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Recommended Practices for Fishing Competitions in NSW

Guidelines have been developed to help event organisers improve fishing competition management in NSW. These guidelines are intended to be applicable to a wide range of fishing events including catch and keep and catch and release competitions. If you require additional detail on how these may be applied to your fishing competition, or require any DPI-advisory material, please contact Mark James on (02) 9527 8476 or Mark.James@dpi.nsw.gov.au

GENERAL PRACTICES: All competition formats

Fishing tackle: Using tackle that maximises released fish survival

Within this document there is an emphasis on encouraging fishing practices that improve released fish survival at all types of angling events. A large proportion of fish captured in fishing events are undersized and must be released due to minimum legal length regulations and an increasing number of fish are now released in catch and release competitions. It is therefore responsible practice to ensure that all fish released have a good chance of survival. The use of appropriate fishing tackle will help to achieve this objective.

Hooks

- 1 Promote the use of barbless hooks and/or single hooks and/or circle hooks (non-offset preferred) to make hook removal easier and minimise hook damage.

Landing net

- 1 Promote the use of soft knotless landing nets to minimise physical damage to landed fish.

Breaking strain of line

- 1 Encourage the use of appropriate line classes for the targeted species. Suggest the use of higher breaking strain line when targeting larger fish species to minimise fight time and associated stress to the fish.

Length of eligible fish: Reducing environmental impact

- 1 Consider applying additional fish size limit rules to those set by NSW DPI - Fisheries Regulations.
- 1 Consider applying rules that require all fish to beat the previous best recorded at the event. This can be done by displaying an up-to-date scoreboard and will help to reduce the presentation of unnecessary fish for recording and limit the needless taking of fish

Number of eligible fish: Reducing environmental impact

- 1 Consider applying fish bag limits which are below those set by NSW DPI - Fisheries Regulations.
- 1 Advise anglers to only take fish to satisfy their immediate needs.
- 1 Consider introducing a "single best fish of each species per angler" rule to limit the unnecessary taking of fish.

Fishing location: Fishing pressure and environmental impact

- | Define fishing area considering the protection of important habitat and the presence of threatened species or spawning fish aggregations, etc.
- | Consider possible conflict with other users of the location. Define the fishing area for the competition reflecting the expected level of fishing effort (number of anglers) and restrict the numbers of entries as appropriate.

Rules, regulations and prizes: Encouraging participation, compliance and discouraging cheating

- | Ensure that the rules are clear, fair and consistent with relevant legislation. Provide a complaints or dispute resolution process.
- | Consider making any high-value prizes available to all competitors attending the competition by way of lucky door prizes, mystery lengths, etc.
- | Provide trophies rather than high-value prizes as awards for best fishing captures to reduce the incentive for possible cheating.

Entry eligibility: Promotion of recreational fishing participation

- | If appropriate, consider making the competition an open invitation event and not restricted to club or association members.
- | Encourage competition entry to people of all backgrounds and abilities.

Social issues: Encouraging community involvement and support

- | Encourage the involvement of the local community when organising a competition. Organisations such as local community services and other sporting groups may be willing and able to provide valuable help.
- | Avoid potential social conflict caused by excessive interaction between competition fishers and other resource users. Consider the availability of resources such as fishing grounds, boat ramps, fish cleaning tables, etc. Consider the fishing area and the competition start and finish times to avoid potential conflict.

Economic benefits: Ensuring economic benefits to the wider community

- | Utilise the competition to generate increased tourism to the locality.

Involve and consult with local tourism bodies, Chambers of Commerce, businesses, local council, etc

- | Use the competition to raise funds that will benefit recreational fishing in the locality, eg: for fish stocking, new facilities, etc.

Educational and research benefits: Promoting responsible fishing and fishing techniques

- | Incorporate the instruction of responsible fishing practices and/or improved fishing techniques within the competition format.
- | Support approved scientific programs or other areas of research where possible.

Safety: Considering the welfare of participants, organisers and others

- | Consider safety issues when planning the event location, timing, weather conditions, etc.
- | Give participants advice on good safety practices to be exercised during the competition.

- | **Carry out a site specific risk assessment and develop a safety plan.**
- | **Consider and obtain appropriate insurance for the event, as necessary.**

Catch and Keep Competitions

Disposal of fish and the reduction of fish waste: Reducing environmental impact and social conflict

- | **Introduce rules that discourage high-grading (where fish are retained and later replaced by a bigger fish).**
- | **Discourage wasteful disposal of fish.**
- | **Minimise fish waste by introducing rules that limit the number of fish taken during the competition.**
- | **Facilitate the removal of fish waste generated by event.**

Catch & Release Competitions

Eligible fish: Maximising released fish survival by targeting appropriate species

- | **Ensure the target species (fish that are eligible in the competition) have a good chance of survival under the competition format and environmental conditions.**

Live fish holding facilities: Maximising released fish survival by using appropriate holding facilities

- | **Encourage anglers to use appropriate live fish-holding facilities. The fish-holding facilities should reflect the needs of the targeted species according to their size and biology.**

Total time fish are held: Maximising released fish survival by reducing retention time

- | **Consider applying rules that allow immediate release of captured fish. Examples include camera validation, tagging or the “buddy system” (where a fishing companion witnesses the capture, recording and release of a fish).**
- | **Use multiple recording stations and/or on-water marshals. This minimises the need to travel long distances to have fish recorded and reduces the retention time of live fish.**

Handling techniques used by recorders: Increasing fish survival by reducing physical damage

- | **Fish recording should be undertaken using good handling techniques including the use of soft wet gloves, nets and damp release mats.**
- | **Consider recording length rather than weight of fish to reduce handling.**

Site of fish release after recording: Minimising behavioural disruption to fish

- | **Fish should be released into the same or similar environment (within the same water body) as to where it was captured, ideally through immediate release.**

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