

Fishing Tournament FAQs

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources anticipates new fishing tournament permit application rules will go into effect in April 2015. The application process is not yet online, so tournament anglers have continued to send in paper applications. To date the Department has received nearly 1,200 tournament requests. As part of the permit procedures, an online account will be created for each club or tournament trail that has submitted paper applications.

Notification of that account will be sent to each tournament director via e-mail. Each tournament director will enter catch information after each tournament. This information will be used by the biologists make management decisions. We thank the tournament angling community for their patience as we've worked through this process and look forward to receiving their catch data.

The new proposed rules can be found at <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/adrules/Pages/Proposed.aspx> under the second notice tab.

1. If one Director (of a tournament trail division) fails to get a permit or turn in a report, do the other Divisions suffer the consequences or just one Director and their trail?

The Director of one Division who failed to submit reports for a lake, would not be able to get subsequent year permits for that body of water. Once report/data was submitted, he or she would be eligible to get permit(s) for that body of water. The entire trail would likely only be affected if no reports were submitted for all water bodies on the trail.

If the Director failed to get a permit and tournament was held without it, the Director would get a petty offense citation for Type 2 Group B for offense related to fishing. (\$120 fine plus 3 points), as outlined in 17 IL Adm. Code 2530.

2. There is nothing in the proposed amendments to make "Outlaw tournaments get a permit or report data? What happens if a 20 boat tournament (no permit are seen by DNR or reported to DNR?

If the Director or organizer failed to get a permit and tournament was held without the permit, the Director would get a petty offense citation for Type 2 Group B for offense related to fishing. (\$120 fine plus 3 points), as outlined in 17 IL Adm. Code 2530.

If no Director or organizer can be identified, then all those participating in unpermitted tournament event will receive a citation. IDNR believes these sanctions will be sufficient to ensure compliance.

3. Any applicant, sponsoring organization or group can lose the ability to receive permits for up to five years if one director makes and error in getting a permit. Concerns that the entire organization can be banned from having events for 5 years as seen in following:

j) Failure to acquire a permit required by subsection (a) is a petty offense and will result in denial of future applications for a Fishing Tournament Permit by that applicant, sponsor or group for a period up to 5 years.

The Department has changed the language in the rule so that applicant, sponsoring organization or group, holding a competitive, sponsored event without a permit would get a citation for a Petty Offense Type II Group B for fishing violation under the Fish and Aquatic Life Code.

The rule now reads as follows:

“Failure to acquire a permit before holding a tournament, as required in subsection 810.90(a), is a petty offense pursuant to 515 ILCS 5/20-35 and the citation will be issued to the tournament director or

organizer. If no director or organizer can be identified by the Department, all participants of the tournament will receive a citation.”

With the online system, there should be no error in the permit.

4. Section 810.90 g) 1) states “Copies of the IDNR Hook and Line Fishing Tournament Permit must be in the possession of each individual participant at all times.

The rule was revised so that it requires only the Director or tournament organizer to possess the permit during the tournament.

The rule now reads as follows:

810.90 d) Copies of Fishing Tournament and Group Activity Permit must be in the possession of the Director or organizer at all times during the event.

5. Section 810.90 i) 5) A) Tournament officials must keep and have available on site a written record or log of daily participants (including names and boat registration numbers) for inspection by Department of Natural Resources officials.

The Department agrees that on-site written logs of participants is not necessary and removed the requirement from the rule.

6. Your boats must be marked, the DNR wants to separate the tournament angler from every other user on the water.

The Department revised the rule so that it no longer requires boats participating in a tournament to be marked.

7. Section 810.90 i) 3) All tournaments must obtain a permit and that permit can be declined by a pretty broad set of circumstances as seen in following:

A) Biological status of the fish population, including the species sought;

B) Length of the tournament;

C) Number of boats and anglers participating in the tournament; and

D) Safety of anglers and potential boater-user conflicts

The Department is responsible for the management of all fish and aquatic life per 515 ILCS 5/. It is unlikely permits will be denied for biological reasons but if the IDNR becomes aware of an unexpected change in a specific fish population at the site of the tournament so that it cannot support a tournament, the IDNR needs to be able to respond appropriately. Subparts A, B, C, and D all relate to protection of the fishery, safety of the angler or user conflicts. The IDNR needs to retain the ability to decline a permit that would result in user conflicts or pose an unreasonable risk to the safety of those utilizing an area.

8. Some boats livewells may not be legal to fish tournaments as seen in the following rule: A) Tournament officials must be able to certify that all boats will be required to possess a livewell (except muskie fishing tournaments) measuring at least 18” long, 12” deep, and 12” wide and be fitted with a functioning aerator and water pump.

- 1) This requirement had been a longstanding provision in rule 810.90. After considering your comment and those of others, the IDNR agrees that this requirement should be updated. The rule will now simply require an aerated livewell with functioning water pump. The updated rule will now read as follows:

810.90 k) 1) Tournament officials must be able to certify that all boats will be required to possess a livewell (except muskie fishing tournaments) fitted with a functioning aerator and water pump.

9. Permits can be applied for November 1 for the following year.

Permit applications will be accepted for each succeeding year on November 1 to allow for anglers to plan the following year's schedule. So applications for calendar year 2016 can be applied for on November 1 of 2015 but dates and waters can only be applied for one year at a time. No one tournament can lock up dates for multiple years on a given water body.

10. This (program) should be scrapped for a year. Confusion is rampant and to the very least there is lost confidence in the DNR and many feel a flat out mistrust.

Any confusion and mistrust is unfortunate and unintended. However, the IDNR considers this rule change necessary to adequately protect the aquatic life of Illinois and should move forward. The IDNR is carefully considering all public comments it has received and is responding to all commenters individually to eliminate confusion as much as possible. The IDNR greatly appreciates hearing suggestions from the public and will be making changes based on public comments

11. Will law enforcement have access to a website that lists all of the permits that have been issued? It would be a great help to law enforcement to be able to check online to see who has a permit for a particular day and lake.

Law enforcement will have access to this information and they will receive copies of all permits.

12. Can a cancel box be added to the online reporting page, so an individual or organization is not penalized for not reporting data if the tournament is cancelled (due to weather for example)?

The IDNR agrees that option would be helpful and will include it on the online reporting page.

13. Can the online application form be set up for both the Club or Organization Director and Secretary? An account will be set up for each club, but can the permit(s) be sent to 2 emails?

Yes, that is in the works. IDNR has added that ability to the online form so that up to two individuals will receive the approved permit via email.

14. I Recommend changes to the Hook and Line Fishing Tournament definition issued by the IDNR. What about small non-competitive fish-offs among friends.

A tighter definition of what comprises a fishing tournament has been developed. Impromptu get-togethers will not be considered a competitive fishing tournament and therefore will not require a permit.

The definition will now read as follows:

“Fishing Tournament” – An **organized, competitive** fishing event, other than a fishing derby, in which two or more individuals fish during a specified time period. An event will be considered a fishing tournament when all three of the following criteria are present:

- 1) The event is sponsored or promoted by an individual or organization;
- 2) Participants compete for trophies, cash, prizes, citation or other recognition for participation in the event; **and**
- 3) The event is conducted during a specified time period.

15. Why has the length of time for applying for a tournament permit been reduced from 60 days to 30 days beginning April 1, 2015?

The tournament application and permit system will be online and the IDNR plans to streamline our internal permit review process. By changing the time listed in the rule from 60 days to 30 days, the Department is giving the tournament director or sponsors an additional 30 days. In other words, before this change, applicants had to apply at least 60 days before a tournament but now the application only has to be submitted 30 days in advance, giving tournament sponsors additional time and flexibility.

16. Why does IDNR not recognize that not all tournaments have weigh-ins but are simply catch, measure and release (similar to Musky rules)

IDNR does recognize this fact. The new online process will accommodate these types of tournaments by allowing catch to be reported in either length or weight. This reporting method will still help the IDNR achieve its management goals because length can be converted to weight if such data is needed.

17. Fear of over regulations. – major concern that petty offense and loss of permit for 5 years. There was a lack of information provided by IDNR and there is misunderstanding of the online system and no explanation of the revised point system. It would be very difficult to have a permit right revoked period much less for 5 years.

The rule has been revised so that it no longer includes revocation of up to 5 years. The rule now reads:

“810.90 m) Failure to acquire a permit before holding a tournament, as required in subsection 810.90(a), is a petty offense pursuant to 515 ILCS 5/20-35 and the citation will be issued to the tournament director or organizer. If no director or organizer can be identified by the Department, all participants of the tournament will receive a citation.”

Under the revised rule, if the

- 1) Director or organizer fails to get a permit and tournament was held without the permit, the Director could get a petty offense citation for Type 2 Group B for offense related to fishing. (\$120 fine plus 3 points) as outlined in 17 Adm Code 2530. However, the rule allows the Department to refuse to issue a permit to a Director or organizer who has not supplied data required by this rule:

“810.90 h) 4) Within 30 days after the tournament event, a summary report containing catch data that may include the sizes (length and/or weight), numbers of each size fish caught, the length of the tournament (fishing hours), number of participants, number of boats, the number of participants that brought in their limit, and the number of fish killed during the handling must be provided to the IDNR Division of Fisheries. Subsequent Fishing Tournament Permits for the following year(s) may not be issued until the summary reports have been submitted for the current or previous years.”

18. Why do we need this regulation and an online permit system?

The number of tournaments has dramatically increased and IDNR needs tournament impact data to help manage the State’s fisheries. There is also a need to ensure that activities at the State sites are safe and avoid user conflicts. Advance notice of tournaments allows the site to maintain a balance between the tournament anglers and the general angling public. The permitting system also allows the means to open up dialog between IDNR and tournament anglers to manage fisheries and improve regulations.

19. In the Bow Fishing Section a) 2) B) and d) 1) refer to a harvest limit of 10 native species, ... it is unclear whether the limit applies to each bowfisher or the entire boat. Clarification is needed....

The Department will remove the language regarding the number of native species that can be harvested. The genesis of this rule was the concern the IDNR has over the decline in native species in some waters in the state. The proposed rule was designed to help protect those waters. After considering comments from the bowfishing community, the IDNR decided to remove the statewide 10 native species per person per tournament language. The IDNR can effectively manage the fishery without a statewide limit on native species’ tournament harvest but the IDNR will continue to monitor fish populations closely and may place site specific rules on certain waters where there is evidence of declines in native populations. In addition the separate Bow Fishing tournament section has been incorporated into the Fishing tournament section. There is no longer a separation between bow fishing and hook and line fishing tournaments. They are being administered as one.

20. Requiring) a tournament permit is discrimination toward tournament fishers. There are hidden costs and bias(es). Revenue is brought into the state by tournament anglers.

Tournament angling continues to grow in the state and the IDNR needs to know the impact tournament angling has on the fisheries to carry out its mission to manage the fisheries. The completed tournament catch data that will be submitted will give the biologists additional information in managing those waters. Tournament permitting is not intended to burden fishermen and the online version will be ready very soon and will be easy and quick for the angler. The state does not charge for tournament permits, as many other states do. The IDNR is aware that tournament angling brings in significant revenue to local economies. Anglers in this state spend approximately \$1 billion dollars annually to go fishing that generates nearly \$3 billion dollars in economic activity. The IDNR has considered the positive impacts of tournaments in formulating these rules.

21. Will state-owned sites/ramps require an activity permit as well as the fishing tournament permit.

For state-owned sites or ramps, once the process goes online the returned permit received via email will suffice as both permits. For those waters and or ramps that are **not** state-owned, the tournament organizer must get the fishing tournament permit and permission from the owner, ie. city, Corp of Engineers, water conservation districts, US Fish and Wildlife Service etc.