

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources expects adherence to the following rules by all contestants.

## **1. Code of Ethics and Sportsmanship Behavior**

*Behavior and conduct not complying with these standards can disqualify a participant at the discretion of tournament officials.*

All contestants, coaches and family are required to follow high standards of sportsmanship, ethical practices, courtesy, safety, conservation and to conduct themselves in such a manner to reflect positively on themselves, their school, affiliated sponsors, and organizations. Anglers, parents and family members shall also conduct themselves in a manner becoming of an ethical angler. Fishing is about enjoying the outdoors and having fun. Please be aware that this event is encouraging both of these attributes. ● Unethical behavior such as contestants obtaining fishing patterns or locations from non-competitors, following a non-competitor's boat to participate in the practice of "hole-sitting" (a practice wherein a non-competitor sits on a fishing spot, holding it for a contestant) should not be exhibited. In addition, non-competitors should not place markers for contestants. Student anglers should use proper judgment and courtesy given to all other anglers on and off the water. ● Student anglers shouldn't receive guidance or direction from guides or angler development sources in the off limit time period prior to the tournament. ● The goal of every tournament is to practice catch and release fishing. It should be of utmost importance to ethical anglers to keep all fish handled alive, especially those stored in the live well. ● The use of tobacco products by anglers under the age of 21 is illegal. Boat captains and student anglers over the age of 21 are not be permitted to use tobacco products during the tournament or weigh-in. No alcoholic beverages are permitted. ● Students and captains are strongly discouraged from using cell phones for any unsportsmen or unethical behaviors during the tournament; however the use of cell phones for emergencies and photography of your catch is encouraged.

## **2. Interpretation and Enforcement**

*In addition to tournament limits, all SC freshwater fishing laws must be adhered to, including all participants ages 16 years old and older must have a valid South Carolina Recreational Freshwater Fishing License.*

Except for very serious rule violations that may lead to disqualification, protests must be made via the official Tournament Protest Form provided in the tournament registration packet. Copies will also be made available from Tournament Coordinators. All protests must be completed and submitted to a Tournament

Coordinator at the time the last fish is weighed to be considered. Protests must be made by a school coach only; protests from others must be first addressed to the school coach for the coach to complete the Tournament Protest Form. Protests from anyone other than the school coach, designated via the school's registration information, will not be accepted. If pending violations have not been resolved by the weighing of the last fish, tournament results announced at the closing of the weigh-in will be unofficial until all protests have been addressed.

### **3. Registration, Pre-tournament and Eligibility**

The completed registration packet, including the registration form for the team, the photo release/liability/medical form for each angler (including substitutes), and a copy of the liability insurance for the boat to be utilized, must be submitted during the designated registration window. ● A middle school may enter a maximum of 4 participants (or a lesser, even number of anglers). A high school may enter a maximum of 4 participants (or a lesser, even number of anglers). Each school is responsible for bringing 1 boat per 2 anglers. Schools must fish in twoperson teams. ● Each middle or high school is highly encouraged to register up to four additional student anglers to use as substitutions. Only these anglers added as substitute anglers during registration will be allowed to take the place of existing anglers in the instance that these anglers can no longer compete. Boat and captain substitutions may be made until the conclusion of boater safety check on Friday, March 6, 2026; information to provide for a boat and/or captain substitution includes: proof of minimum liability insurance, boat registration number, captain's cell phone number and the boat participates and passes the Friday night boater safety check. All substitutions, those for anglers, boat captains or boats, must be finalized at the conclusion of boater safety check on Friday, March 6, 2026. ● Students, coaches, or boat captains may not hire or fish with a guide within 30 days of the tournament on the tournament waters. ● The tournament waters are off-limits to anglers and boat captains from Monday, March 2nd, 2026 starting at 12:01am. Teams may not solicit information from anyone who has been on the tournament waters during the off-limits period. Teams may not have the assistance of any non-competitor for the purpose of locating or catching fish during the offlimits period and on the competition day. Any competitor found guilty of violating the off-limits period will be subjected to disqualification. ● One official practice day will be allowed on the day prior to the start of the tournament (March 6, 2026), pre-fishing is allowed until 5:00pm. ● Student anglers are encouraged to wear school uniform shirts which may include outside sponsor logos.

#### **4. Safety**

In the event of unfavorable weather the day of the tournament, the tournament will continue as scheduled during rain only. In the event of lightning or thunder, all boats will be secured and participants asked to return to the nearest safe location. It is the responsibility of the Tournament Coordinator to determine whether or not the fishing should be suspended or stopped altogether until the weather clears. If the event is stopped, the winning weights will be determined by the fish that were caught up until that point in the day. If unforeseen dangerous natural events or unexpected problems occur prior to the start of the tournament, then the event may be cancelled. ● Boat captains are required to have a cell phone and must provide the Tournament Coordinator the number of that cell phone in case of an emergency or to notify of bad weather conditions. In the event of an emergency all boat captains should call 911 first, then notify tournament officials. ● All student anglers and boat captains must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved Personal Floatation Device (PFD). Anglers found with PFDs removed will be disqualified. ● All boats must be subject to the SCDNR safety check prior to the launch on Saturday March 7, 2026. ● Boat captains must operate boats in a safe manner, abiding all boating laws when carrying student anglers.

#### **5. Boats, Operation and Horsepower**

Boats provided by volunteers must be a minimum of 16 feet in length, have current boat registration, sufficient liability insurance of \$300,000, have front and rear casting decks, a front mounted trolling motor and an aerated live well capable of keeping alive the two man teams five bass limit. Boats must also have console steering (no tiller), an operable ignition safety kill switch and all safety equipment as required by the U.S. Coast Guard. ● Every boat must have an adult captain, 21 years of age or older, for driving purposes. Professional guides and professional fisherman are not eligible to be a boat captain, unless they are an immediate family member (mother, father, sister, brother, grandfather, or grandmother) of one of the competitors that they are captaining. The boat captain will be the only one to operate the outboard motor with the exception of the trailoring process (outlined in rule #11). Anytime the gasoline engine is in use, boat captains must be seated in the driver's seat and anglers should be seated in the appropriate locations aboard the vessel. Student anglers may operate the trolling motor when the outboard motor is not in use. Boating laws and age requirements still apply. ● Boats shall not exceed the maximum horsepower capacity on the boat's maximum horsepower rating affixed to the boat by the manufacturer or a maximum of 250hp. The maximum capacity rating must be legible. ● Only the designated boat captain and the two

angler team assigned to that boat may be aboard the boat during competition. ● Student anglers make the decisions on what areas to fish on the lake and what direction to go. Boat captains cannot make suggestions on areas to fish.

## **6. Tackle and Equipment**

Participants can only use the gear that is in the boat when the boat leaves the dock at the start of the day. Permitted methods of fishing will be the use of artificial lures only, no live bait of any sort. ● Only one fishing rod may be in use at any one time by an angler. Bass may be landed by use of conventional hook and line only. No snagging of fish allowed. No live bait or trolling allowed. ● Anglers may assist one another in netting fish. Boat captains may also assist in netting fish, but are not allowed to assist by tying lures or handling rods and reels at any time. ● Each boat must have a way to measure the length of the fish. Make sure your ruler is accurate. The Gator Grip Golden Rule will be utilized for official tournament measurements at the weighin. There will be no courtesy length measurements conducted by tournament staff at the landing.

## **7. Live Fish and Culling**

There will be a five fish black bass limit per two man team per boat. Black bass includes largemouth, smallmouth, spotted and/or redeye (Bartram's) bass. Fish may be culled if a team has the five fish limit in the live well. No more than five fish can be in the livewell at any one time. All fish must be kept alive. Penalty will be 1/4 pound per each dead fish at the landing. If a two man team is caught with more than the five fish limit in their livewell by tournament officials, the fish will be culled starting with the largest fish until they are down to the stated limit of five fish. Bags brought to the landing are final (culling of fish based on measurements should be handled on the water, not at the landing). ● No livewell culling systems may be used that pass through the fish's operculum or gill flap. Culling systems that attach via the fish's lip are allowed.

## **8. Penalties**

Tardiness, dead fish and size limits All participants must be back at the boat landing no later than their assigned return time. There will be a one pound deduction every minute a participant is late getting back to the landing up to 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, no weight will be allowed for that boat's participants. Boat captains are responsible for making sure the boat is back to the dock by assigned time. Boat captains are responsible for notifying the Tournament Coordinator in advance of the 3:00pm closing time of any problems that may result in tardiness to the landing. ●

Dead fish at the landing will have a 1/4 pound deduction and cannot count as the large fish for that angler or two man team. Dead fish may not be culled. ● Illegal fish, those less than 14 inches, brought to the scales at weigh-in will automatically disqualify an angler pair's total bag from being weighed. The Gator Grip Golden Rule is the final measuring device.

## **9. Scoring**

The total weight for each of the five fish limit to a middle school two man team's boat will count towards the overall school team total for the tournament in the middle school category. The total weight for each of the five fish limit to a high school two man team's boat will count towards the overall school team total for the tournament in the high school category. Individual weights will be recorded for the top fish designated by each boat. The biggest fish award will be given at the tournament to an angler in the middle school category and the high school category. ● In addition to first, second and third place awards for schools, there will also be a first, second and third place award given to a two-man team in the middle school category and the high school category. Scholarships will be awarded for the two-man team with the heaviest weight in the 15-18 age category.

## **10. Ties**

In the event of a tie, the following will be used in order to break the tie: schools with all two of their two man teams weighing in a full five bass limit will automatically place higher; schools weighing in with dead fish will be automatically placed lower; and the school team that landed the larger fish will automatically be placed higher.

● For the top ranked two-man team in the high school category, ties will be broken, if the poundage is equal, in the following manner: first criteria will be the largest fish; second criteria will be the number of fish. Any fish found to be altered or in poor condition (mashed, mangled or mauled) will not be counted at the discretion of tournament officials.

## **11. Launching**

Student anglers may assist with loading and unloading of the boat by use of the combustion engine in the trailering process within the no wake zone of the designated tournament ramp. It is the responsibility of the boat captain and coach to determine whether the student is capable of this task. ● At the time of launch from the landing, all student anglers and their boats must comply with all the rules applied by tournament officials. At check-in back at the landing, boat captains shall report their tournament boat identification number and anglers must present their

limit and report the number of fish and any dead fish. Once the two man team's catch has been verified, boats will be trailored and convoy to the weigh-in with fish remaining in the livewell. Boat captains must check-in even if they don't have any fish to ensure the safe return of all anglers.

## **12. Equipment Failure**

### *Livewells and engine*

If there is an equipment failure that would cause the transfer of fish from one livewell to another boat's, the Tournament Coordinator must first be notified. The transfer of fish must then occur in the presence of the Tournament Coordinator at the landing or an SCDNR law enforcement officer. ● In the event of equipment failure or emergency that would yield a boat stranded, both anglers must cease fishing and their catch must be verified by a tournament official. In this instance, there are two permitted methods of returning to the landing for checkin after first notifying and receiving approval from the Tournament Coordinator of their rescue/retrieval plans: (1) by both anglers remaining in their boat and being towed by water, or (2) by both anglers entering an appointed rescue boat following notification of the tournament coordinator. Under these two conditions, the team's catch may be counted without penalty (excluding late or dead fish) at the check-in site. If after the emergency situation is resolved and enough time is left for anglers to resume fishing, a restart will be allowed. This applies to dire emergency situations as determined by the Tournament Director.

## **13. Weigh-in**

Bags brought to the landing are final (culling of fish based on measurements should be handled on the water, not at the landing). There will be no courtesy length measurements conducted by tournament staff at the landing. Fish brought to the scales at weigh-in less than 14 inches will automatically disqualify an angler pair's total bag from being weighed. Possession of undersized fish is in violation of state law. If a team is deemed disqualified, a coach or captain's presence will be required. The standard rule of measurement will be the Gator Grip Golden Rule Fish Ruler at the weigh-in. ● At the weigh-in location, each two man team must carry their catch to the stage and scales.