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09-137 DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Chapter 2: RULES PERTAINING TO COMMERCIAL FISHING, FISH CULTURE AND FISHING DERBIES AND TOURNAMENTS

2.05 Regulations Pertaining to Bass Fishing Tournaments

A. Scope

These rules shall be applicable to bass fishing tournaments as authorized by Title 12, M.R.S.A., Section 12505.

B. Definitions

For the purposes of these rules the following terms have the following meanings:

Bass Club
For purposes of determining eligibility to apply for a permit to conduct a one-day bass tournament, a "bass club" is defined as any organized group of five or more individual bass anglers which is able to satisfy one of the following criteria.,

1. Provide current documentation of being a member club in a nationally recognized bass fishing organization; or

2. Provide a current listing of club officers and members along with a signed affidavit affirming that the club (consisting of at least 5 members), although not affiliated with any nationally recognized bass fishing organization, is a bona-fide independent fishing club. The affidavit must include a list of all members with contact information and must indicate those members who have participated in an approved aquatic species and livewell inspection training program within the last three years, with a minimum of four trained inspectors per club.

NOTE: It is a Class E crime to obtain a permit through fraud, misstatement, or misrepresentation - Title 12 M.R.S.A., Section 10757.

Pre-launch
For the purpose of determining whether or not an activity falls under the term "pre-launch" within these rules, pre-launching is defined as the activity of launching a watercraft on a body of water for the purpose of participating in a bass tournament on that body of water within the next five days. Watercraft launched for this purpose are only to be considered pre-launching if they are not retrieved from the water between the initial launch and the commencement of the bass tournament on that body of water.

C. **Requirements (General)**

1. Any bass club which sponsors a bass tournament must submit a completed bass tournament questionnaire via a state-approved electronic data collection and management tool or system, when requested to do so by an agent of the Commissioner, provided that such request is identified on the tournament permit or made in writing to the sponsoring club prior to the day of the tournament.

2. Each tournament requires the presence of boat inspectors who have participated in a state-approved aquatic invasive species inspection training program within the last three years, to conduct watercraft and livewell aquatic invasive species inspections. Inspectors during a tournament must be at a sufficient number such that all watercraft can be inspected at the launch sites identified by the hosting bass club as an inspection station launch. Each watercraft will first be inspected immediately before a tournament participant launches prior to the tournament, unless the watercraft was inspected for the purpose of pre-launching by an inspector who has taken a state-approved aquatic invasive species inspection training program. Watercraft will be inspected ~~and~~ for a second time after retrieval from the water immediately after the conclusion of the tournament for that participant by an inspector who has taken a state-approved aquatic invasive species inspection training program. If a watercraft remains on the water after the end of the tournament, the watercraft must be inspected either on the water, inclusive of trimming up motor and opening livewell for thorough inspection, or upon final retrieval from the water by an inspector who has taken a state-approved aquatic invasive species inspection training program.

   a. Bass clubs must submit all watercraft inspection data via a state-approved electronic data collection and management tool or system. For boats that pre-launch prior to a tournament or remain on the water at the end of a tournament and intend to be inspected by an inspector who has taken a state-approved aquatic invasive species inspection training program but is not associated with the bass club (e.g., Courtesy Boat Inspector), record that an inspection has or will be taking place with an outside inspector must be noted.

   b. Bass clubs will ensure that all tournament participants are informed of the water access site(s) at which aquatic invasive species inspections will occur such that every watercraft associated with the tournament can receive required launching and retrieval inspections at one of the designated inspection sites. Bass clubs must designate at least one water access site for inspections in their permit application, however additional water access sites for inspections can be added, removed, or changed without notification to the Department so long as the full, final list is available upon commencement of the tournament.

3. All anglers in the tournament must possess a valid Maine fishing license unless of an age where a license is not required.

4. Bass tournament watercraft must be specifically identified by attaching at least one strand of fluorescent biodegradable tape to the watercraft in a manner visible

from the exterior of the watercraft and a roster of participants must be available on site.

5. Only one permit will be issued on a waterbody for a specific date.

6. All fishing will be restricted to artificial lures.

7. No weigh-in bass tournaments will be permitted on a body of water less than 500 surface acres.

8. A copy of the tournament permit, a copy of the rules affecting tournaments, and a list of water access sites being used by the tournament for aquatic invasive species watercraft inspections shall be conspicuously displayed during each tournament at a location accessible to all tournament contestants. If tournament permit, rules, and inspection site locations are displayed in an enclosed location (e.g., vehicle window/dash), the enclosed location must be specifically identified by attaching at least one strand of fluorescent biodegradable tape to the exterior of the enclosed location in a manner plainly visible.

9. Tournaments are limited to one watercraft per 35 acres with a maximum of 100 watercraft.

10. Tournaments may be Catch/Measure/Release or Weigh-In.

    a) For Catch/Measure/Release tournaments in waters managed by MDIFW under the South Zone General Law, all bass caught must be immediately released to the location from which caught. Youth tournaments are to be Catch/Measure/Release only. There will be no application fee for Youth tournament permits.

    b) For Weigh-In tournaments in waters managed by MDIFW under the South Zone General Law, all bass retained shall be kept in a livewell being operated with the pump(s) in a mode that constantly exchanges livewell water with fresh lake or river water as a flow-through system, except when watercraft are being operated under power of the main outboard while changing locations, or while motoring to shore immediately prior to weigh-in, at which time the pump(s) may be operated in a manner that aerates a fixed volume of water in the livewell. All bass taken shall be returned to the water from which it was caught, unharmed as far as possible, at the conclusion of the tournament day. The daily limit shall be 5 bass per participant with no weight limit.

11. The total cash value of prizes for single-day tournaments shall not exceed $25,000.

12. The Commissioner has the authority to put any condition necessary on any tournament to assure that appropriate measures are taken to protect biological resources and address social concerns.

13. Weigh-In tournaments are not permitted in Hancock & Washington Counties from May 20 to June 30 (dates inclusive). In all other South Zone counties weigh-in tournaments are not permitted from May 8 to June 14 (dates inclusive).

14. Weigh-in tournaments are not permitted in Maine and New Hampshire Border waters from May 15 to June 30 (dates inclusive).

15. There will be no more than seven weigh-in tournaments per calendar year on any water greater than 500 acres.

16. Bass tournaments are not permitted in any waters managed by MDIFW under North Zone General Law except for the following waters which are exempt due to a history of ongoing bass tournaments:

- Indian Pond in Saint Albans;
- Moose Lake (Great) in Athens, Harmony, Hartland, and Saint Albans;
- Schoodic Lake in Brownville, Lake View Plt, and T4 R9 NWP;
- Sebec Lake in Bowerbank, Dover-Foxcroft, Sebec, and Willimantic; and
- Wesserunsett Lake (Hayden Lake) in Madison.

On these five exempt waters, bass tournaments may be permitted as Catch/Measure/Release tournaments or Weigh-In tournaments as above. However, bass tournament participants are not prohibited from harvesting bass during a permitted bass tournament.

17. No bass tournament shall occur at a public water access facility in a manner that prevents non-event participants from launching and retrieving watercraft.

D. **Multi-Day-Tournaments**

The following section applies to multi-day bass tournaments and shall be considered "in addition to" the requirements listed in Sections 2.05.B and 2.05.C above. All other existing State laws and rules pertaining to bass tournaments which are not modified herein continue to apply to multi-day tournaments.

1. Multi-day permit applications will be accepted up to 24 months prior to planned date of the tournament.

2. Multi-day permits will only be allowed for a statewide, multi-state or national championship tournament of a nationally recognized fishing. The organization must provide current documentation of being a nationally recognized bass fishing organization at the time of application.

3. Each day of a multi-day tournament prior to Labor Day will be deducted from the number of one-day weigh-in tournaments allowed per water but these one-day tournaments may be replaced after Labor Day. Multi-day tournaments may be held after Labor Day without displacing one-day weigh-in tournaments.

4. Multi-day tournaments are only permitted on bodies of water greater than 2000 acres.

5. The maximum number of multi-day tournaments/year shall be six statewide, no more than one per water, per calendar year.

6. Number of watercraft permitted for a multi-day tournament will be based on 1 watercraft per 35 acres, maximum of up to 300 watercraft.

7. The total cash value of prizes for multi-day tournaments shall not exceed $300,000.

E. **Maine and New Hampshire Border Waters**

The following section applies to bass tournaments on Maine and New Hampshire Border Waters and shall be considered "in addition to" the requirements listed in Sections 2.05.B and 2.05.C above. All other existing State laws and rules pertaining to bass tournaments which are not modified herein continue to apply to Maine and New Hampshire Border water tournaments.

CATCH/ MEASURE/ RELEASE (CMR)/ WEIGH IN TOURNAMENTS

1. In Weigh-In tournaments, all bass caught shall be kept on a water-circulating live-well with the intent to keep the retained bass alive. All bass entered for the weigh-in at bass tournaments shall be released unharmed into the same water body where caught as follows: in lakes and ponds, not less than 300 feet away from the shoreline; in rivers at mid-channel not less than 300 feet away from the weigh-in site. Boats designated by the bass tournament sponsor may hold more than the daily limit of bass solely for the purpose of releasing bass after weigh-in.

2. The daily limit shall be 2 bass per participant from April 1 to May 14 with no minimum length or weight limit. The daily limit shall be 5 bass per participant from July 1 to November 30 with no minimum length or weight limit.

3. There will be no more than ten (10) weigh-in tournaments on any water greater than 500 acres.

2.08 Free Fishing Days

In accordance with 12 M.R.S.A. Section 12503 Sub-section 3 it is lawful for a person to fish without a license in inland waters except that this subsection does not apply to a person whose license to fish is under suspension or revocation. All other provisions of the Part relating to fishing apply during a free fishing day.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Title 12 M.R.S.A. §§ 7155 and 7035