



BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON FISHING TOURNAMENTS PERMITTED BY THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Virtual tournaments are defined as *sportfishing competitions conducted entirely electronically and online, without contact among participants or between participants, the general public and organizers.*

Directors may organize a virtual tournament by following some general guidelines identified below. If applicable, it is recommended that the tournament director's captains meeting be held virtually by utilizing a platform such as Facebook, Google, YouTube or another video conference service, or via conference call.

Tournament registration should be conducted electronically with anglers performing all check-ins via mobile applications. Anglers should not check-in with any staff or tournament organizer in person. When an angler catches a fish, the angler can take a photo of the catch on an industry-accepted bump board or weigh with a hand scale, but all catch details on length and/or weight are submitted using a mobile application. Fish are released immediately after capture and measurement. Throughout the fishing day, judges can review the submissions electronically and can accept, adjust or reject any submission electronically for/from the angler.

There should be no "in-person" weigh-ins of any kind. At the conclusion of the virtual fishing tournament, anglers can "check-out" using mobile applications, which will notify the tournament director that anglers have safely come off of the water. There should be no "in-person" results or awards ceremony after the tournament. Anglers may attend a "virtual award ceremony" on Facebook, Google, YouTube, or other social media or internet platform, where the tournament director can announce competitor totals and award finalists with their official placings. This format prevents gatherings of any kind. Results and awards should be announced online or via social media and payouts should be transferred electronically or mailed.

Tournament organizers are encouraged to review [general business best practices](#) available on the Maryland Department of Commerce's [Back to Business page](#).

In-person tournaments are defined as *sportfishing competitions conducted when anglers and/or organizers gather in groups of greater than two during any one of the following activities: captain's meeting, registration, morning check-in, launching the boat, weighing or measuring fish, and results and/or awards ceremony.*

Recommendations for ensuring public health and safety during in-person contact are provided below for each of these activities. Captain's meetings that include pairings and

boat numbers should be done prior to the tournament using email. Registration for the tournament should also be done online. If a table registration is necessary, such as for “opens,” current restrictions on the number of individuals permitted in a social gathering and social distancing protocols should be adhered to at all times, including those conducting the registration.

Additionally, competitors and staff should wear face coverings during registration and during check-ins. Social distancing should be adhered to during check-ins. No angler should gather in groups of more than are allowed under the state’s current executive orders or local orders. Prior to launch, staff may inspect boats and live wells; this inspection should be done on the water and in such a way as to minimize direct contact. Boaters should carry a first aid kit, sanitizers, and disinfectant wipes or soap and water. Equipment shared between boaters and anglers should be sanitized with wipes and safe distancing should be practiced while fishing. It is recommended to have no more than 10 boats per flight and time between flights should be no less than 15 minutes. Longer times between flights may be necessary when crowding at the marina is expected or if the recommendations are expected to lengthen weigh-in times. Weigh-ins should be conducted dockside or drive-through (dockside is preferred).

When an anglers’ boat number is called, then the boat should idle to dock so that anglers can hand fish to tournament staff for weighing. Tournament staff should wear protective coverings during the exchange. In the case of a drive-through weigh-in, which can be harder for the fish and is not preferred, the boater may trailer their boat with aerators running in the live well. Only one boat should be allowed to the scale at a time. Anglers and staff should wear protective coverings during the exchange. There should be no public announcement by the weigh-master as this can draw a crowd. At the conclusion of the weigh-in, anglers should not gather in groups and instead should immediately leave the weigh-in area. Results and awards should be announced online or via social media and payouts should be transferred electronically or mailed.

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