



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Fish and Wildlife
500 Lafayette Road, Box 20
Saint Paul, MN 55155

October 3, 2018

Bass Fishing Tournament Permit Holder

Attached please find your 2019 permit to conduct a fishing tournament. The enclosed permit includes new conditions that are being implemented on all permitted fishing contests where Bass (Largemouth and Smallmouth) are the primary species being targeted. Please carefully review these conditions and discuss with your weigh-in crew and event participants.

Background: For the past two years DNR has been working with the Minnesota Bass Workgroup to identify ways to improve fish handling during tournaments. The Minnesota Bass Workgroup is a 15-member citizen advisory committee that includes representation from MN Bass Nation, MN Bass Federation, tournament anglers, guides and several unaffiliated anglers - all with a common interest in the love of Bass fishing. This group reviewed Best Management Practice guidelines employed around the country, tournament regulations in other states, and hosted a workshop for MN Bass Tournament Directors in April, 2017.

Changes: Recommendations from the Minnesota Bass Workgroup focused on fish handling and care at the weigh-in, where there exists a wide discrepancy as to how fish are handled across the state. Central to this issue is the role tournament directors play in managing fish brought to the weigh-in. The new permit conditions will elevate the tournament directors role in managing the weigh-in. Fish must be transported in water at all times and weigh-in bags should be high quality double bags featuring a mesh-liner style inner bag (e.g. Accu Cull Tournament Weigh-IN Bag available at Tackle Warehouse for \$27.99). Single wall plastic bags will no longer be allowed. The number of bags in use at any one time will be based on the number of boats in the tournament. Events with more than fifty boats will be required to have aerated or oxygenated holding tanks. These measures are intended to keep fish in the water and reduce the time fish are held in non-aerated containers.

The second major change in the tournament conditions is intended to standardize the maximum number of Bass that can be brought to the weigh-in for different event formats. Currently most of the permitted Bass tournaments held in Minnesota are team events that employ a 5-fish team limit (Smallmouth and Largemouth combined) however some events allow up to 6 fish per angler. The more fish, the higher the stress level, particularly in July-August events when water temperatures rise into the 70s and 80s. The new maximum limit for team events will be 6 fish (Largemouth and Smallmouth combined). For those events that employ a Pro-Am or Boater/non-Boater format the limit will be a maximum of 5 fish per competitor. There are no set limits for those events that employ a catch and immediate release format.

Recommendations from the Minnesota Bass Workgroup are consistent with existing Statute and Rules governing the issuance of fishing tournament permits by the MN DNR. In fact, there are a number of tournament circuits that are already using similar practices as standard protocol. The permit conditions that follow will be standard language on all Bass Catch and Release permits issued in 2019.

For all permitted Bass catch and release tournaments:

- (1) Watercraft - All boats must be equipped with functioning livewells with either flow-through systems or functioning aerators. Livewells must be properly sized to sustain the anticipated number and size of fish in good condition.
- (1) Weigh-in
 - a. Location of weigh-in station should be within 200 feet of shoreline.
 - b. Tournament director is responsible for providing fish handling bags. Fish handling bags should be double bags with reinforced impermeable outer bag with removable mesh inner bag. The number of bags in use is dependent on the size of the event.
 - c. At no time shall fish be transported without water.
 - d. Fish should not be held in unaerated water for more than five (5) minutes
- (2) Limits
 - a. The maximum limit for team events is six (6) Bass (Largemouth and Smallmouth combined)
 - b. The maximum limit for boater/non-boater or Pro-Am format events is five (5) Bass per competitor (Largemouth and Smallmouth combined)
 - c. There is no specified limit for catch and immediate release events

For permitted contests with less than 25 boats:

A maximum of 6 weigh-in bags will be in use at any one time

For permitted contests with 25-50 boats:

A maximum of 12 weigh-in bags will be in use at any one time

For permitted contests with more than 50 boats:

- a. A maximum of 20 weigh-in bags will be in use at any one time
- a. Aerated or oxygenated holding tanks are required. A minimum of four (4) one hundred (100) gallon tanks is required with one additional tank for every 15 boats above 50. Holding tanks must be shaded.

Additional information regarding Best Management Practices will be provided to tournament permit holders. If you have specific questions regarding the new permit conditions please feel free to contact either Jon Hansen, Fisheries Management Consultant at jon.hansen@state.mn.us or Henry Drewes, Northwest Region Fisheries Manager at henry.drewes@state.mn.us or .