem guide 200 is used similarly to the stem guide 100 except that the upper shoulder 220 is used for fixed bobber fishing and the lower shoulder 225 is used for winter slip bobber fishing. Upon pulling the sleeve (not shown) down so that it is compressed against the sleeve stop 230, the shoulder 220 is exposed and a fishing line can be placed within the shoulder. When the sleeve is released, the fishing line will enter and exit a space between the sleeve and the rod 215 adjacent to the base 210 of the stem connector 205. The fishing line will be fixed in position between the sleeve and the rod 215.

[0176] In contrast, for winter slip bobber fishing, the sleeve is pulled up so that it is compressed against the stem connector base 210 with the lower shoulder 225 exposed so that a fishing line can be placed within the shoulder. When the sleeve is released, the fishing line will be pushed down within the shoulder extension 235 and surrounded by the notched section 245. Because the sleeve cannot extend all the way to the bottom of the extension 235, the fishing line can easily pass through the shoulder during winter slip bobber fishing. Of importance to winter fishing, when the bobber is in the water, the fishing line will be positioned in or under the water so that it will not freeze against the bobber.

[0177] In another implementation of a multi-season stem guide, FIG. 24 illustrates a multi-season stem guide 300 that includes an elongated rod 315 having a stem connector 305 on one end and a line stop system 340 on the other end. The line stop system 340 includes one or more sleeve stops 345 in the proximity of one end and the stem connector 305 on the opposite end. A sleeve (not shown) is in compression between the sleeve stops 345 and a base 310 of the stem connector 305. The line stop system 340 further includes an upper L shaped line shoulder 320 and a lower L-shaped line shoulder 325.

Each of the line shoulders are used to engage a fishing line that is inserted there through. The sleeve stops **345** are positioned adjacent to the lower line shoulder **325** such that a portion **335** of the lower line shoulder **325** extends past the sleeve stops **345**. In this manner, a sleeve around the rod **315** will not be able to extend past the sleeve stops **345**.

[0178] The stem guide **300** is used similarly to the stem guide **200** with the upper shoulder **320** used for fixed bobber fishing and the lower shoulder **325** used for winter slip bobber fishing. Upon pulling the sleeve (not shown) down so that it is compressed against the sleeve stops **345**, the shoulder **320** is exposed and a fishing line can be placed within the shoulder. When the sleeve is released, the fishing line will enter and exit a space between the sleeve and the rod **315** adjacent to the base **310** of the stem connector **305**. The fishing line will be fixed in position between the sleeve and the rod **315**.

[0179] In contrast, for winter slip bobber fishing, the sleeve is pulled up so that it is compressed against the stem connector base **310** with the lower shoulder **325** exposed so that a fishing line can be placed within the shoulder. When the sleeve is released, the fishing line will be pushed down within the shoulder extension **335** beyond the sleeve stops **345**. Because the sleeve cannot extend all the way to the bottom of the extension **335**, the fishing line can easily pass through the shoulder during winter slip bobber fishing. Of importance to winter fishing, when the bobber is in the water, the fishing line will be positioned in or under the water so that it will not freeze against the bobber.

[0180] In another implementation of a multi-season stem guide, FIG. 25 illustrates a multi-season stem guide **400** that includes an elongated rod **415** having a stem connector **405** on one end and a line stop system **440** on the other end. The line stop system **440** includes a sleeve stop **430** at one end and the stem connector **405** on the opposite end. A sleeve (not shown) is in compression between the annular sleeve stop **430** and a base **410** of the stem connector **405**. The line stop system **440** further includes an L shaped line shoulder **425** that includes an upper portion **420** and a lower portion **435**. Each of the line shoulder portions are used to engage a fishing line that is inserted through the shoulder **425**. The upper portion **420** extends to the proximity of, but above, a top edge **433** of the sleeve stop **430**. The lower portion **435** extends into a notched or cut-out section **445** of the annular sleeve stop **430**. In this manner, a sleeve, such as a spring or other compression means, positioned around the rod **415** will extend past and enclose the upper portion **420** but will not be able to extend over the lower portion **430**.

[0181] The stem guide **400** is used similarly to the above stem guides except that the shoulder **425** is used for both fixed bobber fishing and winter slip bobber fishing. In particular, the fishing line is fed into the line shoulder **425** and then into the upper portion **420** used for fixed bobber fishing and the lower portion **435** for winter slip bobber fishing. Upon pulling the sleeve (not shown) up so that it is compressed against the stem connector base **410**, the shoulder **425** is exposed and a fishing line can be placed within the shoulder. The fishing line then can be placed within the upper extension **420** for fixed bobber fishing or the lower extension **435** for winter slip bobber fishing. For fixed bobber fishing, when the sleeve is released, the fishing line will enter and exit a space between the sleeve and the rod **415** adjacent to the top edge **433** of the sleeve stop **430**. The fishing line will be fixed in position between the sleeve and the rod **415**.

[0182] In contrast, for winter slip bobber fishing, when the sleeve is released the fishing line will be pushed down within the lower extension **435** in the notched section **445**. Because the sleeve cannot extend all the way to the bottom of the lower extension **435**, the fishing line can easily pass through the shoulder extension during winter slip bobber fishing. Of importance to winter slip bobber fishing, when the bobber is in the water, the fishing line will be positioned in or under the water so that it will not freeze against the bobber.

[0183] The assembly of one implementation of the stem guide **100** is illustrated in FIGS. 26-28. FIG. 26 is an expanded view of the stem guide **100** and a stick bobber **500**, such as a stem of a stick bobber, that illustrates the arrangement of the components of both the stem guide and the stem. Referring also to FIGS. 27 and 28, the elongated rod **115** includes one or more alignment ridges **116** on its outside surface that are configured to mate within alignment grooves or slots **117** within the inner surface of the stem cup **120**. In this manner, it is ensured that during assembly the extension **170** of the shoulder **150** and extension **170** will be properly aligned with the cutout section **175** of the stem cup. This is important to the reliable and consistent manufacture of the product because if the extension **170** of the shoulder and the cutout section **175** are not aligned, the stem guide may not function appropriately for slip bobber fishing.

[0184] Prior to mating the elongated rod **115** with the stem connector/cup **120**, the sleeve **140** is placed over the rod. If not placed over the rod prior to assembly, the flange or stop **130** would prevent the sleeve from sliding onto the rod. The rod and stem connector or cup can be adhered together using an adhesive or other adhering means, e.g., heat, interference fit, etc. Once the rod, stem connector and sleeve are assembled, an optional weight **118** may be inserted into the open end **119** of the stem cup and adhered in position. Alternatively, another attachment method may be used to retain the weight within the stem cup. The weight **118** is useful when casting out with a fishing apparatus using the stem guide **100**.

[0185] The assembled stem guide then may be combined with another piece of fishing tackle, such as the stick bobber **500**. As illustrated in FIG. 26, the stick bobber **500** includes a stem **505**, a float **510**, a marker **515** and a grommet **520**. The stem **505** has a longitudinal channel that is aligned with the channel **110** passing through the elongated rod so that a fishing line can be inserted into the elongated rod and passed into and through the longitudinal channel in the stem. The float **510** includes an internal longitudinal channel that receives the stem **505**, and the two are held together using an adhesive, an interference fit, or other mating method known in the art. The marker **515** and grommet **520** are mounted to the other end of the stem and the grommet mounted to the longitudinal channel in the float with an adhesive, interference fit, etc. or combination.

[0186] FIGS. 29-32 show in more detail the configuration of the elongated rod that forms the stem of the stem guide. As noted above, the elongated rod includes the internal longitudinal channel **110** that runs the length of the rod from a first open end to a second open end. The body of the elongated rod therefore can be divided between the channel and the remainder of the body, which is a solid portion **122**. The diameter of the channel **110** is sufficiently large such that it can receive a fishing line and have a negligible effect on the ability of the line to pass through the channel, such as during casting or reeling in the line. The shoulders are molded and positioned entirely or at least primarily within the solid portion **122** of the

rod. This manufacturing process causes the shoulders to be smooth, radiused or rounded so they can cause minimal damage to the fishing line inserted within the channel 110. In addition, because of the large percentage of the rod that is the solid portion 122, the strength of the rod is increased in comparison to a similar extruded tube with a larger diameter channel.

[0187] Also of note in the configuration of the elongated rod 115 is the widened end 123 of the channel 110 which is positioned within the stem cup. The channel diameter at that end 123 increases such that the fishing line passing through the rod 115 will more easily pass into the channel in the stem of the attached stick bobber, light stick, scent stick, etc. The channel opening at the opposite end of the rod also may have an increased diameter relative to the majority of the length of the channel, such as by having a flared opening. In this manner, the angler can easily insert the line into the stem guide.

[0188] Referring to FIGS. 33 and 34, in another configuration a stem guide consists of an elongated rod 550 that has a pair of line shoulders 565 and 575 and multiple line stops 555 and 560. A movable sleeve (not shown), such as a spring, is positioned between the line stops 555 and 560. Generally, the sleeve will be maintained in compression between the line stops 555 and 560. The line stops are arranged relative to the line shoulders to permit fixed fishing and winter slip bobber fishing. The line shoulder 575 is positioned entirely between the line stops 555 and 560. In this manner, a fishing line positioned in the line shoulder 575 would be compressed by the sleeve against a surface of the elongated rod 550 such that the fishing line cannot move or slide through the line shoulder 575 and thereby functions for fixed bobber fishing. In contrast, the line shoulder 565 has an extension 570 that extends along the length of rod but on the opposition side of the line stop 555 relative to the shoulder 565. Because of this configuration, the sleeve cannot extend beyond the stops 555 and 560 and would not slide over the extension 570. In this manner a fishing line positioned within the line shoulder 565 would be advanced by the sleeve into the extension 570 such that the fishing line can move or slide within the extension 570 and function for winter slip bobber fishing.

[0189] The elongated rod 550 also has a lumen 580 along its length to permit summer slip bobber fishing. The lumen is oversized for purposes of carrying a fishing line but because of its diameter a fishing article, such as a light stick, scent stick or bobber stem 600, or part thereof, can be press fit or adhered within the lumen. With this configuration, the elongated rod also functions as a stem guide, but without the need to add a second part, i.e., the stem cup, and the elongated rod can be extruded or molded. If the rod is extruded, the line shoulders can be cut into the rod and then radiused or smoothed. The line stops can be mounted using conventional means. Alternatively, if the rod is molded, the line stops and line shoulders can be molded at the same time. The injection molded rod also can be molded such that the line stops are configured to be flanges or ridges around all or part of the outer circumference of the rod. In either method, the sleeve can be placed over the line stops and be maintained in compression between the line stops.

[0190] To use the stem guide for fixed bobber fishing, the angler compresses the sleeve up to expose the line shoulder 575 and passes the fishing line into the line shoulder. The angler then releases the sleeve to fix the position of the fishing line in the shoulder 575. To use the stem guide for winter slip bobber fishing, the angler compresses the sleeve down to

expose the line shoulder 565 and passes the fishing line into the line shoulder. The angler then releases the sleeve to allow the fishing line to be forced into extension 570. Before or after the position of the fishing line in the line shoulder is set, the angler can attach a fishing article to the stem guide by inserting the article into the open end of the lumen. An adhesive may be used if desired. If the angler wishes to use the stem guide for summer slip bobber fishing, the fishing article should first be inserted into the stem guide and then the fishing line passed through the lumen in the fishing article and the lumen of the stem guide.

[0191] It is expected that the elongated rod can be extruded and the line shoulders formed within the rod such that the edges are smoothed or radiused. The stem cup then can be mounted to the rod if necessary. Also, the elongated rod and stem cup can be molded as either a single piece or two separate pieces that later are joined. The stem guide may be an integral part of a piece of fishing tackle, such as a bobber, light stick or scent stick.

[0192] The inventor also has developed a fishing stem guide and system that permits an angler to use a stem guide configured to allow a first cartridge to be easily replaced with a second cartridge without destruction to either the stem guide or the cartridge such that the stem guide or cartridge cannot be used again. The stem guide can be configured as the stem guides describe above, modified from those described above, or as follows to provide a replaceable cartridge fishing apparatus. The cartridge may be, for example, a float, a scent stick or a light stick. The float may be configured to receive a scent stick or a light stick. For example, the float may have an inner channel that has at least one opening on an end into which the scent stick or light stick can be inserted. The float may be configured to have an absorbable pouch, surface or section that can be dipped or otherwise wetted with a fishing scent.

[0193] Referring to FIGS. 35-38, in one implementation a stem guide system 650 includes a replaceable cartridge, such as a float 653, that is removably attached to a stem guide 657 having a cartridge attachment means for attaching the cartridge to the stem guide. The float 653 includes an attachment means 655 positioned at one end of the float. In system 650, the attachment means 655 is a hollow tube having an exterior surface with threads 665. To mate the cartridge attachment means with the attachment means 655, the float 653 and attachment means 655 are inserted into an open end 660 of the stem guide such that the threads 665 mate with threads 663 on an internal surface of the stem guide.

[0194] The float 653 can be attached to the attachment means 655 in a number of manners. The two can mate together merely through an interference fit. However, the interference fit can be augmented with an adhesive bonding between the outer surface of the float and the inner surface of the attachment means. In another attachment method, heat, an adhesive or a solvent can be used to bond or otherwise affix the attachment means to the float.

[0195] The stem guide 657 is attached to a fishing line using a line attachment means 667 or one of those otherwise described herein. Line attachment means 667 is generally T-shaped with a slotted opening 672 in the stem guide connecting to a second slot 674 connecting to and extending generally perpendicularly from the first slotted opening 672. In this manner, a fishing line can be easily inserted into the first slotted opening and pulled into the second slot 674. When the fishing line is within the second slot, the line is unlikely to pass out of the second slot into the first slotted opening 672 of

its own accord. This configuration thereby ensures the fishing line remains positioned securely within the stem guide.

[0196] The stem guide 657 also includes a weight attachment means 670 that includes a narrow slot into the stem guide that terminates in a larger diameter opening. The weight includes a line that is pulled through the slot into the larger diameter opening. This configuration also ensures that the weight remains positioned securely within the stem guide.

[0197] To use the stem guide system 650, the angler selects a float having particular characteristics, such as length, diameter, color, and presence or absence of an internal channel passing through the length of the float. It is expected that the float 653 will be provided with the attachment means 655 already positioned around the float. The angler then threadably inserts the attachment means 655 into the cartridge attachment means of the stem guide, including the threaded opening 660 of the stem guide. The angler inserts the attachment means 655 into the opening 660 until the attachment means is firmly mated with the threaded opening of the cartridge attachment means. The angler then inserts the fishing line into the line attachment means 667 and proceeds to use the float in the water.

[0198] While the system 650 has been described with reference to a float 653, it should be understood that another type of apparatus may be used, such as a light stick or scent stick, if desired.

[0199] Similarly, although system 650 has been described with reference to a threaded attachment means and a threaded cartridge attachment means, other configurations can be used to mate the cartridge and stem guide. For example, the attachment means can include protrusions and the cartridge attachment means can include channels such that the protrusions are inserted into the channels and twisted in one direction to attach and the opposite direction to remove.

[0200] Referring to FIGS. 39-41, in a simplified version of the system 650, a system 680 differs by the elimination of the threaded attachment means 655. The system 680 includes the float 653 and stem guide 657 with the cartridge attachment means as used in the system 650. The stem guide 657 has an open end 660 that has threads 663 on its inner surface. A fishing line can be inserted into either the line attachment means 667 or other means described herein.

[0201] To use the system 680, an angler selects a cartridge or float 653, which is not attached to a threaded attachment means, and inserts the float into the open end 660 thereby mating the cartridge with the cartridge attachment means. By pressing down or inserting in a downwardly threading manner, the angler fixes the float within the stem guide 657. The threads 663 form an interference fit with the float to keep the float within the stem guide. To remove the float, the angler pulls outwardly with or without a threading movement of the float relative to the stem guide. The float can be used again at a later time and the stem guide can be used again to receive a float, bobber, scent stick, light stick, or the like.

[0202] Referring to FIGS. 42-46, in another implementation of a stem guide system that permits replacement of the cartridge from the stem guide, a stem guide 700 includes a cartridge attachment means that includes an attachment opening 703 into which the cartridge 653 is inserted. The attachment opening is made up of multiple flaps 706 that extend from the stem guide along the longitudinal axis of the stem guide and form a channel 709 to receive the cartridge. The flaps 706 are configured to be resilient with an inward tendency or bias. An elastic band or ring 712, made up of any

elastic or slightly elastic material such as rubber, plastic and metal for example, surrounds the outer surface, or a portion of the outer surface, of the flaps 706. In this configuration, when a cartridge is inserted into the channel 709, the ring 712 restrains an outward movement of the flaps. The ring 712 may be positioned within a groove 715 on the outer surface of the flap formed by a lip 718 extending from the flap as one boundary, the flap itself as a second boundary, and a ridge 721 as another boundary. The ridge 721 is configured such that the angler can slide the ring 712 over the ridge and down the length of the flaps to allow the channel 709 to be opened wider, for example to insert or remove a cartridge.

[0203] Upon inserting the cartridge 653 into the channel 709, the angler then can slide the ring 712 over the ridge 721 into the groove 715. When the ring 712 compresses the flaps 706 against the cartridge, the flaps form an interference fit with the cartridge 653 to ensure the cartridge is retained in the channel 709 of the stem guide.

[0204] The flaps 706 optionally may include one or more projections or protrusions 723 on an inner surface of each flap. When a cartridge is inserted into the channel 709 and the ring 712 put into position, the projections 723 will be pressed into or against the cartridge. In this manner, the projections 723 will further ensure that the cartridge is retained within the channel.

[0205] Referring to FIGS. 47-50, in another implementation of a stem guide system that permits replacement of the cartridge from the stem guide, a stem guide 730 has a cartridge attachment means that includes an opening 733 of a channel 735 into which the cartridge 653 is inserted. The channel 735 passes between the 733 opening and a base 737. The stem guide 730 includes a magnet 739 embedded within the base. The cartridge 653 includes an attachment means 741 that is a portion of a hollow tube having an open end and a closed end at the opposite end. The closed end includes a magnet 743 embedded within it to form the attachment means 741. The cartridge 653 is mounted within the open end of the cartridge attachment means. The cartridge may be mounted within the attachment means 741 using an interference fit, heat, adhesive, solvent, mechanical or other means. When the cartridge 653 and attachment means 741 are inserted into the cartridge attachment means, i.e., into the channel 735 of the stem guide, the magnets 739, 743 are attracted thereby retaining the attachment means and cartridge within the channel against the stem guide.

[0206] Referring to FIGS. 51-55, in another implementation of a stem guide system that permits removal and replacement of the cartridge from the stem guide, a stem guide 750 has a cartridge attachment means that includes an opening 753 of a channel 755 into which a cartridge 757 is inserted. The channel 755 is formed from a wall that defines the channel. The channel passes between the opening 753 and a base 760. A prong 763 extends outwardly from the base 760 through the opening 753. The prong 763 is configured to receive a cartridge having an internal channel extending at least a portion of the length of the cartridge. As illustrated in FIGS. 51-55, the cartridge 757 includes a longitudinal channel 765 extending its entire length. The cartridge 757 is placed into the opening 753 with the prong 763 inserted into the channel 765. To replace the cartridge 757 with a different cartridge, such as one of a different length, color, shape, or purpose (e.g., float, light stick, scent stick), the angler merely pulls the cartridge out of the channel 755 and off of the prong 763.

[0207] The prong **763** may optionally include a surface configured to restrain the removal of the cartridge from the prong. As best illustrated in FIGS. **54** and **55**, a portion of the length of the prong includes barbs or projections **767** extending from the prong. When the cartridge **757** is inserted onto the prong, the barbs cause both an interference fit and a slight embedment into the cartridge to restrain removal of the cartridge from the prong. Although barbs are illustrated on the prong **763** of FIGS. **51-55**, another restraining means can be used, such as ridges, grooves, protrusions, a roughened surface, or a soft surface that conforms to the surface of the channel in the cartridge to restrain the ability of the cartridge to fall off of the prong but yet permits the angler to remove the cartridge without damage to the prong or the cartridge. A small amount of adhesive may be used to assist in retaining the cartridge to the stem guide. The adhesive may be between the prong and the cartridge, between the channel wall **755** and the cartridge or between the base **760** and the cartridge. In these configurations, the stem guide will not be damaged upon removal of the cartridge such that the stem guide cannot be used again. However, it is possible that the cartridge will be damaged and unable to be used again.

[0208] Referring to FIGS. **56-60**, in a modification of the stem guide **750**, the opening into the channel of the stem guide is eliminated such that a prong for mounting a cartridge extends from an exposed base. The stem guide **770** of FIGS. **56-60** has a cartridge attachment means that includes a base **773** from which a prong **775** extends. The cartridge **757** is inserted over the prong **775** until an end of the cartridge rests against the base. The prong **775** may optionally include barbs or projections **777**, as illustrated in FIGS. **56-60**. When the cartridge **757** is inserted onto the prong, the barbs cause both an interference fit and a slight embedment into the cartridge to restrain removal of the cartridge from the prong of the cartridge attachment means. Although barbs are illustrated on the prong **775** of FIGS. **56-60**, another restraining means can be used, such as an adhesive, ridges, grooves, protrusions, a roughened surface, or a soft surface that conforms to the surface of the channel in the cartridge to restrain the ability of the cartridge to fall off of the prong but yet permits the angler to remove the cartridge without damage to the prong or the cartridge. For example, a small amount of adhesive may be used to assist in retaining the cartridge to the stem guide. The adhesive may be between the prong and the cartridge or between the base **773** and the cartridge. In this configuration, the stem guide will not be damaged upon removal of the cartridge such that the stem guide cannot be used again. However, it is possible that the cartridge will be damaged and unable to be used again.

[0209] Referring to FIGS. **61-64**, in a modification of the stem guide **750** and **770**, but applicable to the other stem guides described herein, a stem guide **780** includes a first end **783** for attaching a fishing line and a weight and a second end **785** from which a prong **787** extends. A surface **789** of the stem guide is knurled or otherwise provided with a surface around the circumference of the stem guide such that the angler can easily hold the stem guide to remove the cartridge, for example, by a gripping the knurled surface and applying a turning motion to the stem guide relative to the cartridge while pulling the cartridge from the stem guide. Although FIGS. **61-64** illustrate a knurled or ribbed surface, any other surface may be applied or imparted that will provide an easily gripped surface. This surface will reduce the likelihood that the stem guide will slip in the angler's hands when the stem

guide is still wet after being pulled from the water with the intent of replacing the cartridge with a different cartridge. In this configuration, the stem guide will not be damaged upon removal of the cartridge such that the stem guide cannot be used again. However, it is possible that the cartridge will be damaged and unable to be used again.

[0210] Referring to FIGS. **65-71**, in another implementation of a stem guide that can be used with a replaceable cartridge, a stem guide **800** has a cartridge attachment means that includes an opening **803** into a channel **805** for receiving a replaceable cartridge **807**. The channel **805** is formed by a wall **810** that extends from a base **813**. The wall **810** includes projections or protrusions **815** that extend from an inner surface of the wall **810** into the channel **805**. When the cartridge **807** is inserted into the channel **805**, the projections **815** restrict the ability of the cartridge to be removed from the channel, thereby retaining the cartridge **807** to the stem guide **800**.

[0211] A variety of cartridge attachment means and attachment means have been described. Other configurations are applicable as well. For example, the cartridge attachment means and attachment means can be made up of a hook and loop system, e.g., such as Velcro®. The stem guide can have a cartridge attachment means that is made up of one part of a hook and loop system and the attachment means is made up of the other part of the hook and loop system. When the cartridge is attached to the stem guide, the cartridge attachment means mates with the attachment means.

[0212] In another configuration, the cartridge attachment means may be protrusions that made with grooves in the attachment means. In another embodiment of this implementation, the cartridge attachment means may be grooves and the attachment means may be protrusions. In either embodiment, the cartridge may be inserted in a turning manner.

[0213] In another configuration, the cartridge attachment means may be a flap or flaps that include one or protrusions that mate with grooves or a groove within the attachment means of the cartridge. The flaps are pulled outwardly, the cartridge inserted into a channel formed by the flaps and the flap or flaps then released such that the protrusions are inserted into the grooves or groove. To remove the cartridge, the flap or flaps are pulled outward and the cartridge removed. In any of these embodiments, an amount of adhesive may be used. Alternatively, the embodiments may be free of an adhesive to retain the cartridge to the stem guide.

[0214] The embodiments above showing a stem guide with a prong can be configured with the prong having threads on its outer surface and the cartridge having a threaded inner channel. In this manner, the cartridge is threadably attached to the prong and retained together in that manner. Any other known means that can be used to removably connect two items together.

[0215] While several particular forms of the invention have been illustrated and described, it will be apparent that various modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, as illustrated in FIG. **72**, the stem guides illustrated in FIGS. **16-32** can be modified to receive a replaceable cartridge. FIG. **72** illustrates a stem guide **830** that differs in part from those of FIGS. **16-32** by a portion of the stem cup being removed and a prong **840** extending from a surface **835** of the stem guide. As described above with respect to FIGS. **51-64**, the cartridge is removably inserted over the prong. In FIG. **72**, arrow B indicates the direction of movement of the spring for inserting a fishing line

into the stem guide **830**. The stem guides of FIGS. **16-32** also can be modified according to the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. **35-71** and the other embodiments described but not illustrated above. The stem guide **830** may be a single piece component in which the stem guide and cartridge attachment means, e.g., the prong, may be injection molded or formed as a single piece. Alternatively, the stem guide may easily be formed from two or more pieces and assembled. In fact, the majority of the stem guides described above may be made as single pieces, by injection molding for example, or assembled from multiple pieces.

[0216] The replaceable cartridges can be of a variety of shapes, materials and configurations for mounting to the stem guide. For example, referring to FIG. **73a**, a replaceable cartridge **850** includes a float portion **853** and an attachment means **857** for mounting to the cartridge attachment means of a stem guide. The float portion of the cartridge **850** is generally pear shaped such that when a fish takes the hook there will be a gradual increase in resistance caused by the float. FIG. **73a** illustrates a channel **859** into which a prong **855** extending from a stem guide (not shown) would be inserted. The position of the prong **855** is illustrated in FIG. **73a** as if the cartridge **850** were mounted to the stem guide having a prong. The attachment means **857** can be configured to mount to any stem guide, for example by including a thread along its outside surface, a threaded surface on the channel **859** running the length of the cartridge and mating with a threaded prong on the stem guide, a surface that forms a friction fit with the inner channel of the stem guide, etc. The choice of materials for fabricating the cartridge can be a conventional material such as a plastic or foam, e.g., polystyrene, Styrofoam, polycarbonate, rubber, cork, polyethylene, balsam wood etc. The material can be selected for improving the attachment of the cartridge to the stem guide. The cartridge can be extruded or injection molded to have a lengthwise shape, such as slots or protrusions. Extruded polyethylene has been found to be particularly suitable as a buoyant cartridge.

[0217] It should be understood that in some configurations herein, the stem guide will not be damaged upon removal of the cartridge such that the stem guide cannot be used again. However, it is possible that the cartridge will be damaged and unable to be used again.

[0218] Referring to FIG. **73b**, a replaceable cartridge **860** includes a float portion **863** and an attachment means **867** for mounting to the cartridge attachment means of a stem guide. The cartridge attachment means of the stem guide may have a channel into which the attachment means **867** is inserted. The float portion of the cartridge **860** is elongated with a torpedo shape along its length. In this manner when a fish takes the hook there will be a gradual increase in resistance caused by the float being pulled into the water. As described above, the attachment means **867** can be configured to mount to any stem guide and the material can be selected for improved attachment of the cartridge to the stem guide. FIG. **73b** illustrates the cartridge **860** having a channel **869** for receiving a prong (not shown) on a stem guide (not shown).

[0219] Referring to FIG. **73c**, in a modification of the replaceable cartridge **860**, a replaceable cartridge **870** does not include the elongated attachment means **867** but instead includes an attachment means **877** that is an end of a float portion **873**. The attachment means **877** for mounting to a cartridge attachment means of a stem guide includes a channel **879** that extends the length of the cartridge. In this configuration, the angler mounts the cartridge over a prong (not

shown) extending from a stem guide. As described above, the attachment means **877** can be configured to mount to any stem guide and the material can be selected for improved attachment of the cartridge to the stem guide.

[0220] Referring to FIG. **74a**, in a modification of the replaceable cartridges described above, a stem guide **900** includes a stem cup **902**, an elongated rod **904** and an eyelet or closed wire loop **906** at an end of the elongated rod. Such eyelets or closed wire loops are more often used for fishing in Europe and other regions outside of the United States, than in the United States. The stem cup **902** has an open end **908** into which a float or other buoyant member is inserted. The cup **902** can be configured according to the embodiments described above such that the float can be held in place temporarily or permanently. For example, the float can be held in place with an adhesive, a threaded interaction (e.g., FIGS. **35-41**), an elastic band (FIGS. **42-46**), magnets (FIGS. **47-50**), a prong with barbs extending from the cup (e.g., FIGS. **51-55**), or a friction fit (FIGS. **65-71**). The stem guide will not be damaged upon removal of the cartridge such that the stem guide cannot be used again. However, it is possible that the cartridge will be damaged and unable to be used again.

[0221] As further illustrated in FIG. **74b**, a stem guide **910** includes an end **912** having a flat surface **914** from which a prong **916** extends. The prong **916** includes barbs or protrusions **918**. The prong is configured to receive an article of fishing tackle or cartridge, such as a float, light stick or the like. The cartridge is pushed over the prong until it rests against the surface **914**. A small amount of adhesive may be placed on the surface to better retain the cartridge to the stem guide. Like FIG. **74a**, the stem guide also includes an elongated rod or stem **904** having an eyelet or closed wire loop **906** at the end.

[0222] As further illustrated in FIG. **74c**, the stem guide **910** can be used for slip bobber fishing by passing a fishing line **920** through the eyelet **906**. A bobber stop **922** is placed on the fishing line to interact with the eyelet and cause the line to stop passing or sliding through the eyelet. A cartridge **924**, such as a float, is placed around the prong **916** and held in place at least through the interaction between the barbs **918** and an inner channel of the cartridge. The cartridge further includes a viz-stick **926** inserted into the channel of the cartridge and extending outwardly beyond the cartridge. The viz-stick allows for the angler to more easily see the cartridge and know its location, as well as watch for strikes by a fish.

[0223] Referring to FIGS. **75a-c**, in another implementation of the replaceable cartridges disclosed herein, a stem guide **930** includes a body **932** over which a sleeve **934** can slide. The sleeve can slide in the direction of a prong **944** extending from a base **942** or in the direction of a hook **936**. As illustrated in FIG. **75a**, the sleeve **934** is intermediate between the hook **936** and the prong **944**. In this manner, an opening **938** is formed into which a fishing line **940** can be inserted. FIG. **75b** illustrates the sleeve moved further in the direction of the hook **936** such that the opening **938** is closed and the position of the hook relative to the sleeve forms a channel through which the fishing line **940** passes. Because the opening is closed, the fishing line cannot be pulled laterally out of the channel. If a line stop (not shown) is used on the fishing line, the stem guide can be used for slip bobber fishing. As illustrated in FIG. **75c**, by further pushing the sleeve **934** over the body **932** in the direction of the hook **936**, the fishing line can be wedged in place between the sleeve and the hook,

which prevents the fishing line from sliding through the stem guide. In this manner the stem guide can be used for fixed bobber fishing. Although not shown in FIGS. 75a-c, a replaceable cartridge, such as a float, can be placed over the prong 944. The cartridge can be inserted over the prong and held in place by the barbs or protrusions 946 without more or an adhesive can be additionally applied.

[0224] Referring to FIG. 76, in another implementation the stem guide 930 can have a cup 948 instead of a flat surface at one end. The cup can be used to receive a cartridge 950. The cartridge is received within the cup and held in place using any or more of the methods described herein, e.g., magnets, friction fit, adhesive, threaded, etc. The type of stem guide bottoms illustrated in FIGS. 75a-c and 76, i.e., a hook with a movable sleeve, is used primarily in Europe rather than in the United States.

[0225] Referring to FIGS. 77a-c, the systems described herein with a buoyant member can be modified to minimize the resistance a fish would feel upon striking a lure or bait used with the stem guide and replaceable buoyant member. The modification is accomplished by cutting the buoyant member such that a top surface of the buoyant member is approximately flush with the top surface of the water when used with hook, lure or bait, sinker, etc. The buoyant member is made of a material that floats in water but can be cut using, for example, a knife, scissors, or torn off by hand. Suitable materials that can be cut include a conventional material such as a plastic or foam, e.g., cork, polyethylene, balsam wood, etc. The buoyant member, or cartridge, can be extruded or injection molded. Extruded polyethylene has been found to be particularly suitable as a buoyant member or cartridge.

[0226] By minimizing the length of the buoyant member, and hence its buoyancy, when a fish strikes the bait or lure and takes the line, there will be a minimum resistance of the buoyant member in the water. The buoyant member can be cut such that the top surface is above the water surface, partially below the water surface or flush with the water surface.

[0227] Because the top surface of the buoyant member will be approximate the surface of the water, the angler will likely find it difficult to see the buoyant member. This can be problematic to know whether a fish has struck the bait or lure. To address this need, the buoyant member can be fitted with a viz stick, light stick or other visualization article. The buoyant member may have a channel along its length that is of a similar inner diameter as the outer diameter of the viz stick, light stick or other visualization article. The viz stick is inserted into the channel where it is retained and extends above the top surface of the buoyant member. In this manner, the angler can easily see the position of the line and whether or not a fish is striking the bait or lure. The length of the viz stick can be adjusted by the angler if desired. For example, the viz stick can be made of an extruded plastic that is selected to have a bright color and be easily cut. The viz stick can be hollow or solid. It also can have a phosphorescent coating such that it will emit light to further improve visualization of the viz stick.

[0228] FIGS. 77a-c illustrate the stem guide 952 with a hollow buoyant member 954 mounted over a prong 956. The other versions of stem guides and stem connectors described herein can be used in the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 77a-c. FIG. 77a illustrates the stem guide 952 with the uncut buoyant member positioned over the prong 956. FIG. 77b illustrates the buoyant member 954 as being a simple hollow

tube with a channel 958 along its length. It should also be understood that the buoyant member can alternatively be a solid tube.

[0229] FIG. 77c illustrates the buoyant member 954 being cut to have a buoyancy that is approximately equal to the weight of the lure or bait, hook, sinker, etc. that together pull the buoyant member into the water. FIG. 77c also shows a viz stick 960 being positioned in the channel 956 such that the viz stick extends above the water so that it can be seen by the angler even if the buoyant member cannot be seen.

[0230] In another embodiment, the buoyant member can be solid but sufficiently soft such that a rigid viz stick with a pointed end can be inserted into the material. The viz stick can be a hollow, extruded tube in which the end is sharpened, for example by cutting. The cut end then can be pushed into the buoyant member. It should be understood that a viz stick of this configuration can be used with either a hollow buoyant member or a solid buoyant member. Similarly, a solid extruded viz stick can have a sharpened end formed by the process of cutting the individual viz sticks from the extruded tube. Such viz sticks can be used with either hollow or solid buoyant members. Viz stick are available from Rod-n-Bobbs of Eau Claire, Wis.

[0231] Referring also to FIG. 77d-g, in other embodiments, the buoyant member can be formed from a resilient foam material, such as extruded polyethylene or polypropylene foam, or other suitable resilient buoyant material, and configured to have a lengthwise channel that does not have a diameter (or at least a negligible diameter) when in an uncompressed configuration but that opens up to form a lengthwise channel when the buoyant member is compressed. For example, FIG. 77d illustrates a slit 961 formed in the buoyant member 954. The slit 961 runs the entire length or a portion of the length of the member 954. As illustrated in FIG. 77e, by applying a compressive force 962 on opposite sides of the buoyant member, the cross-section of the buoyant member is distorted thereby distorting the slit 961 such that it opens to form a channel. Once the slit 961 is distorted to form a channel, the channel can be placed over a prong that has protrusions or is free of protrusions. For example, the prong can be in the form of a blade. Once the compressive force applied to the buoyant member is removed, the channel reverts to its slit-like configuration, which compresses the buoyant member against the prong and hinders its removal.

[0232] Similarly, FIG. 77f illustrates the slit 961 formed in the buoyant member 954. The slit 961 runs the entire length or a portion of the length of the member 954. The slit has a semi-circular shape but may be shaped in any other nonlinear shape. As explained below, the nonlinear shape of the slit is results in a varying degree of force applied to a prong within the slit across the length of the slit. As illustrated in FIG. 77g, by applying a compressive force 962 on opposite sides of the buoyant member, the cross-section of the buoyant member is distorted thereby distorting the slit 961 such that it opens to form a channel, here in the shape of an opened semi-circle. Once the slit 961 is distorted to form the channel, the channel can be placed over a prong that has protrusions or is free of protrusions. For example, the prong can be in the form of a blade. Once the compressive force applied to the buoyant member is removed, the channel reverts to its semi-circular slit configuration, which compresses the buoyant member against the prong and hinders its removal. The semi-circular slit retains the buoyant member against the prong based first on the presence of the slit and second because of the shape of

the slit. The shape of the slit will attempt to conform the prong to that shape. However, the rigid nature of the prong will not permit such change in the prong and thereby providing additional force to retain the buoyant member to the prong.

[0233] The buoyant member 954, and other buoyant members described herein, are designed to be easily mounted to the stem guide 952 and thereafter easily removed from the stem guide 952 when and if desired. There is no requirement of securing the buoyant member to the stem guide with an adhesive, glue or other permanent mechanical securing means to permanently or temporarily secure the buoyant member to the stem guide. For example, rather than a crimping step of the stem guide to retain the buoyant member to the stem guide, the buoyant member may be retained by an interference fit within the stem guide in a step that does not include crimping or another form of permanent or plastic deformation of either the stem guide, the buoyant member or the combination of the two. Similarly, the step in which the buoyant member is retained in the stem guide or on the stem guide is by a step that does not either permanently or plastically deform the stem guide or buoyant member. For example, the buoyant member may have one end compressed, inserted into a cavity of the stem guide and then allowed to expand to its natural condition, or almost natural condition, to securely fit within the stem guide. In this configuration, it is not necessary to apply adhesive or glue to retain the buoyant member in the stem guide. This method of applying the buoyant member may be applicable to buoyant members with a channel along its length as well as solid buoyant members.

[0234] As another example of a step of retaining the buoyant member to the stem guide, the buoyant member can be twisted or rotated (e.g., in a clockwise or counter clockwise direction) into the stem guide such that the twisting or rotating causes the outer diameter of one end of the buoyant member to be temporarily decreased to fit within the stem guide. In another embodiment of mounting the buoyant member to a prong extending from the stem guide, the buoyant member can be compressed or distorted in shape to change the round channel through the buoyant member to form an elongated, narrowed channel that passes easily over any protrusions extending from the prong. By forming an elongated, narrowed channel, it is meant that the diameter of the channel is reduced in one dimension but extended in another dimension. For example, the channel may be round at rest but upon compressing two opposite sides of the buoyant member inward, the channel changes from a round shape to an elongated oval shape. As a consequence, the buoyant member passes easily over the prong to be in contact with the stem guide, but upon releasing any compressive force applied to the buoyant member the resiliency of the buoyant member causes the channel to return to its original diameter. As a result, the channel will attempt to return to its originally round shape and compress against the prong and any protrusions extending from the prong, which will thereby restrict the ability of the buoyant member to be inadvertently removed. However, the buoyant member can be easily removed by repeating the compression action to slide the buoyant member off of the prong.

[0235] It also should be noted that most of the buoyant members and stem guides described herein have certain characteristics in common. For example, the stem guide is generally rigid without movable parts such as a hinge mechanism. Therefore the stem guide is free of any movable part and free of any hinge or hinge-like mechanism and consists of or

consists essentially of the configurations illustrated in the figures for purposes of mounting and retaining the buoyant member to the stem guide. It should be understood, however, that the spring or sleeve that slides over a portion of the stem guide is not included in this characterization because the spring is not the same as the stem guide but instead is an article added to the stem guide for use with the stem guide.

[0236] In contrast, most of the buoyant members used as replaceable elements with the stem guide are configured to be movable rather than rigid. By movable, it is meant that the buoyant member can be one or more of compressed inward, distorted in shape, bent, folded over, stretched lengthwise or widthwise and compressed lengthwise or widthwise. These characteristics permit such buoyant members to be easily mounted to and removed from a stem guide. A buoyant member made of a material that is resilient, flexible or compressible, could be difficult for an angler to mount to the prong or insert into a cup. For example, a rigid Styrofoam buoyant member could be too rigid for use as a replaceable float with the prong version or the cup version of the stem guide. The act of sliding the Styrofoam buoyant member of a prong having protrusions extending from the surface may result in the buoyant member cracking or otherwise permanently deforming.

[0237] As an example of one of these characteristics referenced above, the prong extending from the flat surface of the stem guide is generally rigid and does not include a flexible or movable portion that is used to exert a force to retain the buoyant member to the prong. Instead, the prong maintains a constant shape, does not exert a force against the buoyant member and can be characterized as being passive with respect to acting on or exerting a force against the buoyant member. Therefore, retention of the buoyant member to the prong is based solely on the compressive force exerted by the buoyant member against the prong rather than an expansive force exerted by the prong against the buoyant member. In other words, retention of the buoyant member to the prong occurs because the buoyant member exerts a force on the prong while the prong receives the force exerted by the buoyant member.

[0238] As a further explanation, in use the buoyant member is stretched or forced over the prong and passed along a portion or all of the length of the prong. Upon being placed or forced over the prong, the buoyant member is primarily retained to the prong by the compressive force of the buoyant member as it attempts to reduce its size by returning to its unstretched or unexpanded state against the prong. Consequently, if a buoyant member has a channel with an inner diameter that is greater than the outer diameter of the prong, the buoyant member will not exert a force against the prong and therefore will easily fall off of the prong.

[0239] FIG. 78 describes a process 970 by which an angler can use the stem guide 952 and the buoyant member 954 for fishing to minimize the resistance that a fish would feel upon taking the lure or bait used with the stem guide. Initially, the angler places tackle on the fishing line and attaches a stem guide to the fishing line (step 972). Next, the angler mounts the buoyant member 954 to the stem guide 952 and places the stem guide in the water to estimate the amount of buoyant member extending above the surface of the water (step 974). The angler next removes the buoyant member from the stem connector and cuts the buoyant member across its width at the position where the surface of the water was seen on the buoyant member. In this manner the top surface of the buoy-

ant member should be approximately flush with the surface of the water (step 976). The angler then positions the cut buoyant member over the prong of the stem connector and places the stem connector back in the water to ensure buoyant member was cut at the correct position. If the angler decides that the buoyant member extends too much out of the water, the angler can cut off more of the buoyant member (step 978). Finally, the angler can place a viz stick or other visualization aid (e.g., light stick) in the buoyant member and ensure that the viz stick can be seen when fishing (step 980).

[0240] Although it is expected that the buoyant member will be securely retained to the stem guide without the use of an adhesive, the angler may decide to apply a small amount of adhesive to the buoyant member of the stem guide. In this manner, the angler will have additional assurances that the buoyant member will be retained to the stem guide. Similarly, the viz stick should be securely retained within the buoyant member without the use of an adhesive. However, the angler may wish to apply a small amount of adhesive to either the viz stick or the buoyant member to be assured that the viz stick will be retained within the buoyant member. In one embodiment, the amount of adhesive applied is just enough to retain the viz stick or buoyant member but not so much that the articles cannot be separated without damage to either article. In another embodiment, the amount of adhesive applied retains the viz stick or buoyant member but prevents separation without damage to either the viz stick, buoyant member or stem guide. Such techniques are optionally included in the method of this invention.

[0241] Referring to FIGS. 79a-c, in another embodiment, an angler can use a fishing float 1000 for both slip bobber fishing and fixed bobber fishing in any season. The fishing float 1000 includes a stem 1002 and a float 1004. At a lower region 1018 of the stem 1002 there is positioned a pair of line shoulders 1006, 1008 that pass into the stem. At the lower region of the stem there also is a cap 1010 positioned at the end of the stem. The cap 1010 can be a molded part that is attached to the stem or molded with the stem during the manufacture of the stem. The cap 1010 has an outer diameter that is greater than that of the stem such that the outer edge of the cap extends beyond the outer edge of the stem. The line shoulder 1008 extends into the cap 1010 through an upper surface of the cap that is oriented generally perpendicularly to the outer surface of the stem.

[0242] The stem also includes a flange or ridge 1014 against which the float 1004 is mounted. The ridge 1014 may be a part separately mounted to the stem and held against the stem by, for example, an adhesive, interference fit, solvent or heat to form a bond between the stem and ridge or a combination of these techniques. The stem also may be an integral part of the stem that is formed during the manufacture of the stem. During manufacture, the float 1004 is passed over the stem from the upper region 1016 along the stem to the ridge 1014. The float 1004 may be retained against the stem by an interference fit between an inside surface of the float, an adhesive that bonds the float to the stem, use of a solvent or heat to form a bond between the float and the stem, or a combination of these techniques.

[0243] The fishing float 1000 also includes a spring 1012 that is positioned over the lower region of the stem 1002 such that the spring surrounds both line shoulders 1006, 1008. The spring extends between the cap 1010 and the ridge 1014 such that the spring is retained on the lower region 1018 of the stem. As noted above, the line shoulder 1008 extend into the

cap 1010. In so doing, a portion of the length of the line shoulder is not surrounded by the spring. In contrast, the spring covers the entirety of the upper line shoulder 1006. This difference is important in use of the fishing float 1000 for slip bobber fishing and fixed bobber fishing. As is understood by one of skill in the art, the lower region 1018 of the fishing bobber will be within the water during fishing with a lower portion of the float 1004 under the water and an upper portion above the water. When a fishing line passes through the lower line shoulder 1008, the fishing line can slide through the line shoulder without hindrance and remains underwater when passing through the line shoulder. While this may not provide unexpected advantages during fishing in above freezing temperatures, this configuration offers advantages during winter fishing when temperatures are below freezing. Because the interaction of the fishing line and the line shoulder occurs underwater, there is no contact with freezing air conditions that could cause water on the line or line shoulder to result in the line freezing to the line shoulder.

[0244] To prepare the fishing float 1000, the stem 1002 is prepared by extrusion, molding, or other fabrication technique. The stem may be solid or hollow with a lengthwise channel through its center. The stem may be molded with the line shoulders 1006, 1008, cap 1010 and ridge 1014 in place or extruded and the line shoulders, cap and ridge formed separately. The cap 1010 may have an optional opening that can be used if the stem 1002 has a channel along its length, for example, for slip bobber fishing. The stem may be made of a plastic, such as polypropylene, polyethylene, nylon, etc. The float 1004 may be a polyurethane foam, a hollow plastic piece with a channel through the middle such that a buoyant region is formed, or other buoyant material with a lengthwise channel through the middle. The float 1004 may be placed over the upper region 1016 of the stem and then affixed to the stem in the manners described above. The spring 1012 may be mounted to the lower region of the stem prior to placing the cap and ridge on the stem or afterwards by manipulating the spring such that it can be forced over the cap or ridge. The ridge 1014 can be formed such that it includes a downward directed opening forming a cavity sized to receive the end of the spring. In this manner, the upper end of the spring resides within the cavity, which advantageously reduces the likelihood that an angler will attempt to push down the upper end of the spring with using the fishing float 1000.

[0245] As evident from the figures, the upper region 1016 of the stem includes a tapered cap 1020 that is positioned at a terminal end of the stem. The tapered cap 1020 can be a separate item that is affixed to the stem, an integral part of the stem formed during manufacture, or an integral part of the stem formed by inserting the stem into a heated mold shaped to result in the tapered shape. The cap 1020 can be the same color as the stem or a different, more readily visible color, such as red, yellow, orange, or a fluorescent color that is easily seen during angling. The cap can include a lengthwise channel and have an opening at the tapered end that permits passage of the fishing line so that the fishing float can be used for slip bobber fishing through the length of the stem as well as through the line shoulder 1008.

[0246] To use the fishing float 1000, the angler can either slip bobber or fixed bobber fish. If fixed bobber fishing, the angler moves the lower end of the spring 1012 upward in the direction of the ridge 1014. In moving the spring upwards, the line shoulder 1008 and 1006 are exposed. If the angler places the fishing line through the line shoulder 1006, the angler can

use the fishing float **1000** for fixed bobber fishing. Upon releasing the spring **1012**, the spring will expand downward against the cap **1010**. In expanding downward, the fishing line will be forced by the spring against the cap **1010** on opposite positions of the line shoulder. By forcing the fishing line against the cap, the fishing line will be hindered from sliding through the line shoulder, thereby providing the bobber suitable for fixed bobber fishing.

[0247] If the angler pushes the lower end of the spring upward and places the fishing line through the line shoulder **1008**, the angler can instead use the fishing float **1000** for slip bobber fishing. Upon releasing the spring, the end of the spring will push the fishing line into the portion of the line shoulder that passes through the cap **1010**. In this manner, the fishing line can slide through the line shoulder and cap without hindrance until a line stop reaches the line shoulder. The line stop, e.g., a knot and/or bead, will be of an outer diameter than cannot fit through the shoulder such that upon interaction with the line shoulder, the line will not be able to move further through the line shoulder.

[0248] It should be understood that the primary functions of the cap **1010** are to provide a surface against which the fishing line will be pressed for fixed bobber fishing and to prevent the spring from falling off of the stem. The functions can be provided just as well by the formation of a ridge extending from the stem around the entirety or a portion of the circumference of the stem.

[0249] It should be noted that in this embodiment, the fishing float does not include a stem connector as described above. Instead, the fishing float consists of or consists essentially of the stem, the line shoulders in the stem for fixed and slip bobber fishing, a float positioned around the stem to provide buoyancy to the fishing float, and a spring with a ridge or cap to prevent loss of the spring and to permit fixed bobber fishing.

[0250] In another implementation of the fishing float **1000**, the float **1004** is made of a buoyant material that can be cut, as described above. The float can be made of a material that floats in water but can be cut using, for example, a knife. Suitable materials that can be cut include a conventional material such as a plastic or foam, e.g., cork, polyethylene, balsam wood etc. The float can be extruded or injection molded. Extruded polyethylene has been found to be particularly suitable as a buoyant float. As explained above, the float is cut to reduce the amount of buoyant material, e.g., the float, positioned above the water line. In this way, the float can be cut so that a minimal amount of float is above the water line or at the water line. The angler would make these adjustments in the manner described above.

[0251] Advantageously, in this embodiment the float **1004** can be removed and replaced with a different float as desired. In this implementation, the float is retained to the stem **1002** by an interference fit and/or an optional application of an adhesive, or using other methods disclosed herein. In this implementation, the stem **1002** can be provided in a kit with one or more floats **1004**. The floats **1004** also can be provided in a separate package without the stem. The stem **1002** can be sold separately if desired. Although the floats are illustrated as being bulb shaped, the floats can be of any shape, such as an elongated tube as illustrated in other figures herein.

[0252] Referring to FIGS. **80a-f**, in another embodiment, a fishing float **1030** includes a two part stem made up of a first tube **1016** and a second tube **1018**. The pair of tubes are joined together at a sleeve **1040**. The sleeve **1040** may be a short

segment of tubing that receives an end of each of the tubes **1016**, **1018** and then retains the tubes within the sleeve through an interference fit, adhesive, heat or solvent bonding, etc. or a combination of techniques. The sleeve **1040** instead can be integrally formed with the tube **1018**, for example, by injection molding of the entire piece. The inner diameter of the sleeve can be sized to receive the tube **1016** with a tight interference fit. The sleeve also can be configured to have an opening into a cavity that is sized to receive an end of a spring, as described above with respect to FIGS. **79a-c**. If injection molded or otherwise manufactured, the tube **1018** also can be configured to include a cap or ridge **1010** at the end opposite of the sleeve. The cap/ridge **1010** prevents the sleeve from being dislodged off of the tube **1018**.

[0253] As particularly illustrated in FIG. **80c**, the tube **1018** includes a lengthwise channel **1032** that passes between a pair of openings at ends **1042**, **1044**. The opening at end **1042** permits a fishing line to pass out of the fishing float **1030** in slip bobber fishing. The fishing line passes through the channel **1032** from the opening at end **1044** to end **1042**. The fishing line enters the tube **1018** from tube **1016**, which is formed with a lengthwise channel **1034** over its entire length. The end of the tube **1016** that is distant from the tube **1018** has an opening that is closed with a cap **1036**. The cap **1036** has an opening **1046** through which the fishing line can pass. The opening **1046** is sized such that a fishing line can pass through the opening but a bobber line stop, such as a tied knot or an elastic bead, will not pass through the opening. This allows the fishing float **1040** to be used for slip bobber fishing.

[0254] As evident in FIGS. **80c** and **80f**, the tube **1018** is solid except for the channel **1032**. A pair of line shoulders **1006**, **1008** are formed within the tube **1018**. As explained above with respect to FIGS. **79a-c**, the spring **1012** is used in combination with the line shoulders to permit an angler to use the fishing float **1030** for either fixed bobber fishing or slip bobber fishing in any weather conditions, e.g., freezing conditions or summer conditions.

[0255] The fishing float **1030** has other features in common with the fishing float **1000**. For example, the float **1004** can be affixed permanently to the stem or can be removable and replaceable. Similarly, the float can be cut to a particular length to reduce resistance when a fish strikes the hook.

[0256] A difference between fishing floats **1000** and **1030** is the optional ability to insert a light stick into the tube **1016** of fishing float **1030**. If desired, the angler can remove the cap **1036**, insert a light stick into the tube **1016** and position the cap into the tube. In this embodiment, the tube **1016** is made of a clear plastic such that the light emitted by the light stick will pass through the tube and be visible to an angler.

[0257] Referring to FIGS. **81a-f**, in another embodiment a fishing float **1050** is configured for use in slip bobber fishing in all seasons. The fishing float **1050** includes a one-piece stem **1052** that runs the entire length of the fishing float and a float **1004** positioned on and around the stem **1052**. The stem includes a sleeve **1054** mounted on the stem in the form of a ridge or flange around the circumference of the stem. The sleeve acts as a stop to limit the downward movement of the float **1004** on the stem and may be formed with the stem, e.g., by injection molding, or a separately formed part that is mounted on the stem and held in place by, for example, a bond formed through use of an adhesive, solvent, heat, etc.

[0258] In conjunction with a ridge or cap **1056** at the bottom of the stem, the sleeve **1054** also limits upward movement of a spring **1012** on a lower region of the stem while the ridge

1056 limits downward movement of the spring. The spring encircles a pair of line shoulders **1006**, **1008** in the lower region of the stem. As explained above, the line shoulder **1008** extends below the ridge **1056** into the cap such that the spring does not encircle the entirety of the line shoulder **1008** while encircling the entirety of the line shoulder **1006**. This difference in encirclement by the spring permits the line shoulder **1006** to be used for fixed bobber fishing and the line shoulder **1008** to be used for slip bobber fishing.

[0259] The stem **1052** also includes a lengthwise channel **1060** that has a first opening **1064** at one end of the stem and a second opening **1062** at the other end of the stem. The channel **1060** is used for slip bobber fishing and is particularly suited for summer slip bobber fishing. The top end of the stem and the channel opening **1064** is closed with a cap **1046**. The cap **1046** includes an opening through which a fishing line can be passed to be used for summer slip bobber fishing. The opening **1064** can have a flared configuration such that the fishing line will easily pass into the channel **1060**. The stem **1052** can be formed by any conventional manufacturing method, including extrusion, injection molding, etc. and consist of a conventional plastic material, such as nylon, polypropylene, polyethylene, etc.

[0260] To use the fishing float **1050** for slip bobber fishing in warm weather, an angler would place a bobber stop on the fishing line in a position on the line between the fishing float and the reel. The angler then would pass the free end of the fishing line through the opening in the cap **1046**, into the opening **1064**, through the channel **1060**, and out of the opening **1062** and the bottom of the stem. The angler then would attach fishing tackle, including sinkers, swivel, hook, lure, etc. to the free end of the line. The angler reels the fishing line into the reel, which causes the fishing float to slide along the line until it reaches the tackle at the end of the line. Upon casting out, the fishing tackle pulls the fishing line through the channel **1060** until the bobber stop fixed to the fishing line reaches the cap **1046** and the opening in the cap. Because the opening is sized to be smaller than the bobber stop, the line will stop passing through the channel,

[0261] To use the fishing float **1050** for slip bobber or fixed bobber fishing using the line shoulders **1006**, **1008**, the angler pulls the spring **1012** up in the direction of the sleeve **1054**. By pulling the spring up sufficiently to pass the fishing line into the line shoulder **1006** and then releasing the spring, the angler can use the fishing float **1050** for fixed bobber fishing. Releasing the spring causes the fishing line to be pressed by the spring against the ridge **1056**, preventing movement of the fishing line through the line shoulder **1006**. By pulling the spring up sufficiently to pass the fishing line into the line shoulder **1008** and then releasing the spring, the angler can use the fishing float **1050** for slip bobber fishing in freezing weather. Because any contact between the fishing line and the fishing float occurs underwater in this configuration, the fishing line will not freeze against the fishing float during use.

[0262] Referring to FIGS. **82a-d**, in another embodiment a fishing float **1070** is configured for slip and fixed bobber fishing with the use of a light stick positioned within the stem of the fishing float. The fishing float **1070** includes a two part stem consisting of a lower stem segment **1072** and an upper stem segment **1074**. The stem segments **1072**, **1074** are fitted together using any conventional means, such as a threaded mounting, an interference fit or the like. FIG. **82d** illustrates the use of a tube **1076** positioned within and extending from the lower stem segment **1072**. The stem segment **1074** has a

lengthwise channel **1079** into which the tube **1076** is inserted to mount the lower stem segment and the upper stem segment to form the stem of the fishing float **1070**. The tube **1076** is retained within the channel **1079** by an interference fit, application of a small amount of adhesive, solvent bond, etc. The mounting of the two stem segments can result in a water tight seal. The stem includes a sleeve **1078** mounted on the stem in the form of a ridge or flange around the circumference of the stem. The sleeve acts as a stop to limit the downward movement of the float **1004** on the stem and may be formed with the stem, e.g., by injection molding, or a separately formed part that is mounted on the stem and held in place by, for example, a bond formed through use of an adhesive, solvent, heat, etc.

[0263] The channel **1079** within the stem segment **1074** forms a cavity into which a light stick **1084** or other visual indicator (e.g., viz stick) can be placed. The upper stem segment **1074** may be formed from a clear plastic material such that the light from the light stick will emit through the plastic material so that the angler can locate the position of the fishing float **1070** once it is positioned in the water or can be alerted to a strike on a hook attached to the fishing line by movement of the light stick/fishing float combination.

[0264] A cap **1082** is positioned within the channel **1079** such that the cavity within the upper stem segment **1074** is water tight. The cap **1082** can be used to form a simple interference fit or can be modified to provide a more certain, water tight seal. For example, the cap can have a shaft from which extends one or more ridges that form water tight interference fit between the shaft and the inner wall of the channel **1079**. The cap also can have a ribbed surface on the portion of the cap that is outside of the channel **1079**. The ribbed surface permits an angler to easily grip the cap and remove it to insert or withdraw the light stick.

[0265] The float **1004** is positioned around the stem **1074** and held in place in the manner described above, e.g., an interference fit, a bond formed by use of an adhesive, solvent, heat. In use, the lower stem segment **1072** will be submerged under water, a portion of the float **1004** will be submerged in the water and the upper stem segment **1074** will extend out of the water with the light stick **1084** positioned entirely out of the water. Of course, the relative lengths of the stem segments **1072**, **1074** can be varied from that illustrated in FIGS. **82a-d** such that all or a portion of the light stick is submerged. The configuration of the fishing float **1070** keeps the cavity **1079** water free so that the light stick remains dry.

[0266] To use the fishing float **1070** for slip bobber or fixed bobber fishing with a light stick **1084** in the cavity formed within channel **1079**, the angler first attaches the fishing line. The angler initially pulls the spring **1012** up in the direction of the sleeve **1078**. By pulling the spring up sufficiently to pass the fishing line into the line shoulder **1006** and then releasing the spring, the angler can use the fishing float **1050** for fixed bobber fishing. Releasing the spring causes the fishing line to be pressed by the spring against the ridge formed by the cap **1080**, preventing movement of the fishing line through the line shoulder **1006**. By pulling the spring up sufficiently to pass the fishing line into the line shoulder **1008** and then releasing the spring, the angler can use the fishing float **1070** for slip bobber fishing in freezing weather. Because any contact between the fishing line and the fishing float occurs underwater in this configuration, the fishing line will not freeze against the fishing float during use. The angler then removes the cap **1082**, activates a light stick, inserts the light stick into the cavity formed in channel **1079**, and replaces the

cap. The angler can cast out the fishing tackle and float or use the tackle and fishing float at that location (e.g., through a hole in the ice). If slip bobber fishing, the fishing line will pass through the line shoulder **1008** until a bobber stop attached to the fishing line at a predetermined position reaches the line shoulder, at which time the interaction between the bobber stop and the line shoulder will prevent further movement of the fishing line through the line shoulder. In this manner, assuming that the angler is fishing at night or in otherwise dark conditions, the angler will be able to view the position of the fishing float based on the light emitted from the light stick.

[0267] As described above with reference to the fishing float **1000**, the fishing float **1070** may similarly include a float **1004** that is made of a buoyant material that can be cut, as described above. The float can be made of a material that floats in water but can be cut using, for example, a knife. Suitable materials that can be cut include a conventional material such as a plastic or foam, e.g., cork, polyethylene, balsam wood etc. The float can be extruded or injection molded. Extruded polyethylene has been found to be particularly suitable as a buoyant float. As explained above, the float is cut to reduce the amount of buoyant material, e.g., the float, positioned above the water line. In this way, the float can be cut so that a minimal amount of float is above the water line or at the water line. The angler would make these adjustments in the manner described herein elsewhere.

[0268] Advantageously, in this embodiment the float **1004** can be removed and replaced with a different float as desired. In this implementation, the float is retained to the stem **1072** by an interference fit and/or an optional application of an adhesive, or using other methods disclosed herein. The stem **1074**, like the other stems described herein can also include protrusions, a roughened surface, longitudinal ribs, circumferential ridges, etc. to improve the interference fit between the float **1004** and the stem **1074**. In this implementation and the others herein, the stem **1072** can be provided in a kit with one or more floats **1004**. The floats **1004** also can be provided in a separate package without the stem. The fishing float **1070** can be sold separately without a float **1004** if desired and then a kit with different sized, shaped and colored floats purchased separately for mounting on the stem. For example, while the float **1004** has been depicted as being bulb shaped, the floats can be of any shape, such as an elongated tube as illustrated in other figures herein.

[0269] Referring to FIGS. **83a-f**, in another embodiment a fishing float **1085** is configured for slip and fixed bobber fishing with the use of a light stick **1084** positioned within a hollow tube **1087** positioned adjacent to an upper stem segment **1091** of the stem of the fishing float **1085**. The fishing float **1085** includes a two part stem consisting of a lower stem segment **1090** and the upper stem segment **1091**. The stem segments **1090**, **1091** are fitted together using any conventional means, such as a threaded mounting, an interference fit or the like. Alternative, the stem segments can be produced as a single, one piece stem, such as by injection molding.

[0270] FIGS. **83a-c** illustrate the hollow tube **1087** positioned adjacent to and extending lengthwise along the length of the upper stem segment **1091**. The hollow tube **1087** has a closed lower end and an open upper end into which a light stick **1084** or other visual indicator (e.g., viz stick) can be inserted. The light from the light stick will emit through the plastic material so that the angler can locate the position of the fishing float once it is positioned in the water or can be alerted to a strike on a hook attached to the fishing line by movement

of the light stick/fishing float combination. The open end is closed by a cap **1088** that fits within the opening. The cap may be threaded to be retained in the cap or may be threadably inserted into the cap. The cap can have a hinge that connects the cap to the tube **1087**. The hinge can be in the form of a strip of plastic connecting the cap to the tube. The cap can be used to form a simple interference fit or can be modified to provide a more certain, water tight seal. For example, the cap can have a shaft from which extends one or more ridges that form water tight interference fit between the shaft and the inner wall of the channel formed in the hollow tube. The cap also can have a ribbed surface on the portion of the cap that is outside of the channel. The ribbed surface permits an angler to easily grip the cap and remove it to insert or withdraw the light stick.

[0271] The hollow tube **1087** can be made from a clear plastic material or can be tinted with one or more colors. In this manner, if the plastic used to form the tube is clear and untinted a light stick positioned within the tube will emit a light of the color of the light stick. Alternatively, if the tube is tinted with one or more colors, a light stick positioned within the tube will result in the light emitted to be of the tint or tints of the tube. The tube **1087** can be made of multiple segments that are attached to each other to form a tube. Each tube can be made of a clear plastic with a different tint to allow an angler to better distinguish his float from another. For example, the tube can be made of a first clear untinted segment and a second clear red tinted segment. In this manner, a light stick within the tube will cause a red light and a white light to be emitted when in use. Other color combinations are also possible and within the scope of the invention.

[0272] The hollow tube **1087** may be formed with the stem or stem segments or may be formed separately and mounted to the stem or stem segments. If the hollow tube is formed with the stem or stem segments, the tube may be injection molded or extruded. If formed separately, the tube may be injection molded or extruded, and then mounted to the stem or stem segments. The hollow tube **1087** may be adhered to the stem using an adhesive or solvent based bond, the tube may be heat bonded to the stem or may be retained through use of a mechanical fitting.

[0273] The stem segments **1090** and **1091** have a lengthwise channel **1092** into which a fishing line can be passed for through slip bobber fishing. As illustrated in FIG. **83d**, the upper stem segment **1091** includes an opening **1089** at one end into which the free end of a fishing line can be inserted. The fishing line is then passed through the channel **1092** into the lower segment **1090** and out the end of the stem. The diameter of the opening **1089** is selected such that a pre-tied knot on the fishing line will interact with the opening **1089** for slip bobber fishing.

[0274] The stem includes a sleeve **1093** mounted on the stem in the form of a ridge or flange around the circumference of the stem. The sleeve acts as a stop to limit the downward movement of the float **1004** on the stem and may be formed with the stem, e.g., by injection molding, or a separately formed part that is mounted on the stem and held in place by, for example, a bond formed through use of an adhesive, solvent, heat, etc. The sleeve **1093** also limits upward movement of a spring **1012** that encircles a portion of the lower stem segment **1090**. The stem segment **1090** also includes a lower cap **1093** that limits downward movement of the spring **1012**, restraining movement of the spring between the cap **1093** and sleeve **1093**.

[0275] The float **1004** is positioned around the stem **1090/1091** and held in place in the manner described above, e.g., an interference fit, a bond formed by use of an adhesive, solvent, heat. In use, the lower stem segment **1090** will be submerged under water, a portion of the float **1004** will be submerged in the water and the upper stem segment **1091** will extend out of the water with the light stick **1084** positioned entirely out of the water. The configuration of the fishing float keeps the cavity within tube **1087** water free so that the light stick remains dry.

[0276] To use the fishing float **1085** for slip bobber or fixed bobber fishing with a light stick **1084** in the cavity formed within the tube **1087**, the angler first attaches the fishing line. The angler initially pulls the spring **1012** up in the direction of the sleeve **1093**. By pulling the spring up sufficiently to pass the fishing line into the line shoulder **1006** and then releasing the spring, the angler can use the fishing float **1085** for fixed bobber fishing. Releasing the spring causes the fishing line to be pressed by the spring against the ridge formed by the cap **1094**, preventing movement of the fishing line through the line shoulder **1006**. By pulling the spring up sufficiently to pass the fishing line into the line shoulder **1008** and then releasing the spring, the angler can use the fishing float **1085** for slip bobber fishing in freezing weather. Because any contact between the fishing line and the fishing float occurs underwater in this configuration, the fishing line will not freeze against the fishing float during use. The angler then removes the cap **1088**, activates a light stick, inserts the light stick into the cavity formed in hollow tube **1087**, and replaces the cap. The angler can cast out the fishing tackle and float or use the tackle and fishing float at that location (e.g., through a hole in the ice).

[0277] If slip bobber fishing, the angler will pass the fishing line through the line shoulder **1008** until a bobber stop attached to the fishing line at a pre-determined position reaches the line shoulder, at which time the interaction between the bobber stop and the line shoulder will prevent further movement of the fishing line through the line shoulder. In this manner, assuming that the angler is fishing at night or in otherwise dark conditions, the angler will be able to view the position of the fishing float based on the light emitted from the light stick.

[0278] In another form of slip bobber fishing, the angler passes the fishing line through the opening **1089** in the upper stem **1091**, through the channel **1092** and out the opening at the bottom of the lower stem **1090**. In use, when a bobber stop attached to the fishing line at a predetermined position reaches the opening **1089**, the interaction between the bobber stop and the opening will prevent further movement of the fishing line through the line shoulder. In this manner, assuming that the angler is fishing at night or in otherwise dark conditions, the angler will be able to view the position of the fishing float based on the light emitted from the light stick.

[0279] As described above with reference to the fishing float **1000**, the fishing float **1085** may similarly include a float **1004** that is made of a buoyant material that can be cut, as described above. The float can be made of a material that floats in water but can be cut using, for example, a knife. Suitable materials that can be cut include a conventional material such as a plastic or foam, e.g., cork, polyethylene, balsam wood etc. The float can be extruded or injection molded. Extruded polyethylene has been found to be particularly suitable as a buoyant float. The extruded polyethylene can be a foam and the foam can be a closed cell foam. As

explained above, the float is cut to reduce the amount of buoyant material, e.g., the float, positioned above the water line. In this way, the float can be cut so that a minimal amount of float is above the water line or at the water line. The angler would make these adjustments in the manner described herein elsewhere.

[0280] Advantageously, in this embodiment the float **1004** can be removed and replaced with a different float as desired. In this implementation, the float is retained to the stem **1090/1091** by an interference fit and/or an optional application of an adhesive, or using other methods disclosed herein. The stem, like the other stems described herein can also include protrusions, a roughened surface, longitudinal ribs, circumferential ridges, etc. to improve the interference fit between the float **1004** and the stem. In this implementation and the others herein, the stem can be provided in a kit with one or more floats **1004**. The floats **1004** also can be provided in a separate package without the stem. The fishing float system **1085** can be sold separately without a float **1004** if desired and then a kit with different sized, shaped and colored floats purchased separately for mounting on the stem. For example, while the float **1004** has been depicted as being bulb shaped, the floats can be of any shape, such as an elongated tube as illustrated in other figures herein.

[0281] Further, the fishing float described herein have the option of mounting a light stick to the stem guide or buoyant member. The light stick can be mounted against or within the stem guide or buoyant member. Examples of lights sticks and fishing floats are described and illustrated in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/774,710, the contents of which are incorporated herein in their entirety by reference for the different configurations, uses and accessories disclosed therein along with methods of making and using.

[0282] It should be understood that references to materials of construction, specific dimensions, and utilities or applications are also not intended to be limiting in any manner and other materials and dimensions could be substituted and remain within the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, in the examples above the float or other cartridge item can be retained to the stem guide through the use of an adhesive as a supplement to the other retaining means or as the sole retaining means. The amount of adhesive used by itself or with other cartridge retaining means can be of an amount that retains the cartridge to the stem guide but permits removal of the cartridge without rendering the stem guide unusable. It also should be understood that the above embodiments illustrated and disclosed may be free of an adhesive to retain the cartridge to the stem guide. Accordingly, it is not intended that the invention be limited, except as by the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A replaceable buoyant member system configured to receive a fishing line at one end and a replaceable fishing cartridge at the other end, the system comprising a stem guide having a fishing line receiving portion and a buoyant member attachment portion, wherein

the fishing line receiving portion is a first end of the stem guide and comprises a line shoulder therein for releasably receiving a fishing line, the line shoulder in the form of a first slot extending from an opening at an outer surface of the stem guide and terminating at a second slot, wherein at least a portion of the second slot is oriented generally perpendicularly to the first slot, the first and second slots being at a position within the stem

guide, the slots both communicating with and extending between diametrically opposed openings in the stem guide to allow a fishing line to pass through the stem guide within the slots, the fishing line receiving portion being free of a movable element to enclose the opening at the outer surface of the stem guide; and

the buoyant member attachment portion is a second, opposite end of the stem guide and comprising a bottom surface and a linear, elongated prong, the prong extending generally perpendicularly from the bottom surface, the prong having a surface along at least a portion of a length of the prong wherein the surface of the prong is configured to permit a buoyant member to be mounted over the prong and removed without damaging the prong such that the stem guide can be used again;

wherein the linear, elongated prong extends along a longitudinal axis of the stem guide and is collinear with the fishing line receiving portion; and

wherein the bottom surface is located between the prong and the line shoulder and is configured to limit longitudinal movement of a buoyant member over the prong when a buoyant member is mounted over the prong and the bottom surface extends outwardly and generally perpendicularly from the longitudinal axis of the stem guide.

2. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 1, wherein the fishing line receiving portion is free of a movable element to enclose the opening of the line shoulder at the outer surface of the stem guide.

3. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 1, wherein the prong comprises a surface configured to restrain removal of a buoyant member from the prong.

4. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 3, wherein the surface comprises one or more protrusions extending outwardly from the prong.

5. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 1, wherein the one or more buoyant members comprises one or more of a float, and a float in combination with a light stick or scent stick inserted into the float.

6. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 1, wherein the one or more buoyant members comprise an attachment end configured to be removably attached to the elongated prong of the stem guide.

7. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 1, wherein the stem guide and one or more buoyant members comprise a fishing kit.

8. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 1, wherein the one or more buoyant members comprise extruded closed cell, polyethylene foam.

9. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 1, further comprising a stick to be inserted into one end of the one or more buoyant members.

10. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 9, wherein the stick comprises a light stick or a scent stick.

11. A replaceable buoyant member system configured to receive a fishing line at one end and a replaceable buoyant member at the other end, the system comprising one or more replaceable buoyant members and a stem guide having a fishing line receiving portion and a buoyant member attachment portion, wherein

the fishing line receiving portion is a first end of the stem guide and comprises a line shoulder therein for releas-

ably receiving a fishing line, the line shoulder in the form of a slot extending from an opening at an outer surface of the stem guide and terminating at a position within the stem guide, the slot both communicating with and extending between diametrically opposed openings in the stem guide to allow a fishing line to pass through the stem guide within the slot; and

the buoyant member attachment portion is a second, opposite end of the stem guide and comprises a first surface and a linear, elongated prong extending from the first surface, the prong extending along the longitudinal axis of the stem guide and being collinear with the fishing line receiving portion, the prong having a second surface along at least a portion of a length of the prong wherein the second surface of the prong is configured to permit a buoyant member to be mounted over the prong and removed without damaging the prong such that the stem guide can be used again;

wherein the first surface is located between the prong and the line shoulder and is configured to limit longitudinal movement of the buoyant member over the prong when the buoyant member is mounted over the prong; and

the buoyant member comprises a polyethylene foam tube having a first end, a second end, and a channel passing between the first end and the second end, wherein the length of the channel is greater than the length of the elongated prong.

12. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, wherein the slot comprises a first segment in communication with a second segment and the first segment is oriented at an angle to the second segment.

13. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, wherein the fishing line receiving portion is free of a movable element to enclose the opening of the line shoulder at the outer surface of the stem guide.

14. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, wherein the prong comprises a surface configured to restrain removal of a buoyant member from the prong.

15. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 14, wherein the surface comprises one or more protrusions extending outwardly from the prong.

16. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, wherein the one or more buoyant members comprises one or more of a float, and a float in combination with a light stick or scent stick inserted into the float.

17. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, wherein the one or more buoyant members comprise an attachment end configured to be removably attached to the elongated prong of the stem guide.

18. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, wherein the stem guide and one or more buoyant members comprise a fishing kit.

19. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, wherein the one or more buoyant members comprise extruded closed cell, polyethylene foam.

20. The replaceable buoyant member system of claim 11, further comprising a stick to be inserted into one end of the one or more buoyant members, wherein the stick comprises a light stick or a scent stick.