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GOVERNOR

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DEPARTMENT OF
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TIMOTHY E. PEABODY
ACTING COMMISSIONER

Dear Bass Clubs,

Thank you for your patience in working through the recent rule changes impacting bass tournaments, beginning in the 2026 season. As a reminder, these rules went into effect May 7th, 2026.

All clubs were given a grace period for a few of the changes to rule, as these conditions were unable to be met by bass clubs for the 2026 tournament season due to the seasonality of permit submission and availability of watercraft inspection training. **Clubs were given until the 2027 tournament season to meet the required minimum of four trained aquatic invasive species inspectors per club that have taken their training within the last three years.** The rule changes also stipulated that bass clubs must designate at least one water access site for their watercraft inspections and provide that site in their permit application. As permit applications for the 2026 season had already been submitted at the time of rule change, **bass clubs were exempted from designating an inspection site until applying for 2027 tournaments.**

All clubs will be expected to meet all requirements per rule and permit for 2027 tournaments. G**iven the current seasonal availability of aquatic invasive species education courses** to meet certification requirements, we are aware that many clubs will still not meet inspector requirements by the date of the bass tournament draw and application submission, as is required per rule. For this reason, for the 2027 tournament season only, **clubs will be allowed to enter the draw and submit tournament applications prior to meeting the four certified inspector requirement** so long as the club meets the requirement of having four trained inspectors per club prior to the date of the club's first tournament. **While applications will be accepted prior to a club meeting this requirement, tournament permits will not be issued until the Department receives copies of the certifications proving that four inspectors per club have been certified in the last three years.** All permits in 2027 will be issued at or around 2 weeks prior to a tournament date, and changes may be made before the permit is officially issued. To ensure that you receive your permits, certification copies must be submitted more than two weeks before the date of the club's first tournament so that they can be processed.

This exception in meeting the required number of inspectors at the time of application submission is only for the 2027 bass tournament application period. In future years, all requirements will need to be met by the date of the draw and application for a tournament, rather than the date of the club's first tournament. To ease the challenges in seasonal availability of courses to become certified, the Department is developing an online, self-paced Aquatic Invasive Species Education Course that can be taken year-round at any point in time to meet certification requirements. During the December Bass Tournament Drawing we will communicate on how to access this course and other options for certification.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Latti

Elizabeth Latti, Director of Fisheries & Hatcheries

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