

**Section 810.90 Fishing Tournament Permit**

- a) A Fishing Tournament Permit from the Department is required for any fishing tournament event, which includes Hook and Line Fishing Tournaments and Bowfishing Tournaments, that is held in any of the waters listed in Section 810.45 or Section 810.15(d) and in any public owned or Department-managed lake, river or stream in Illinois.
- b) The Fishing Tournament Permit serves as the IDNR Site Activity Permit (17 Ill. Adm. Code 110.90).
- c) Definitions
  - 1) "Fishing Derby" – An organized event conducted for children under the age of 16 who are attending primary school, senior citizens (65 years old and older), anglers with disabilities, or other school-sanctioned groups when the principal purpose is education or enjoyment, rather than competition among anglers. Tournament Permits are not required for a fishing derby.
  - 2) "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 the following criteria are present:
    - A) the event is sponsored or promoted by an individual or organization;
    - B) participants compete for trophies, cash, prizes, citation or other recognition for participation in the event; and
    - C) the event is conducted during a specified time period.
- d) Department sites require that the tournament director or organizer either:
  - 1) provide proof of liability insurance of \$1,000,000; or
  - 2) require each individual who participates in the event to sign a liability waiver, obtained from the site office, prior to the event.
- e) A copy of the Fishing Tournament Permit must be in the possession of the director or organizer at all times during the event.
- f) Special Length Limit and/or Daily Harvest Limit exemptions to Site Specific Regulations are allowed (if they do not exceed the statewide limits) when requested on the Fishing Tournament Permit application, approved by the Department, and stated on the Fishing Tournament Permit. However, Special Length Limit and Daily Harvest Limit exemptions will only be approved for:

- 1) any Black Bass Fishing Tournament in Lake Michigan (Illinois Portion) (see Section 810.45);
  - 2) Illinois High School Association (IHSA) or other youth-only sanctioned catch and release tournaments, for which the Special Length Limit will be the statewide minimum (i.e., 12 inches); and
  - 3) catch, hold for weigh-in, and release Muskie Fishing Tournaments (all waters), provided all fish are released unharmed immediately after a quick weigh-in.
- g) The statewide Daily Harvest Limit of no more than 6 largemouth, smallmouth or spotted bass (black bass) may be in possession while participating in a Hook and Line Fishing Tournament, except:
- 1) as specified by Site Specific Regulations in Section 810.45;
  - 2) In streams and rivers (including the mainstem of the Mississippi, Ohio (including the Golconda Marina) and Wabash Rivers), the daily possession can contain no more than 3 smallmouth bass; and
  - 3) In rivers and streams and their tributaries (excluding the Mississippi; Ohio, including the Golconda Marina, and Wabash and Illinois Rivers), all smallmouth bass must be immediately released between April 1 and June 15.
- h) The Mississippi, Ohio and Wabash Rivers are not eligible for permits that exempt participants from daily harvest and size limits due to regulatory agreements with neighboring states.
- i) Requests for a Fishing Tournament Permit shall be made on applications provided by the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fisheries, available on the IDNR and IFishIllinois websites.
- 1) If applications are submitted online, the Fishing Tournament Permit will also serve as the IDNR Site Activity Permit for tournaments held at IDNR sites.
  - 2) If the Fishing Tournament Permit request is made by paper application, the applicant will need to contact the IDNR site for a separate paper Site Activity Permit application.
  - 3) Applications must be received not less than 30 days prior to the first tournament date and must be completely filled out before submitted.

- 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 Division of Fisheries. Subsequent Fishing Tournament Permits for the following years may not be issued until the summary reports have been submitted for the current or previous years.
- 5) Fishing Tournament Permit applications will be accepted beginning November 1 of each year for the following year. Applications cannot be accepted more than one year in advance pursuant to 17 Ill. Adm. Code 115.
- j) The issuance or denial of a Fishing Tournament Permit shall be based upon the following criteria:
  - 1) The capability of the fishery resource to absorb the tournament with minimal impact to its well-being.
  - 2) The evaluation of the adverse impacts resulting from the additional fishing pressure generated by the tournament on the fish population and the targeted fish species. The evaluation must demonstrate minimal and short-term impacts in order for the Department of Natural Resources to issue the permit. Specific items to be considered include:
    - A) biological status of the fish population, including the species sought;
    - B) timing of the tournament with regard to date, hours and water conditions;
    - C) length of fishing hours for the tournament;
    - D) need for emergency protective procedures to protect the sport fisheries resources of the State and the general health, safety and welfare of the general public as provided for in Section 810.80;
    - E) number of boats and anglers participating in the tournament; and
    - F) safety of anglers and potential boater-user conflicts.
  - 3) The criteria and evaluation required for a Site Activity Permit, described in 17 Ill. Adm. Code 110.90.

- k) Appeals of denied permits must be made in writing to the Division of Fisheries within 10 days after receipt of the denial. Any supplemental information requested must be included in the appeal.
- l) Required provisions for holding, handling and releasing caught fish to protect fish health in Hook and Line Fishing Tournaments:
  - 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.
  - 2) Following the weigh-in, fish must be released away from the weigh-in site and as near to the spot where the catch was made as possible by means of a common release boat or vehicle, or by individual boats. When impractical to release away from the ramp, fish shall be released into the water body as quickly as possible to avoid undue stress.
  - 3) If a common release boat or vehicle is to be utilized, a permit must be obtained from the IDNR-Division of Fisheries exempting the anglers transporting the fish to be released from the Daily Harvest Limit. A common release boat and holding tank used to transport fish for release shall be adequate to carry a tank constructed of a suitable material (aluminum or fiberglass) with smooth interior walls with no obstructions to trap or injure fish. The tank must be able to hold at least one gallon of water per pound of fish, provide adequate aeration, and maintain constant desirable temperature to sustain their well-being. The tank must have operating hatches to prevent fish from jumping out of the tank and allow quick opening and closing for introduction and removal of fish.
  - 4) Individual boats and anglers returning their catches of fish back to a release site must adhere to Daily Harvest Limits. Tournament officials must be able to certify that a common release boat is being utilized for this tournament.
  - 5) For catch, hold for weigh-in, and release Muskie Fishing Tournaments, all boats must have a fish cradle (made from netting) to temporarily hold the muskie in the water while an official determines the length or weight of the fish prior to release. Muskies may not be transported to a weigh-in site.
- m) Bowfishing tournaments may be held in any of the public waters open to bowfishing listed in Section 810.45 or public waters listed in Section 810.15(d). Bowfishing tournaments are subject to the following additional rules:
  - 1) No Special Length Limit and/or Daily Harvest Limit exemptions are allowed to Site Specific Regulations (not to exceed the statewide statutory limits) on:
    - A) waters listed in Section 810.45 or public waters listed in Section 810.15 with restrictive limits; and

- B) the Mississippi, Ohio and Wabash Rivers due to regulatory agreements with neighboring states.
- 2) All non-native species legal to harvest with bowfishing methods listed in Section 810.45 have unlimited harvest. No possession of live Asian carp is permitted.
- 3) No exemptions will be granted for the wanton waste and fish abandonment provisions in Section 810.14.
- n) Failure to acquire a permit before holding a tournament, as required in subsection (a), is a petty offense pursuant to Section 20-35 of the Fish and Aquatic Life Code 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.

(Source: Amended at 40 Ill. Reg. 6000, effective March 25, 2016)

