



2026 Rules & Regulations for Montana Pikemasters

Montana Pikemasters - Billings Chapter, Inc.

Rules and Regulations for 2026 Tournament in Montana

OBJECTIVE:

The intention of these tournament regulations is to promote high standards of sportsmanship. Furthermore, these rules and regulations outline non-tolerated, unsportsmanlike conduct and cheating behavior that will result in immediate disqualification from this and future tournament activities coordinated by the Montana Pikemasters Chapter.

DEFINITIONS:

- Northern Pike: *Genus - Esox, Lucius*. The sole purpose of these intended rules.
- Tournament Committee: A group of individuals chosen from members of Montana Pikemasters.
- Tournament Officials: Individuals selected by the Montana Pikemasters Tournament Committee to enforce the regulations listed herein.
- Tournament Headquarters: The tournament headquarters will be determined by the tournament committee.
- **Tagged Fish - Refer to: Procedure of Fishing - Section (H)**

1. Eligibility for Participation:

- a) Any applicant under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult partner over 18 years of age.
- b) The entry fee is determined by individual tournaments on a per team basis.
- c) **NEW! All applicants must show proof of AIS inspection confirmation at registration. Participation will be denied without appropriate inspection confirmation.**
- d) Tournament Committee reserves the right to refuse entry of any individual.

2. Regulations:

- a) As stated by Montana State Law and enforced by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, all boat exteriors must be washed and live wells cleaned prior to entering the water at the beginning of the tournament.
- b) Each participant must possess a valid Montana Fishing License.
- c) Each participant must observe and adhere to all the rules and regulations of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the U.S. Coast Guard.

3. Participating Teams:

- a) Due to the fact that each boat is tagged with the number of people allowed on board safely for each boat, there is no limit on the (safe) number of anglers per boat with the understanding that each boat may not exceed the safe number for that boat.
- b) **Any change of team members must be approved by the Tournament Committee and an application must be signed.**
- c) **Individuals can enter tournament as a solo, but will pay full entry fee.**
- e) Tournament committee has the right, for a valid reason, to reject any team entry.

4. Drugs & Alcohol:

Drugs and/or drug paraphernalia and/or alcoholic beverages are not permitted in any contestant's boat (no exceptions). If you are disqualified, your entry fee will not be refunded.



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5. Rules Meeting:

- a) One participant from each team is required to attend the rules meeting, as advertised on the agenda, prior to the tournament starting.
- b) It is understood there are circumstances that may be made at the sole discretion of the Tournament Committee (refer to Rule #6 should this occur).

6. Late Registration Exceptions:

- a) Late entries must be completed no later than 30 minutes prior to the beginning of tournament.
- b) Any contestant registering late is expected to know the tournament rules in its entirety. Absolutely no ignorance of these rules will be tolerated by any late registrant.

7. Inspections:

- a) Boats will receive an inspection each day prior to the start of the tournament by a Tournament Official and approved by the Tournament Committee.
- b) Absolutely no entry boat may have Northern Pike on board prior to the start of the Tournament.
- c) All boats participating in the tournament must display their identifying markers provided by the tournament committee upon registration.
- d) Maximum of four (4) fishing rod and reel combinations (per boat) used at any one time during the tournament hours.
- e) Zero tolerance for alcohol found on any boat during tournament hours. Weigh boat personal will report any violations found when weighing fish.

8. Tackle:

- a) Due to tournament catch-and-release policies, all hooks should be barbless.
- b) Each participant must adhere to all rules and regulations set forth by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks regarding the methods of taking fish.
- c) Spare fishing rods and equipment may be carried in the boats.

9. Boat Operations:

- a) As an ongoing effort to prevent the transport and introduction of aquatic nuisance species that may be harmful to the preservation of all freshwater species, all participants are required to wash their boats and trailers before and after all tournament events.
- b) Each participant is required to wear an approved Personal Flotation device (PFD) when the primary motor is running, unless when trolling.**
- c) All teams must depart by boat from the starting area under the direction of the Tournament Officials.**
- d) Team Boats may not come within **100 feet** of another watercraft, except for patrol boats.
- e) Marine band and CB radios may be used for emergency purposes, status of weather, etc.**
- f) Disqualification may occur when handling a boat in a careless and reckless manner.**
- g) A check boat can refuse to follow the format of the tournament if any participating boat approaches in a reckless manner.**
- h) If a check boat refuses to follow tournament format, the participating team will need to find another check boat to try to get their fish weighed.**
- i) The Tournament Committee may disqualify a team, without refund, from the tournament for repeat offenses of approaching a check boat in a reckless manner.**



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10. Tournament Hours and Procedures:

- a) Tournament hours are as advertised in the tournament itinerary.
- b) The starting order will be announced at the rules meeting by the Tournament Committee.
- c) Starting boats will commence as advertised and will always occur in single files.
- d) Any boat arriving late for the start time will be required to go to the end of the start line.
- e) Starting and check-in procedures will be determined by the Tournament Committee.
- f) The Tournament Committee strongly recommends that small boats pull over either at start or request to be placed at the end of the starting line.
- g) The Tournament Committee will announce the established check-in methods, as well as start and finish points, during the rules meeting.
- h) Teams not returning to the finish point by the designated time will be disqualified for that day without refund.

11. Withdrawal Requirements:

- a) Entry fee refunds will be made only if team gives written notification of withdrawal two (2) weeks prior to the tournament starting date.
- b) A service charge of twenty percent (20%), plus the Conservation Fee, will be assessed against refunds made due to withdrawal from the tournament.
- c) Any other refunds defined outside this policy are subject to review by the Tournament Committee.

12. Fishing Area:

- a) Fishing will only be allowed within the boundaries of the tournament area that will be defined at the Rules Meeting.
- b) Teams may not leave their boat at any time except as allowed by specific permission of the check boat personnel or in the event of a lightning storm posing an immediate threat or a personnel bathroom break not exceeding ten (10) minutes.
- c) A team operating their boat outside of the designated tournament area during tournament hours is grounds for disqualification without a refund.

13. Inclement Weather:

- a) The Tournament Committee reserves the right to postpone or cancel a daily competition if, in the opinion of the Tournament Committee, weather conditions exist that pose a threat to the safety of the teams, their participants, and tournament personnel.
- b) On any day of the competition, after the tournament has already begun, the Tournament Committee may declare a bad weather condition due to deteriorating weather.
- c) In the event that inclement weather is declared, check boats and tournament staff will be called in.
- e) When the Tournament Committee has ruled to stop the tournament, teams are encouraged to seek immediate shelter.
- f) Bad weather will not change tournament hours.
- g) Teams must reach the check-in point in a safe manner by the required time.
- h) After arrival time, teams will give their score card to Tournament Committee Officials.
- i) Good intentions, sportsmanship and proper judgment are essential as it pertains to your own personal safety.



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14. Procedure of Fishing:

- a) The tournament will be catch-and-release only, which means all Northern Pike caught are to be released as soon as each fish is weighed and all must be released at the end of each tournament day and may not be kept past that time. Any non-releasable fish will not count toward the daily totals, with the exception of tagged pike. If a fish fry occurs during a tournament, and a contestant so chooses, non-releasable fish can be used of the fish fry. Also, this will be mentioned at the Rules Meeting.
- b) During the tournament hours, each contestant may keep one (1) Northern Pike measuring 40 inches or more in length per day.**
- c) Teams will catch, measure, and release as many Northern Pike as they choose, however, only the largest five (5) Northern Pike per team, per day, will count towards a team's overall score.**
- d) Teams are not allowed to have more than five (5) Northern Pike in the boat at any given time and it is recommended to minimize the holding time to less than two (2) hours. The trophy Northern Pike will count toward the five (5) Northern Pike tournament limit.**
- e) Northern Pike ***must*** be a minimum of 24 inches in length with a pinched tail to be counted. The length of a Northern Pike that breaks a 1/4 inch mark will be scored at the next 1/4 inch mark. However, all fish ***must*** break the 24 inch mark before it can be scored as a legal fish. (In fact, there will be ***no*** 24 inch fish shown on the weigh cards. The smallest recorded weight will be 24 1/4 inches.)
- f) Any team caught releasing Northern Pike or any other game fish that are dead, or are otherwise non-releasable, will be disqualified for the whole tournament without a refund.**
- g) During the tournament hours, each contestant may keep one trophy Northern Pike greater than 40 inches in length per day or have a replica made. This fish must be releasable. If it isn't, it will be counted as a trophy and tagged for personal possession.**

15. Check-in Late Penalty:

- a) All Teams must check in each day at the location designated by the Tournament Committee regardless of whether the team has fish or not.
- b) The team number and arrival time will be recorded at the check-in destination.

16. Fishing Reporting Requirements:

Records of fish caught must be turned in thirty (30) minutes after the tournament time ends each day.

17. Scoring:

- a) Daily scores will be the total measurement converted into the weight of up to five (5) Northern Pike.
- b) Five longest fish on score card will determine total weight for each team each day.
- c) Placement in the tournament is based on the total team score during the duration of the tournament.
- d) The contestant winning daily money pot(s) for big fish prizes must attend the award ceremonies or they will forfeit their prize winnings.
- e) Score cards that are turned in without the initials of the weigh-boat personnel will be disqualified ***(no exceptions)***.
- f) Lost weight cards: no fish will be weighed if team doesn't have a weigh card.



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18. Protest Policy:

- a) **No later than one-half (1/2) hour after the close of the tournament for that day.** Teams and committee members have the right to bring actions of protest to another tournament person.
- b) A participant or team must include a \$50.00 cash protest fee with their protest.
- c) If the protest is found to be sound, the fee will be returned.
- d) If the protest if is found not sound, the fee will not be returned.
- e) Any participant of team found violating the rules may be disqualified without a refund.
- f) Teams or participants **waive any right to appeal the Tournament Committee to a higher authority.** This includes any court of jurisdiction or other states.
- g) The decision made by the Tournament Committee shall be final.

19. Pre-Fish:

Pre-fishing, cut-ff time is 5:00 pm (17:00 hours) the day prior to the tournament.

20. Violations:

- a) Failure to keep or observe these listed rules may result in a denial to compete in future Montana Pikemasters Tournaments.
- b) Future participation would be reviewed by the Tournament Committee.

21. Illness or Emergency:

Once tournament has begun, one member of the team may finish the tournament if another team member becomes ill or an emergency has occurred.

22. Tie Breakers for a Tournament:

At any Montana Pikemasters tournament: The Largest Northern Pike Award will be resolved by a coin toss. For all other tie breakers, the winnings will be combined & divided equally.

23. Rules are Final:

These rules have been established by the rules committee and translation of the rules shall be left exclusively to the Tournament Officials and Tournament Committee members. All decisions made by Tournament Officials will be deemed final.