



**RECOMMENDED Guidelines for
Creating Rules For Competitive
Fishing Events in Ontario**

November 2008

RECOMMENDED

Guidelines for Creating Rules For Competitive Fishing Events in Ontario

(Revised November 2008)

DRAFT: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

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Organizers of competitive fishing events have an obligation to create and distribute a complete, clear set of rules regarding the operation of their event. It is the responsibility of the organizer to ensure that the competitive fishing event rules, attention to safety of participants and other users, live release methods, and cooperation with other organizers and users of the resources are of the highest standard and meet all government rules and regulations.

“Recommended Guide to Creating Rules for Competitive Fishing Events” was created by the Ontario Competitive Fishing Council as a tool for organizers of competitive fishing events.

The following is a list of items that may be incorporated into the rules for a specific competitive fishing event. Individual items may be modified for particular events, used as is or not at all.

1. ACCESS TO COMPETITOR BOATS

A conservation officer (CO) or a representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources, upon presentation of appropriate credentials, is authorized at any time that game fish are possessed during the tournament or otherwise, to open and/or inspect any livewell, holding tank, bag, boat or other fish conveyance or hold receptacle.

During official practice or competition days, a designated tournament official must be granted access to the competitor’s boat at any time requested. Failure to grant access may result in disqualification.

2. AERATED LIVE WELLS

In catch and release events the use of aerated live wells by competing anglers is mandatory. Live wells are subject to inspection by event officials and are part of the

departing boat inspection. Portable recirculating live wells are acceptable. Consideration should be given to the use of oxygenators to provide oxygen into the live well. [Oxygen should not be held as a gas for safety reasons. The new oxygen devices that create oxygen in the livewell from a chemical reaction are fine.] Live well temperatures should be monitored. The following livewell criteria should be used to reduce stress, maintain oxygen levels and reduce mortality.

- During the competition, the water exchange system should be run continuously when fish are contained in the livewell. (Note that in Ontario, according to the 2008 Fishing Regulations, “daily catch limits include all fish that are retained for any period of time and not immediately released. Anglers fishing from a boat may now catch and retain, and selectively live release, more walleye, northern pike, largemouth or smallmouth bass than the daily limit, provided: a) the fish are held alive in a livewell with a mechanical aerator OPERATING AT ALL TIMES...”)
- A livewell is defined in the Ontario Fishing Regulations as: “...a compartment designed to keep fish alive. For a livewell to be used to selectively release bass, walleye and northern pike, it must be attached to or form part of a boat, hold a total volume of not less than 46 litres (10 gallons) of water, have the capacity for water exchange and be mechanically aerated at all times when live fish are being held in it.” (Ontario Fishing Regulations 2008).
- Water temperature should be maintained within 1 to 2 degrees Celsius of the lake surface temperature to maintain oxygen levels and avoid additional stress.
- Recirculation systems alone should be run near weigh-in sites where water quality is often compromised due to boat traffic.
- Livewells should have a minimum volume of 13.5 litres per fish.
- Although some tournament participants may wish to use livewell additives with the goal of improving fish condition, the use of these compounds is not supported, nor prohibited, because (to our knowledge), there is currently no peer reviewed science available that properly evaluates their impact on the fish.
- Livewells should be located in the stern of the boat and lie perpendicular to the center axis of the boat. They should be filled to capacity while in use to reduce mortality.
- Wastes should be removed.

3. ANGLER CODE OF BEHAVIOR

The “*Recommended Code of Behavior for Competitive Anglers in Ontario*” has been created by the Ontario Competitive Fishing Council as a tool for organizers of competitive fishing events. Organizers may use the template as a means to hold competitors to a high standard. The template may be modified for particular events, used as is or not at all. If the *Recommended Code of Behavior* is used, it should be referred to in the event rules. It is the responsibility of the event organizer to impose

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penalties, if any, for not abiding by the *Recommended Code of Behavior for Competitive Anglers*. A code of behavior is necessary to define acceptable behaviors, to promote high standards of practice, to provide a benchmark for competitive angler members to use for self-evaluation and to establish a framework for professional behavior and responsibilities.

4. ARTIFICIAL LURES

Only artificial lures and/or biodegradable artificial lures are permitted. The only “live bait” or “prepared bait” that will be permitted either during practice or competition is pork strips/rinds.

5. BOAT EQUIPMENT

Equipment must comply with Department of Transportation (DOT) Canada Standards and should include reboarding equipment.

6. BOAT IDENTIFICATION

Owners must comply with Department of Transportation (DOT) Canada Standards for boat identification. Identification must be clearly visible.

7. BOAT INSPECTIONS

Event officials may inspect boats at any time during the event. Prior to the start of each tournament day, each boat must be given an inspection check. Tournament Officials may inspect boats for any items they deem necessary, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Adherence to DOT and Canadian Coast Guard standards for boat and motor;
- Boat numbers properly affixed;
- Day 2 and Day 3 starting position numbers properly affixed;
- Livewell is operational;
- Kill-switch operates correctly and is attached to the driver while the main motor is in operation;
- Boat is equipped with lifejackets;
- Other required safety equipment is present;
- No type of live, dead, frozen or freeze-dried bait is present in the boat;
- No underwater cameras are present in the boat.
- Failure to report for inspection will result in disqualification of that day’s catch.
- Committee patrol boats may come alongside, following proper identification, and if necessary, board to check for adherence to all Tournament Rules. No other boat may come in contact with a competitor’s boat at any time, with the exception of a Conservation Officer.

Teams should have all tackle boxes, hatches and live wells open for easy inspection prior to the arrival of the Tournament Officials.

8. BOAT INSURANCE

Each owner, operator and vessel must have current Liability Insurance. A minimum amount of liability insurance may be required by the Tournament Officials, and proof will be required.

9. BOAT NUMBERS (Motor Tags)

Each boat should be given a numbered identification device daily, which must remain unaltered and visible at all times from either side of the boat during tournament hours. Numbers should be turned in at check-in.

10. CHANGES AND AMENDMENTS

Any changes or amendments to tournament rules prior to the event should be explained fully at the Registration and Rules Meeting. Written amendments should be circulated at that time, if necessary.

11. CHECK-IN

The official check-in location and time(s) will be clearly communicated at the Registration and Rules Meeting. At check-in, all boats shall identify themselves by means of their daily numbers (Item 9) and proceed to the weigh-in site. Partners must remain together at all times.

12. COMMUNICATION AND EMERGENCIES BETWEEN ANGLERS

COMPETITORS MUST REMAIN IN THE BOAT: During any days of competition, competitors must not leave their boat, either to land fish or for any other reason, with the exceptions cited below.

Boats must remain in tournament waters during tournament days. Competitors must depart and return to official checkpoint by boat. Both competitors must remain in the boat at all times except in the case of a real emergency or with the permission of the Tournament Director. In such an emergency, or with permission from the Tournament Director, competitors may be removed from their boat to either a boat operated by other competitors or a boat that has been designated as a rescue boat by the Tournament Director.

Partners must remain together at all times, in sight of each other and each other's catch, in order for their catch of that day to be scored in the tournament. In the event of a needed restroom break, competitors are allowed to leave the boat; however upon doing so, all fishing must cease until the partners are back together in the boat.

If a competitor violates any of the above conditions to contact a tournament official by phone or other means or to report an emergency or breakdown, both competitors must

cease fishing at this point, and their catch must be verified by a tournament official in order to be counted in the tournament.

After the emergency situation has been resolved by tournament officials, if enough time remains for the competitors to resume fishing, a RESTART will be allowed and the competitors will continue, allowing their catch to be counted. This applies only to dire emergency situations as determined by the Tournament Director or his/her designate. Towing boats on trailers during tournament hours is prohibited, except by direction from Tournament Officials.

During the official competition days of the tournament, communication devices such as a CB radio, a VHF marine-band radio, a cellular phone, etc. may not be used for the purposes of locating or catching fish. Competitors may use these devices only in the case of an emergency, or to listen to the marine-band weather information (if so equipped).

13. ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Proof of age may be required by the Tournament Director, and participation may be restricted based on a minimum age. Tournaments may be restricted to members of fishing organizations. An application will be required. Anglers must hold a valid fishing license according to requirements within the jurisdiction where the tournament is being held. Anglers must be capable of operating their equipment safely for both themselves and their partners to the satisfaction of the Tournament Director. Payment for the event prior to a deadline date will be required for participation. Tournament Directors reserve the right to discontinue accepting applications for a particular event once the target number of applicants has been received.

Certain events, such as Classic Series, may require participation and/or a certain level of standing, in all of the events of the same series for eligibility. Tournament Organizers may wish to determine other criteria for eligibility as they see fit.

14. EMERGENCIES

Please refer to previous section covering emergencies, Section 12, Communication and Emergencies between Anglers.

15. ENFORCEMENT

Tournament rules must be clearly stated. Organizers must be prepared to enforce rules.

16. ENTRIES

Tournament Organizers should consider dates for tournaments other than opening weekends for the species and long weekends.¹

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Fishing tournaments should not be held on any lakes smaller than 100 acresⁱⁱ unless:

- The tournament will promote public awareness of fishing and the province's resources; and
- Conform to best management practices for the lake; or
- Is a traditional fishing tournament; or
- The lake is a part of a chain of interconnected lakes not interrupted by a lock, dam or other obstruction which prevents free navigation from one lake to another.

For lakes more than 100 acres but less than 450 acres, tournaments should not exceed a maximum of 25 boats; no more than 2 tournament fishing days should occur per month on the body of water.

For bodies of water equal to or larger than 450 acres but less than 1250 acres, tournaments should not exceed a maximum of 50 boats; no more than 6 tournament fishing days should occur per month on the body of water.

For lakes equal to or larger than 1250 acres but less than 5,000 acres, tournaments should not exceed a maximum of 125 boats; no more than 9 tournament fishing days should occur per month on the body of water.

For lakes equal to or larger than 5,000 acres but less than 10,000 acres, tournaments should not exceed a maximum of 150 boats; no more than 16 tournament fishing days should occur per month on the body of water.

Tournament directors reserve the right to cut off or refuse entries at their discretion. There may be pre-qualifications, as indicated in Section 13, Eligibility and Participation, above.

17. ENTRY FEE

Entry fees should be paid prior to the cut-off date in order for competitors to participate in the event, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Tournament Director for late payment. Entry fees must be paid prior to participation in the event.

18. EQUIPMENT – BOATS AND MOTORS

- a) All boats must be a minimum of fourteen (14) feet in length or as deemed safe for use on the waters of the competition as determined by the organizers.
- b) No barges, houseboats, or similar cumbersome craft will be allowed.
- c) All boats, motors and their equipment must meet Canadian Coast Guard and DOT Canada standards.
- d) The Tournament Director reserves the right to disallow the use of any boat, motor and/or equipment deemed unsafe, inappropriate or unsuitable.

- e) All boats equipped with an emergency kill switch mechanism must have the kill switch tether securely attached to the boat operator whenever the combustion engine is running.
- f) Boats used in competitive fishing events should be properly cleaned prior to moving from one body of water to another to avoid transferring invasive species, diseases or parasites from one lake to another.

19. EVENT DIRECTOR ROLE

The Event Director is the official who will be enforcing the rules and handling any protests or disputes. The Event Director and/or other officials should be individuals that will not have any potential gain from the outcome of any decisions rendered regarding rules, protests or disputes.

20. FISH CARE

Tournament Organizers should develop provisions relating to fish holding and handling, and type of catch allowed. Here are some guidelines:

- Use of rubber nets should be encouraged, if nets are allowed to be used by Tournament Organizers. Wet the net before using.
- Handle the fish as little as possible.
- Use of needle-nose pliers for hook removal may be recommended.
- Fish should not be kept out of water for longer than 30 seconds at a time.
- Anglers should wet the measuring board before using and make sure it is cool if it is a metal board.
- If the fish weighs more than three pounds, hold by the lip but support his weight by placing your other hand on his belly near the anal fin or tail. Never place your hand in fish's gills.
- Carry a pair of long-shanked cutters strong enough to cut any hook (Snap-On makes a pair).
- Use tags to mark the size of the fish if culling is allowed in your jurisdiction. Make sure you use the ones that clamp on fish's lip, not the stringer type.
- Staggered starts are recommended.
- Contingency plans (or cancellation of event) for high wind/ high water temperatures should be established. Note: The Beaufort Wind Scale may be helpful in considering high wind conditions.
- Culling of dead fish is prohibited. Dead fish should be weighed in, and a penalty assessed for killing the fish, usually by deducting a portion of the total weight as per tournament rules.
- A plan for disposal of any dead fish should be established. All dead fish should be cared for as food (i.e. cleaned and stored in a sterile container packed with ice for dispersal).
- A weigh-in supervisor, responsible for all aspects of fish handling and retention at weigh-in stations, should be designated.
- Release site should have good water quality and adequate depth; preferably a low-traffic area, away from the shoreline.

- Weigh-in procedures should be well established prior to the event. For guidelines, please refer to Section 50, Weigh In Procedures.
- Schedule competitive fishing events during cooler water periods, as hot temperatures increase stress and mortality. In the event of very hot conditions, consider on-water weigh-in and periodic and multiple weigh-in stations.ⁱⁱⁱ

21. FISHING LICENSES

All anglers must possess a valid provincial fishing license, except those exempted by the Fisheries Act. Sportfishing licenses are recommended.

22. FLIGHTS AND STARTING PROCEDURES

Mass starts should be avoided for safety and publicity reasons. If more than 25 boats are involved in the tournament, separate flights should be established to facilitate good weigh-in procedures with optimum fish care. Starting procedures should be fully explained at the rules meeting.

23. FORMAT

Rules should identify the format that the tournament will follow, e.g. individual, team, pro/am, etc.

24. HORSEPOWER

Pleasure Craft operated in Canada must comply with the federal government's Small Vessel Regulations requirements. A notice showing conformity to Transport Canada (TC) construction standards issued by the Coast Guard must be displayed. Outboard motor boats six metres or less in length, which can accommodate one or more engines totaling 7.5 kW (10 H.P.) or more, are also required to display a capacity plate issued by the Coast Guard showing the maximum safe limits of engine power, load and the number of people that can be carried on board under favorable weather conditions. There is no substitute for the TC plates issued by the Coast Guard and they are mandatory.^{iv}

Event organizers may wish to restrict the maximum horsepower of outboard motors used in an event or create a special category for boats under a particular horsepower. Event organizers may decide not to allow boats with motors exceeding the manufacturers' hull rating. Motors should not have modifications that exceed the manufacturers' hull ratings; these should be excluded from the competition.

25. HOURS OF FISHING

Official fishing hours should be clearly described in the tournament rules and should include start times and finish times for each day of the tournament. If start times are staggered to reduce the congestion and noise of boats tournament rules should include start times and finish times for each flight for each day of the tournament. If start times are staggered the finish times should also be staggered to allow for equal fishing times for all participants.

26. LATE RETURN

A team or angler returning late receives an unfair advantage over teams returning on time. A penalty for returning late could consist of one or more of the following:

- i) a specific weight penalty for a specific time late
- ii) disqualification of day's catch

27. LENGTH MEASUREMENTS

The method used to measure fish must be explained in the rules. Total length is the measurement from the tip of the mouth with the jaws closed to the tip of the tail with the tail fin lobes compressed to give the maximum possible length.^v

28. LIVE RELEASE OF FISH

Culling of dead fish is prohibited. During warm weather tournaments, extra ice should be kept on board for fish care. However, caution must be used; water which is too cold will also harm the fish. Water should be kept within 1 – 2 degrees celcius of environmental water temperatures. Consideration should be given to opening the weigh-in station(s) either throughout the day or earlier than the return of the first flight, to allow for fish care concerns.

Muskies Canada Inc. offers some catch and release tips especially for muskies (which can be equally effective with other species) including the following:

- Match the tackle to the fish you are after;
- Have your landing equipment ready;
- Have your release tools ready and within easy reach;
- Keep your landing area ready;
- Practice proper release and resuscitation techniques;
- Take special precautions in the hot summer months.

(For more details, visit their website: www.muskiescanada.ca)

29. LIVE BAIT

No live bait is permitted. Please refer to item 4, artificial lures.

30. MECHANICAL BREAKDOWN OR EMERGENCIES

a) In the case of an emergency or mechanical breakdown, cellular phones, CB's, and VHF Marine radios may be used for safety reasons. Cell phone calls can be placed only to the Tournament Command Centre unless previously approved by the Tournament Operations Director. Anglers will be advised of the Command Centre phone number at the Rules Meeting.

IN THE EVENT OF BREAKDOWN ANGLERS MAY ALSO USE AN ONSHORE PHONE TO REACH THE TOURNAMENT COMMAND CENTRE IF OTHER COMMUNICATION METHODS ARE ABSENT OR FAIL TO WORK.

b) Committee patrol boats are prohibited from towing any competitor's boat during tournament fishing hours. If necessary for safety reasons, towing will be allowed to the nearest landing only.

c) In the event of mechanical breakdown the fish from the disabled boat may be transferred to another competitor's boat provided they are accompanied by a member of the disabled team and they are kept in a separate live well. Both teams may be subject to a polygraph test. Both catches must arrive prior to the deadline for the flights in which the teams are fishing.

d) In the event of a mechanical breakdown, Tournament Officials or tournament boats will not be used to transport repair parts or repair technicians to the breakdown site. Repairs should be between the fisherman and a repair shop.

31. NO WAKE OR SLOW ZONES

These zones must be marked and easily recognized. They should be identified prior to the event and the identification should be provided to each person involved in the event.

32. NON TARGET FISH

Every effort must be made to avoid catching non target fish in the event. This should include avoiding habitat or posted areas which are known to be species specific or using lures common to a specific non-target species. Any non target fish caught must be safely released.

33. ON THE WATER

a) Competitors are personally responsible for knowing all Tournament Rules, as well as the current Ontario Sport Fishing Regulations and Canadian Coast Guard regulations. Penalty: Teams found to have violated federal or provincial fishing and boating regulations during the tournament may be disqualified when this information is confirmed by Tournament Officials. This judgment could also apply to eligibility to participate in future tournaments.

b) Competitors are not allowed to toss or pass any item(s) to another boat or to receive any item(s) from another boat during competition hours.

c) All teams and their equipment are subject to inspection at any time during the tournament. Committee patrol boats may come alongside, following proper identification, and if necessary, board to check for adherence to all tournament rules. No other boat may come in contact with a competitor's boat at any time, with the exception of a Conservation Officer's boat.

d) No fishing information may be given to or exchanged with competitors during the tournament fishing hours by tournament or non-tournament anglers.

34. PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

In order to participate in the competition, each competitor must complete a waiver and release of liability and provide a copy of photo identification.

In signing the participation agreement or official entry form, each competitor agrees to report to the Tournament Director any violation or infraction of any Tournament Rules.

35. RULE VIOLATIONS & PENALTIES

Failure to report tournament rules violations, suggestions to another competitor that they violate tournament rules or false verification of weigh-in forms may be cause for disqualification.

Depending on the severity or frequency of any rule violation, penalties may be assessed. The rules should clearly identify the penalty for violating each rule. Penalties may include one or more of the following:

- (a) cash fine
- (b) four ounce weight penalty
- (c) eight ounce weight penalty
- (d) one pound weight penalty
- (e) specific weight penalty for specific time late
- (f) disqualification of specific fish
- (g) disqualification of largest fish
- (h) cull down to tournament limit starting with largest fish in possession
- (i) reducing day's weight by specific percentage
- (j) reducing day's weight by specific weight
- (k) disqualification of day's catch
- (l) delayed start – end of flight
- (m) delayed start – end of next flight
- (n) delayed start – end of last flight
- (o) delayed start – specified time after last flight
- (p) delayed start – after special rules meeting
- (q) delayed start – end of last flight – next event
- (r) immediate disqualification from tournament
- (s) disqualification from future tournament(s)
- (t) permanent ban from competition

36. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS

Tournament waters will be established by the Tournament Director, and must be clearly communicated to all competitors. Any water within these boundaries which is posted "off-limits" by provincial or federal agencies or that is part of a provincial or federal no-

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fishing zone or fish sanctuary will be off-limits for the tournament. This information must also be clearly communicated to participants. Tournament waters must be comprised of public fishing areas. All fishing must be done from the boat. Competitors may not fish within 50 yards (46m) of another competitor's anchored boat.

37. PRE-TOURNAMENT PRACTICE

- 1) There will be no off-limits period for any tournament unless specified by the Tournament Director.
- 2) Immediately before the first day of the tournament, there will be an official practice period; times to be established by the Tournament Director. Each competitor must be aware of the official practice times and adhere to them. During competition, a competitor can only have the assistance or advice of another competitor for the purposes of locating or catching fish on tournament waters. During the official practice period, the competitor may only have the assistance or advice of another competitor, or someone who has no knowledge of the tournament waters for the purpose of locating or catching fish.
- 3) During the official practice and throughout the tournament, no scuba diving or skin diving will be permitted in tournament waters.
- 4) No bartering or buying of fish locations will be permitted at any time.
- 5) No communication device of any kind will be allowed during the tournament for the purpose of locating or catching fish. Communication devices may only be used in the event of an emergency. If they wish, competitors may listen to marine-band radio for weather information only.
- 6) Transporting of fish for the sole purpose of stocking an area for a future tournament is both illegal and prohibited.
- 7) Testing of engines after the weigh-in is not permitted, except with the express permission of the Tournament Director.
- 8) Access to a competitor's boat must be granted to tournament officials when requested throughout the official practice and during the tournament. Failure to allow such access may result in disqualification.
- 9) By affixing his or her signature on the official application or entry form, each competitor is agreeing to adhere to tournament rules and to report to the Tournament Director any violation or infraction of tournament rules. Failure to report violations, suggestions to any other competitor that they violate tournament rules, or false verification of weigh-in forms will be cause for disqualification.

38. PRIZE PAYBACKS

All prize paybacks should be clearly identified in pre-tournament information and at the Tournament Registration and Rules Meeting, including the number of places receiving

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prizes (First, Second, Third place, etc.) as well as any special awards such as Big Fish. If cash is involved, the amounts should be specified. If material prizes are to be awarded, any conditions that apply should be identified (e.g. if the prize is a leased truck, the extent of the lease should be made clear).

39. PROTESTS AND APPEALS

Any appeal must be in writing to the Tournament Director and must be received within seven days from the date of the ruling unless otherwise indicated by the Tournament Director or by the specific tournament rules. In the event of an admitted tournament rule violation, no appeal may be heard.

An appeals committee, consisting of anglers and organizers not associated with the particular event in question may be established by tournament organizers. In this event, decisions by the appeals committee will be final.

In most instances the Tournament Director is the sole and final arbiter and will make a binding ruling on any appeal in accordance with the posted rules.

40. REGISTRATION AND RULES MEETING

Each competitor must register in person with official staff at the time and place designated in the schedule of events. Failure to register in person during the designated hours shall result in a penalty of one pound taken from the competitor's total catch. It is the responsibility of each competitor to either check the schedule of events for registration time and location or obtain times from tournament officials.

41. SAFETY

Competitors must comply with DOT Canada Marine Safety Standards, and any other federal, local or provincial safety standards, rules or regulations, including equipment standards for small vessels outlined in the *Canada Shipping Act*.

As will be required by law for everyone in September 2009, all anglers who will be driving a boat at any time during the official practice or the tournament must hold a valid Pleasure Craft Operator Card, indicating that they have passed an accredited (by the Canadian Coast Guard) Safe Boat Training Program.

Competitors must drive their boats safely. During the official practice and throughout the tournament, each competitor must wear a Canada Coast Guard approved lifejacket, properly fastened, at all times when the combustion engine is in operation.

If bad weather or other safety concerns warrant, Tournament Officials may delay, shorten or cancel the start of an official tournament day, or otherwise restrict tournament waters.

Tournament Officials may also impose boat speed limits during tournament days at their discretion for safety or other reasons.

In the event of an emergency, competitors may call emergency services (911) first before notifying tournament officials.

If bad weather places competitors in dangerous situations, they are allowed to leave the boat and seek safe shelter.

42. SCORING

- a) Only target species fish legally caught on a tournament day by angling qualify for weigh-in. Violation of this rule will result in tournament disqualification.
- b) A daily limit per team will be weighed in, as outlined in the specific tournament rules. Any team with more than the daily limit of fish will be penalized.
- c) A minimum size limit will be established by the tournament rules for the target species and should be measured from the tip of the nose with mouth closed to the end of the tail with the tail compressed, or as outlined in the specific tournament rules.
- d) Fish presented for weigh-in which fail to meet the official minimum length will not be weighed and that day's weight will be penalized at the rate of one (1) pound for each "short" fish. In the event that assessing weight penalties results in a negative total weight for the day, the negative weight shall be carried forward to the next day or subtracted from the existing team total, whichever is appropriate.
- e) Each team's fish must be presented to the Weigh Master or his/her Assistants in the official bags supplied by the Tournament Organizers.
- f) All weights, upon verbal acceptance by the Team Captain, and then publicly called by the Weigh Master, are immediately official and are not thereafter contestable.
- g) Dead fish presented for weigh-in will be weighed. A penalty will be assessed, as indicated in the specific tournament rules, to be deducted from the total daily weight for each dead or non-releasable fish that is weighed. A resulting negative daily weight will be handled as per the second sentence of Rule 42(d).
- h) Species caught other than the target species must be returned to tournament waters with the exception of damaged fish as per provincial fishing regulations. All legal size fish of any species caught and damaged must be turned over to the Tournament Committee before weigh-in, and may not be kept by competitors. No fish, other than the day's limit of the target species, will be kept in the boat while reporting for weigh-in.

43. SIZE AND LIMITS

The catch limit is the number of fish an angler is allowed to catch and keep in one day and includes fish that are retained for any period of time. The possession limit is the number an angler is allowed to have in his/her possession on hand, in cold storage, in transit, or anywhere. Possession limits are the same as one day's catch limit except

where otherwise specified. Tournament catch limits should consider size restrictions as well (slot sizes) where applicable.^{vi}

44. SPORTSMANSHIP & COURTESY

Anglers participating in any competitive tournament event shall conduct themselves professionally. Anglers shall observe all aspects of the Recommended Code of Behavior for Competitive Anglers in Ontario developed in April 2007 by the Ontario Competitive Fishing Council and its directors.

45. SPIRIT OF THE RULES

Acting professionally, as indicated in the Recommended Code of Behavior for Competitive Anglers in Ontario, means respecting yourselves, your fellow competitors, all recreational anglers, the sport, the event, the sponsors of the event and the sportfishing industry. It involves a respect for the environment, the resources, other resource users and conservation objectives, so that healthy fisheries, and recreational fishing, will be enjoyed in Ontario in perpetuity.

46. STOCKING OF FISH

Transporting of fish for the sole purpose of stocking an area for a future tournament is both illegal and prohibited.

47. TACKLE & EQUIPMENT

- Only one casting, spin casting or spinning rod and reel may be used by any one competitor at any given time, although others may be present in the boat, ready for use.
- All fish must be caught in a sporting and legal manner – no snagging or snatching is permitted.
- Competitive anglers must use only artificial lures as explained in Section 4.
- The use of grippers is not permitted in landing bass.
- Competitive anglers must adhere to all boat equipment rules (Section 5) and equipment rules for boats and motors (Section 18).

48. TIE BREAKERS

A method for breaking ties should be clearly stated. Options include the following:

- a. sudden victory fish-off with time limit
- b. sudden victory fish-off for biggest catch with time limit
- c. biggest individual fish determines placing
- d. heaviest one day weight determines placing
- e. previous day's finishing position determines placing
- f. splitting equally the total prize money for the positions in question
- g. coin flip

Please Note: All tie breaker situations must conform to all provincial, federal and state fishing and boating regulations.

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49. TRANSFERRING FISH

Competitive fishing events should not be planned for adjoining lakes where locking is necessary. Fish must be returned to the same body of water from which they were caught.

50. WEIGH-IN PROCEDURES

Weigh-in procedures should be well established prior to the event. Here are some guidelines for catch and release tournaments:^{vii}

- a. Based on extensive research, it has been found that the main problem at tournament weigh-ins is maintenance of adequate oxygen levels in weigh-in bags, holding tanks and on live-release boats (or anywhere fish are being held). It is highly recommended that all tournament organizers purchase a reliable hand-held oxygen meter and have someone on their staff learn how to use it. Oxygen levels should be monitored periodically anywhere fish are being held during the weigh-in (especially where large numbers of fish are being held such as holding tanks and live release boats). Further details about the importance of maintaining proper oxygen levels can be found in “The Shimano Water Weigh-In System: A Fish Friendly Guide”.
- b. Control the number of weigh-in bags to control the pace of the weigh-in.
- c. Keep fish in live wells with aerators running continuously while waiting for a weigh-in bag.
- d. Use reinforced, perforated baskets that allow water exchange.
- e. Weigh in flights if the tournament has many contestants or teams.
- f. To reduce stress, plan a water weigh-in. For further information, please refer to “The Shimano Water Weigh-in System: A “Fish-Friendly” Guide”. (For a tutorial on the system, go to www.catchfishing.com).
- g. Handle the fish as little as possible. Tournament personnel may wear wet cotton gloves.
- h. Exposure time of individual fish to atmosphere should not exceed 30 seconds at any one time^{viii}.

51. ROLE OF THE WEIGH MASTER

In the event of a rule violation the Weigh Master may impose such sanctions as he deems appropriate including, without limitation, disqualification, forfeiture of prizes, entry fee and prohibition from participation in future tournaments. The decision of the Tournament Weigh Master and Tournament Committee will be final in all matters of rule violations.

52. COMPETITORS MUST REMAIN IN BOATS

Competitors must remain in their boats at all times during tournament days. Please refer to Section 12, Communication and Emergencies between Anglers for the explanation and safety exceptions.

53. CO-OPERATION WITH MEDIA AND PROMOTIONS

As indicated in the Recommended Code of Behavior for Competitive Anglers in Ontario, competitive anglers should interact with the media, the public, the outdoor industry and sponsors with integrity, propriety, honesty and accuracy. They should become informed and involved in local conservation projects, should participate with youth fishing activities, practice ethics and sportsmanship and be the best possible “fishing” teachers by sharing fishing knowledge and skills.

Competitors are expected to co-operate as much as possible with official video and still photography personnel.

ⁱ Opinion polls in Wisconsin suggest that even tournament anglers oppose timing tournaments on opening weekends or during long weekends. (Fishing Tournaments in Wisconsin: Public Awareness, Participation and Opinions).

ⁱⁱ Iowa’s regulations state that on lakes less than 100 surface acres, there is a 15 boat maximum. On lakes greater than 100 surface acres, a maximum of one boat per ten surface acres, although biologists may waive this rule for special events.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alberta Competitive Fishing Events: Best Management Practices. Note that in Iowa, multiple weigh-ins are required when water temperatures exceed 70 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board. In some states, tournaments are not permitted for some fish species between July 1 and August 31. In Iowa, weigh-in tournaments are not allowed for walleye, northern pike and muskellunge in June, July or August. Wisconsin no longer bans tournaments in July and August, but the DNR reserves the right to write conditions into the required permits for “catch-hold-release” events to reduce fish mortality, including reducing bag limits, if predetermined temperature limits are reached (70 degrees F. for walleye and 80 degrees F. for bass).

^{iv} Taken from www.ic.gc.ca

^v Ontario Recreational Fishing Regulations Summary 2006.

^{vi} Taken from Ontario Fishing Regulations www.mnr.gov.on.ca. Wisconsin conducted a study over several years on the effects of culling during bass tournaments.

^{vii} Taken from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Fishery Research Lab.

^{viii} Alberta Competitive Fishing Events Best Management Practices.

Resources:

Alberta Competitive Fishing Events Best Management Practices.
Alberta Fisheries Fact Sheet.

American Bass Anglers.com
American Bass Anglers, “How Tournament Anglers Should Handle Fish”.

B.A.S.S. 2007 regulations.

Dr. Bruce Tufts, Biology Department, Queen’s University.

Fort Frances Canadian Bass Championships Rules (2006).

Iowa Tournament regulations.

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

New Jersey Bass Federation Official Tournament Rules and Regulations.

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Ontario Recreational Fishing Regulations 2007.

*RECOMMENDED Guidelines for Creating Rules for Competitive Fishing Events in Ontario
Ontario Competitive Fishing Council – www.ocfc.ca*

Shimano Water Weigh-In System: A Fish Friendly Guide.

Wisconsin DNR tournament rules. Wisconsin Natural Resources Board.

Other jurisdictions reviewed: Maine, Washington, North Dakota, Canada (various provinces and territories), Minnesota, Illinois, California, Indiana.

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