



## **GUIDELINES FOR FISHING TOURNAMENTS ON CONNECTICUT PUBLIC WATERS**

The popularity of tournament fishing has increased greatly over the past three decades. In Connecticut, approximately 800 fishing tournaments are now held on public waters annually. At the same time, participation in other water dependent recreational activities has increased. As a result, competition for access to Connecticut's public waters can be intense.

Under section 26-112-42 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, a permit is required to conduct a fishing tournament or derby which is open to persons sixteen years of age or older on waters open to public fishing. These permits are issued at the discretion of the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection through the Fisheries Division. It is DEEP policy to limit fishing tournaments to no more than 50% of the total parking capacity at state boat launches to ensure that access is available for other users (some exceptions can be approved for off-season, night, or weekday tournaments).

Organizers of fishing tournaments typically require that participants launch and takeout at specific locations and times. Most tournaments have as their finale an "official weigh-in" at the launch site. These activities can cause crowding and other problems, which can be effectively dealt with by common courtesy. Courtesy and adherence to safety and boating regulations will minimize conflicts between tournament participants and other lake users and resource managers, helping to ensure the future of tournament fishing in Connecticut. All tournament participants and organizers should be aware of and follow the guidelines listed below. Please note that your **permit can be immediately revoked** for failure to follow these guidelines. The approval of future permit applications can also be affected.

**SAFETY & BOATING REGULATIONS:** Tournament contestants need to familiarize themselves thoroughly with, and adhere to, all boating regulations including speed, wake, and reckless operator laws and safety equipment requirements. **State regulations prohibit fishing in or into a swim area that's been permitted by DEEP (see next page).** Night tournament participants are reminded that boats must always display the correct navigation lights between sunset and sunrise. **Participants receiving citations for Boating Safety violations should be disqualified from the tournament.**

**ALL TOURNAMENTS HAVING MORE THAN 50 CONTESTANTS** will be required to name a Courtesy/Safety Monitor. This person will be responsible for ensuring that the guidelines on parking, noise, launching, takeout and weigh-ins are adhered to. DEEP staff may contact tournament applicants to request the name and contact information of Courtesy/Safety Monitors.

**PARKING:** Maximize the space available for other boaters by parking as efficiently as possible.

**NOISE:** Minimize disturbance to those living on the lakeshore by being as quiet as possible. During the nighttime and early morning hours, noise should be kept to a minimum and outboard motors should not be powered up until well out onto the lake. Amplified sound cannot be used during the nighttime and early morning hours. Generators cannot be used in State Park areas.

**LAUNCH AND TAKEOUT:** Participants should always show consideration to other anglers and boaters.

- Alternate with other boaters; do not make them wait behind a long line of tournament boats.
- If there is space to launch two boats at a time, allow other boaters the use of one side of the ramp.
- If possible, have tournament officials direct traffic to ***ensure that non-tournament boaters are able to launch as efficiently as possible.***
- **"BLAST-OFF" starts are prohibited.**
- **WEIGH-IN:** Weigh-ins should be held in a location that does not impede the normal flow of traffic through the area. When and where possible, hold weigh-ins away from launches and other high-traffic areas.



**Note to ALL ANGLERS -**

**FISHING IN OR CASTING INTO SWIM AREAS PERMITTED BY DEEP IS PROHIBITED.**

State regulations prohibit fishing in or into a swim area that's been permitted by DEEP. Additionally, vessels cannot be operated within a permitted swim area, and there's a 100 foot "no-wake" zone around the perimeter. Swim areas that have been permitted by DEEP will be marked by white buoys with orange markings, and there should be a permit number posted on the buoys. They may or may not have small orange barrier floats to further demarcate the area. Should questions arise concerning the validity of the swim area (*no permit numbers or the area appears to have been changed/enlarged or keeps moving*), please contact DEEP's Boating Division at 860-434-8638.



**To help conserve fisheries resources, the Fisheries Division also recommends the following:**

**CARE OF THE CATCH:** Catch-and-release of gamefish, such as bass and trout, is encouraged. Further precautions which minimize stress on the fish (and help avoid potential publicity problems afterwards) are suggested:

- **Whenever possible, tournament prizes should be awarded based on total length rather than total weight. This minimizes stress on the fish by allowing them to be released immediately at the capture site.** This also helps to reduce congestion at the takeout location.
- If fish are to be kept in livewells, the length of the tournament should be shortened to one-half day during the summer when stress on the fish is greatest.
- Aerators and/or live well pumps should be run continuously.
- If water temperatures exceed 20° C (68° F), consider reducing the bag limit or shortening the length of the tournament. Immediate catch-and-release tournaments are highly encouraged during this time.

**REMEMBER:** Tournament participants should avoid crowding other boaters/anglers and be familiar with all state and local boating regulations. Common courtesy and a concern for the resource will go a long way towards ensuring the future of tournament fishing in Connecticut waters. Good luck and good fishing!