



**RECOMMENDED Guidelines for
Organizers of Competitive Fishing Events in
Ontario**

November 2008

RECOMMENDED

Guidelines for Organizers

of

Competitive Fishing Events in Ontario

(Revised April 19, 2007)

DISCLAIMER: *This document is intended as a planning tool only. The Ontario Competitive Fishing Council and its directors expressly disclaim any representation or methods, express or implied, concerning the accuracy or completeness of any information contained herein. Persons accessing this information assume full responsibility for the use of this information and understand that the Ontario Competitive Fishing Council is not responsible or liable for any claim arising from the use of the information. These codes and guidelines will be reviewed and revised from time to time showing the revision date in the title.*

1. BACKGROUND

- a. *This document has been created by the Ontario Competitive Fishing Council (OCFC) as a tool to assist in planning, hosting, evaluating and establishing a framework for professional behavior.*
- b. *A Competitive Fishing Event (CFE) is any angling activity, organized by an individual, a group, a partnership or a for-profit, non-profit or charitable entity, regardless of budget, cost of entry, number of competitors, promotions involved or species of fish, in which participants are solicited and have the opportunity to win cash, prizes, other benefits and/or recognition.*
- c. *Events include tournaments, derbies, and contests.*
- d. *A tournament is a competitive fishing event requiring pre-registration, where it is intended that angled fish be returned alive to the same area of the water-body.*
- e. *A derby is a competitive fishing event requiring pre-registration, but which may not involve the live release of angled fish.*
- f. *A contest is a competitive fishing event that does not require pre-registration, encompasses a large geographic area, over an extended period of time, and may or may not involve the live release of angled fish.*

2. GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZERS STATEMENT

The “Recommended Guidelines for Organizers of Competitive Fishing Events In Ontario” includes a list of areas of concern that should be used by all organizers responsible for the operations of a competitive fishing event.

a. BUDGET & RECORD KEEPING

A realistic budget should be created taking into account all sources of revenue, either cash or in-kind as well as event expenses. For budgeting purposes it is wise to underestimate revenue and overestimate expenses. Note that if the angler fees are not paid out 100 percent in prizes, there are GST implications. Organizers have a fiduciary responsibility to keep accurate records.

b. CODE OF BEHAVIOR

Consideration should be given to establishing a mandatory code of conduct or behavior for competing anglers. The *“Recommended Code Of Behavior For Competitive Anglers in Ontario”* has been created by the OCFC as a tool for organizers of competitive fishing events.

c. COMMUNICATION

Communicate with the anglers, media, outdoor industry, partners, sponsors, volunteers and the public honestly. Personal and event accomplishments must be truthfully related. Organizers should not solicit support in the form of goods, services or cash with statements that are not accurate, colour history to the benefit of organizers or contain promises, features or benefits that may not be delivered.

d. CONSERVATION (Resource Preservation)

Consideration should be given to donating a portion of the net proceeds of competitive fishing events for local conservation work or fisheries research. A suggested guideline is 5 to 10 percent of net proceeds.

e. DISCLOSURE

To avoid accusations of unfairness in the course of holding an event, organizers should endeavor to disclose all information related directly to the operation of the fishing competition, including prize and revenue allocation, rules, weighing and dispute resolution guidelines. Any aspect that is conditional upon another factor must be clearly disclosed. For example, if cash prizes are a function of the number of entries, this must be clearly stated in the rules, event promotion and marketing.

f. DURATION

Consideration should be given to the amount of time on the water. If children are involved as competitors a later start and earlier finish would be beneficial.

g. FISH CARE

i. General

As good stewards of the fishery resource, competitive fishing event organizers and anglers are expected to be committed to set and follow the highest standards of fish care. Organizers should attempt to take all precautions and measures necessary in order to ensure the best possible survival rate of fish caught during a catch and release event. This would include supplying appropriate fish care products as part of the registration fee, requiring anglers to use aeration or recirculating systems in live wells, minimizing handling of fish during weigh-ins, and rapid return to the waters of caught fish.

ii. Daily Limits

Consideration should be given to reduced daily limits as it has been shown that the daily limit is the single most influential variable affecting initial mortality.

iii. Sustainability of the fishery

Competitive fishing events should only be held on lakes having sustainable populations of the targeted fish species. The sustainability of the fishery on an event's water body is in the best interests of both the organizers and the anglers.

Organizers should make every effort to support and encourage the safeguarding of this resource, both during and after the event. Competitive fishing events for some sensitive species, including wild brook trout and lake trout, are discouraged. It is expected that event organizers will consult with MNR biologists, industry experts, university departments, local resource users, and review all available studies, research papers, current usage and other tournaments and use the information to determine if the lake, river or water system is suitable before commencing any aspect of the tournament.

iv. Weigh-In

The weigh-in at a catch and release event should be a quick procedure and handling time should be minimized. Efforts should be made to reduce the exposure of fish to air and also to decrease the amount of time that fish are held in weigh-in bags. Water temperature and dissolved oxygen content should be measured and maintained at target levels. A wet weigh system should be considered. An established set of guidelines for the weighmaster and the anglers as to how the weigh-in takes place, and ways for anglers to confirm or dispute weighing of their catch, are crucial to maintaining the integrity of the event. During the weigh-in, place dead fish on ice in a cooler immediately, out of view of spectators. Prearrange donation of any unreleasable fish to a local charity or food bank, etc. Event officials should leave the weigh-in area cleaner than when they arrived.

v. Returning fish to waterbody

For catch and release events arrangements should be made to maintain fish prior to, during and after weigh-in with the utmost care to facilitate successful live release. If the organizer can determine fish caught in certain regions of the body of water, appropriate measures should be made to return them to their "home" waters. Remain in the release area for at least one hour after weigh-in to pick up any dead fish. If a fish is floating or cannot swim on its own it will likely die and should be removed.

vi. Required Reading

All organizers, regardless of targeted species, should read and be familiar with the B.A.S.S. publication "*Keeping Bass Alive; A Guidebook for Anglers and Tournament Organizers*" as well as "*Shimano Water Weigh-in System: A 'Fish-Friendly' Guide.*" Organizers should consider purchasing these booklets and make them available to the competing anglers.

h. IDENTIFICATION FOR ORGANIZERS

Event organizers, committee members, etc. should be easily identifiable.

i. INSURANCE (Anglers)

All boat owners are required to have their own marine insurance. At least one million dollars of liability coverage is recommended. Physical damages coverage such as collision, comprehensive and all perils are optional.

j. INSURANCE (Event)

Events partnered with a service organization may have a blanket liability policy available through their national office, which could be extended to cover the event. It is important

to verify your organization and partnering organization's coverage and to purchase any necessary liability insurance prior to the event. If your event cannot be covered as an additional insured under a partner's policy the event should consider obtaining a general liability insurance policy to cover the event with limits not less than \$2,000,000.00. The policy must include coverage for contractual liability, personal injury, employer's liability, non-owned automobile and non-owned watercraft and owned watercraft, if applicable. This policy should not contain any restriction with respect to liability to participants or spectators. Events that are registered as corporations or charities should consider obtaining directors' liability insurance.

k. LOCATION

Organizers should consider other resource users, marina operators, cottagers, etc., when determining launch sites, weigh-in sites, tournament fishing boundaries and off-limit fishing areas. Event organizers should make every attempt to minimize the effect of the event on other users of the facility, including parking and tertiary facility use (bathrooms, concessions, etc.) A well-organized event can provide significant socio-economic benefits to the local community.

In researching and choosing a location for a Competitive Fishing Event the following should be taken into account.

i. Amenities

Enough toilets and washroom facilities should be available. Number and location will depend on the size of the event and the number of anglers, spectators and volunteers. Some of the toilets should be accessible to the disabled. Garbage receptacles and recycle containers should be present and should be emptied when full.

ii. Boat Launch

Boat launching facilities should be able to handle the number of competitive anglers using the ramp without affecting other users.

iii. Electrical Service

Adequate electrical service should be available on site. Calculate electrical demand, include power for lighting, public address system, scales, fish care equipment and tournament information systems. The two parts of your setup that will draw the most power are the lights and sound equipment (assuming you need to use both). However, the cumulative amperage used throughout your setup, including computers, monitors, displays and projectors will add up quickly. Furthermore, refrigeration units and heating units – like coffee makers – can add hugely to your power draw. You should consider three preparatory steps:

- ✓ consult with an electrician as to whether available service is adequate,
- ✓ ensure that your critical pieces of equipment (computers, displays, sound system, lights) are on adequate isolated circuit(s) to prevent any interruption to your tournament presentation,
- ✓ arrange, if possible, for a dry run of all equipment at maximum draw.

iv. Parking

Nearby adequate parking area should be able to handle the number of competitive anglers' vehicles and trailers without affecting regular users.

v. Willing Hosts

Communicate and inform local authorities, townships, and municipalities, local organizations of when and where the event is planned to take place and seek their endorsement and support.

I. MARKETING

Getting the word out to your audience is an important part of your event. Assigning people to create a brochure and/or poster and distributing it can be a big help. Consider using a variety of media and public service announcements (PSAs) to get your message out. This will garner added exposure for your event as well as for your partners and sponsors and your own organization. It will also supply the event information to interested participants. Consider sponsorship opportunities with a local graphic designer for art and ad production, and make certain to release well-written press releases having to do with all significant aspects of your tournament. Remember that you must market to competitors, spectators and sponsors.

m. MEDIA CONTACT

Designate one or two people who are comfortable speaking in front of a camera as spokespersons for the event. They should know as much as possible about your event. Spokespersons should be prepared to answer a range of questions.

n. MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Organizers should provide relevant information on their competitive fishing event to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and/or assist MNR staff to collect data.

o. NUMBER OF COMPETITORS

Registration should be limited to a finite number of competitors and governed by the size of the waterbody. Consider limiting your number of participants to however many you can logistically get off the water and on to your stage, and that you can move through the weigh-ins in a reasonable (1.5-2.5 hour) time frame.

Suggested Guideline for Number of Boats

Less than 500 hectares	(Less than 1250 acres)	- up to 50 boats
500 - 1,000 hectares	(1250 acres -2500 acres)	- up to 100 boats
Greater than 1,000 hectares	(Greater than 2500 acres)	-up to 150 boats

p. ON-SITE OFFICE

An on-site office should coordinate activities and volunteers. The office should be a table in a tent or recreational trailer, part of the stage or a fully equipped office trailer. The office should be of a size that will meet the needs of the event.

q. OTHER RESOURCE USERS

Event organizers, in planning competitive fishing events, should recognize the rights of other resource users which include, among others, area property owners, residents, recreational anglers, boaters, canoeists, water-skiers, jet skiers and swimmers.

It should be clear to other resource users that their concerns and interest in the resource have been considered in the organization and delivery of a competitive fishing event or series.

r. PARTNER/SPONSORS

A sponsorship package should clearly outline the benefits of sponsoring your event.

You may get cash, prizes for participation, drawings, awards and in-kind support from local businesses and outdoor and fishing equipment manufacturers and suppliers. Greatest success at receiving contributions will be by personally contacting, by letter or in person, selected businesses. You are trading publicity and good will for their support.

Give these contributors exposure at your event -- announcements during the awards ceremony and posters listing contributors. Ask sponsors willing to contribute to also provide banners or posters for their companies or products and display them at the event site. In addition to their contributions, some of these businesses will be good sources of publicity, marketing information, and staff for your event. It is wise to ask the sponsor to establish the value of his or her contribution at the time of receipt.

After the event, send sponsors photographs and a letter of appreciation that summarizes the event and states the distribution and dollar value of their contributions.

s. PENALTIES

Penalties for violation of tournament rules should be clearly stated. Possible penalties are discussed in *“Recommended Guidelines to Creating Rules for Competitive Fishing Events in Ontario.”*

t. PRIZE PAYOUT

A tournament organizer should provide a schedule of the payouts for the event in advance. The payouts, whether it is cash and/or prizes, should clearly display the conditions that apply (i.e. percentage, or field size).

Charts displaying the payouts as per field size would be very practical and informative for any competitors. Method and delivery of prizes should be made available to all competitors in advance.

u. PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM

Consult with a live sound reinforcement company or known individual to make sure that you rent an adequate size of sound system. It doesn't need to be fancy, but it does need to be loud. Inadequate amplification levels cannot be compensated for, and an inability to hear your tournament presenter will result in confusion and fading interest.

v. RESULTS

Results should be posted as quickly as possible after verification. Ideally the results should also be posted on the internet on the final day of competition.

w. RULES

A complete, clear set of rules regarding the operation of each event should be created and distributed. Items that should be considered are discussed in *“Recommended Guidelines to Creating Rules for Competitive Fishing Events in Ontario.”*

x. SAFETY

Promote safety by ensuring that responsible boating and fishing are the norm at your event. No one wants an accident to happen, but be prepared if one does. Establish a safety plan and know what to do in case of an emergency. Be sure to consider the following in your event safety plan:

- ✓ Directions to your event site (for emergency services)
- ✓ Identify the nearest phones (both pay and private)
- ✓ Identify staff and volunteers who have cell phones
- ✓ Make sure all staff and volunteers have a phone list
- ✓ Volunteers should be clear about their roles in an emergency
- ✓ Identify the nearest hospital with an emergency room
- ✓ Identify closest Police and Fire stations
- ✓ Have a well-stocked first aid kit
- ✓ Secure a registered nurse as a volunteer
- ✓ Fire extinguisher(s) and persons knowledgeable in their operation

For larger events:

- ✓ Use walkie-talkies or cell phones to maintain communications
- ✓ Plan to have an ambulance available

y. STAGE

Most competitive fishing events will have an awards ceremony.

A stage, preferably raised, is ideal for this activity. The size and height of the stage will depend on the size of the crowd. Award recipients will be coming onto the stage, and access must be easy and suitable for disabled people. Create an area in front of the stage to keep the crowd back from the stage so spectators can see and get to and from the stage easily. A public address system of adequate power is absolutely necessary. Use a public address system with remote microphones rather than a megaphone. A self-contained stage with built-in roof will save valuable setup time, and will result in a safer environment for your weigh-ins particularly in inclement weather.

z. TIME LINES

Start at least one year ahead by forming an organizing committee. This relatively small committee consists of key people responsible for each of the major parts of the event -- site, facilities, scheduling, publicity and promotion, finding a sponsor(s), contributions, personnel (volunteers, officials), supplies and printing, and event operation (schedule for the day, rules, awards, and such). Each of these people may develop a subcommittee. Don't overlook the opportunity to involve other volunteers and leaders in the community for this special event.

Initial discussions should include the topics of budget, bank account, bookkeeping, trust account. A working capital fund is required to pay expenses as they occur without using trust funds, such as entry fees, which are not earned until the event has been held and the prizes paid.

A list of organizing committee members with contact information, name, address, telephone numbers, fax numbers, cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses should be made and circulated.

Promote the use of e-mail for written communication and to summarize and record verbal discussions.

Below is a useful schedule to help ensure your event runs smoothly:

Timelines shown are minimum time from the planned event date

12 to 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create organizing committeeDecide on type of event activity, size, possible location(s), permits and insuranceResearch possible location(s) to ensure its suitability for eventResearch other events and set non-conflicting dateDevelop rulesDetermine marketing programPrepare sponsorship packageDevelop list of potential sponsors/partnersBegin sponsor solicitation – in person is bestIdentify volunteer needsIdentify possible volunteer sourcesBegin volunteer recruitmentDevelop backup plans in case of inclement weather
9 to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Organizing committee meets several timesFinalize specifics on locationInvitations to dignitaries (as soon as date and site are confirmed)Confirm arrangements for equipment, food, and prizesArrange for scales for weighing fishMeet with possible volunteer sourcesContinue volunteer recruitmentConfirm backup plans
6 to 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Organizing committee meets several timesFollow up on sponsorship contactsConfirm sponsorshipsEnsure scales for weighing fish are availableStart to register and assign volunteers
3 to 2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Confirm and update sponsorsDetermine media spokespersonCreate media list
2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Organizing committee meets several timesPrint posters, flyers and other support materials for your eventSend PSA letters to media outlets for potential placementContinue to register and assign volunteersArrange for food and beverages
1 month	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Organizing committee meets regularlyDistribute posters, flyers in visible locationsInvite media to attend and cover the event

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make follow-up calls re PSA placement Develop first aid/safety plans Confirm volunteer commitment Notify volunteer officials of time and place of orientation sessions Confirm all previous arrangements
3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare event signage Confirm arrangements for equipment Visit site to ensure readiness for event Create 'Punch List' of things remaining to be done
2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind volunteer officials of time and place of orientation sessions Distribute media advisory Finalize first aid/safety plans Finalize volunteer schedule Finalize on-site registration materials Pick up contributed materials Create list of items to be taken to site
1 week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit site to verify readiness for event Volunteer briefing session(s) Confirm food and beverage arrangements Media follow-up calls for event coverage Final publicity Finalize number of trash bins, bags and recycling bins at event site Acquire items to be taken to site Verify back-up plans
1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules Meeting Check items on 'Punch List'
Night before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up registration tables, P.A. system Place event signage, hang banners
Event Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take photos Record any problems that occur Note changes to improve the event Record attendance Thank all volunteers, partners and sponsors from the stage
After Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge and thank volunteers, partners and sponsors Organizing committee evaluates event Meet with partners and sponsors to see if their objectives were met Create record of media coverage that can be used for future events

aa. TIMING

Events can be held any time of year when angling for the targeted species is legal and where water or ice conditions are safe. Whether you choose summer or winter, particular attention must be paid to ice and fast water conditions as well as water temperature and other conditions that may affect certain target species (ie, walleye in the summer time).

Event timing should be given consideration on an individual and community basis. Tournament Organizers should consider dates for tournaments other than opening weekends for the species and long weekends if possible.

bb. VISITING OTHER EVENTS

A great amount can be learned by visiting and observing different competitive fishing events. Any type of a gathering where there is a competition, a crowd or a stage can be a great source of ideas.

cc. VOLUNTEERS/STAFF

For a successful and cost-effective event, it is essential to have a strong network of volunteers and staff. These people are the backbone of most fishing events. If you have engaged a partner or partners, they may be willing to supply volunteers. If not, prepare a simple fact sheet describing your event, including position descriptions, special skill needs and your organization's contact information. Many membership organizations have volunteer coordinators who can be a great source of support. For maximum efficiency, provide each volunteer with a job description, schedule, and who they will be reporting to the day of the event. Brief all volunteers a few days before the event and allow plenty of time for questions. During your event, be sure to acknowledge the efforts of volunteer staff from the stage. After your event, thank your volunteers with a personal note. Maintain a database of volunteers with contact information and special skills.

dd. VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

In addition to thanking the volunteers appreciation can take the form of prizes, certificates, clothing, as well as local and provincial recognition.