

2020 Montana Walleyes Unlimited Circuit Rules

Important: ALL participants are required to INSPECT, CLEAN, and DRY your boats, trailers, and equipment prior to launching and pre-fishing for each event and also after the contest **to prevent transport and introduction of aquatic nuisance species.** This also **includes draining your livewells and bilge prior to leaving** the body of water. This is a significant issue and problem even in Montana.

1. ELIGIBILITY: Any applicant under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult partner (18 or over). All applicants must also be members of Walleyes Unlimited of Montana. Tournament participants found not to be Walleyes Unlimited of Montana members will forfeit any cash or merchandise prizes earned. **Current membership status through the date of the tournament must be established at the time of application for the tournament.** Each Tournament Committee reserves the right to refuse or reject an entry. Boats of all tournament anglers must be covered by liability insurance. Tournament directors may declare any boat not so insured as “ineligible for competition”.

2. ENTRY FEES: The entry fees are determined by each individual tournament on a per team basis. Application and payment of entry fee into any particular tournament must be received at least 14 days prior to the tournament. A late fee of \$25 per team will apply to any team who signs up within the 14 days prior to the tournament.

3. RELEASE OF LIABILITY: By signing the tournament entry form, all participants agree to the following Release of Liability: “We, in consideration of being permitted to participate in the Montana Walleye Circuit, do for ourselves, our heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, hereby release and forever discharge the Montana Walleye Circuit, the Montana Walleye Circuit Tournament Committee, Tournament Directors, the Montana Walleyes Unlimited Board of Directors and any and all sponsoring companies, entities and individuals, their heirs, successors, administrators and assigns, from any and every claim, demand, action or right of action, of whatever kind or nature, either in law or in equity, arising from or by reason of any bodily injury or personal injuries, known or unknown, death or property damage resulting or to result from any accident which may occur as a result of your participation in the Montana Walleye Circuit activities or any activities in connection with the Montana Walleye Circuit, whether by negligence or otherwise. We further release all officials, staff, participating sponsor companies and agencies from any claim whatsoever on account of first aid treatment or service rendered during my participation in the Montana Walleye Circuit.” This release contains the entire agreement between the parties hereto and the terms of this release are contractual and not a mere recital.

4. OFF THE WATER TIME AND RULES MEETING: **At least one member of each team is required to attend the tournament rules meeting on the evening prior to the beginning of the tournament.** This meeting will be held at a time and location determined by the individual tournament directors. In all Montana Walleyes Unlimited tournaments contestants may not enter or be on tournament waters after the start time of the mandatory rules meeting, except during competition hours until the conclusion of the tournament other than to immediately launch or load the boat at the designated tournament launch ramp facilities (see boat navigation exception below). In some Montana Walleye Unlimited circuit tournaments the “off the water” time may be designated earlier than immediately prior to the start of the rules meeting by the tournament officials. It is the responsibility of the contestant to be aware of the correct off the water time for each tournament.

BOAT NAVIGATION EXCEPTION

Contestants may navigate or transport their boats across tournament waters before or after a tournament fishing day only when: 1. They notify the tournament director at rules meeting, tournament director will then notify circuit director. 2. Must be at start location 30 minutes before official start to be

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checked in. 3. Contestants will be inspected, which will include a review of a valid GPS plot trail. If plot trail is not there, or shows the boat veering towards points or the shoreline, contestants will be disqualified from tournament. Contestants navigating across tournament waters must travel the most direct route possible, away from shorelines and maintain a steady on plane speed. Boating down and back in one flight would be the preferred method.

Tournament official boats may be used to monitor navigation over tournament waters. Any abuse of above navigation exception will result in immediate disqualification.

5. GENERAL: For the purpose of these rules, “Walleyes” refers to species of the genus *Sander Vitreus* (excluding Sauger (*Stizostedion Canadense*) and Saugeye (hybrid walleye/sauger). Unless otherwise declared at the rules meeting only the species walleye will count towards an anglers score in Montana Walleyes Unlimited Circuit tournaments.

6. REGULATIONS: Each entrant must possess a valid Montana fishing license. All contestants must observe the rules and regulations of the U.S. Coast Guard and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks **and provide their ALS # on their tournament application.**

7. TEAMS: Contestants must enter as a two-person team. Any change of team members must be approved by tournament officials, and a new application must be signed. Only two team members may occupy a boat during any tournament. With approval of tournament officials, an angler may fish without his partner if illness or personal tragedy makes it impossible for that partner to be in the boat for all or part of a tournament.

8. TOURNAMENT HEADQUARTERS: Tournament headquarters are determined by each individual tournament director, and all entries are to be advised of the location prior to the tournament.

9. TOURNAMENT FISHING AREA:

The fishing area of each tournament will be declared and printed on the tournament applications. If the fishing area is determined to be less than the entire body of water that the event is to be held on then those tournament boundaries may not be expanded at a later date to insure that all anglers local and non-local have an equal opportunity to scout and prepare their tournament plan within the final tournament fishing area boundaries before the event.

10. FINAL TOURNAMENT FISHING AREA BOUNDRIES:

In the event of unsafe conditions or an unforeseen event the tournament director may reduce but not expand the final tournament boundaries from the pre announced Tournament Fishing area. The final tournament boundaries will be announced and described in detail at the mandatory rules meeting. **Contestants may not leave their boat at any time during the tournament without specific permission of tournament officials, including weigh boat personnel, except in the event of lightning or wind that poses a significant threat to personal safety. Contestants will be allowed (with specific permission from tournament officials) to return to tournament headquarters for fuel, personal reasons, or to retrieve, repair or replace equipment or tackle. Contestants may not operate their boat outside of the designated tournament boundaries during tournament hours.**

11. TOURNAMENT HOURS AND STARTING PROCEDURES: Tournament hours, including starting times and check-in times, will be established by tournament directors of each event for each tournament. Tournament hours as well as starting hours and flight times, will be announced at the mandatory rules meeting. In all Montana Walleye Circuit tournaments teams will be assigned a boat identification number

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when they register for the tournament, however tournament starting order will be determined by a random drawing of a single boat number at the rules meeting. This randomly drawn boat number will be the first boat out on day one and the last boat out on day two. The starting order will proceed on day one with the next highest boat number going out second and so forth until all boats have been released. The order will be reversed on the second day of competition. The number of flights and starting and return times for each flight and check-in procedures will be established by each tournament director and announced at the mandatory rules meeting.

For safety reasons, the Montana Walleye Circuit strongly suggests that smaller boats either pull over at the start or request to be placed at the end of the starting line. All starts will occur in single file, and any boats arriving late for their position in the starting line, will be required to go to the end of the starting line. Failure to do so may result in being declared ineligible for any tournament prizes or awards. Each tournament director will also indicate a starting point, finishing point and check-in procedures and will announce them during the rules meeting. **Boats not crossing the finish point by the designated time, WILL FORFEIT THEIR WEIGHT FOR THAT DAY.**

12. FOUL WEATHER: The tournament officials reserve the right to postpone or cancel daily competition; if in the opinion of the officials, weather conditions exist that pose a threat to the safety of teams and tournament personnel. Furthermore, the Tournament Director may declare a foul weather situation due to deteriorating weather conditions, after competition has already begun on any day of the tournament. In the event that a foul weather situation is declared, weigh boats and other tournament personnel may be recalled to tournament headquarters and participants must use their own judgment concerning whether to seek safety or continue fishing. In the event that a foul weather rule has been called by the Tournament Director, tournament participants are authorized to seek shelter on shore if required. Unless team members are personally notified by a tournament official, it should be assumed that the tournament hours have not changed. Such notification may come via visits from tournament personnel or through emergency channel 16 on marine radios. Participants will be responsible for reaching the check-in point by the required time in a SAFE manner. At no time will any team be allowed to give their score card to any other participant to be turned in for official scoring. In the spirit of the tournament and good sportsmanship, individual responsibility and good judgment are essential to insure your own personal safety under any and all circumstances.

13. INSPECTIONS: Tournament anglers are expected to arrive at all tournaments with clean boats and must submit their boats for inspection by representatives of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, if asked to do so. Each boat will be inspected by tournament officials each day prior to the start of tournament fishing. No boat may have walleye on board prior to the start of the tournament. All boats in the tournament must display identifying marks and/or numbers as provided by tournament officials. Boats, tackle and equipment may be inspected at any time before, during and/or after the tournament.

14: TACKLE: Artificial and live bait are allowed, but each contestant must conform to the rules of the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks concerning number of lines permitted, allowable bait and methods of taking fish on each particular body of water. Spare rods and equipment may be carried in the boat.

15. BOAT OPERATION: Each contestant is required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved Personal Flotation Device when the boat is on plane. All teams must depart by boat from the starting area under the direction of tournament officials. All participants must abide by all local and state navigation and boating laws and Rules of the Road. Team boats may not come within (75) feet of any other boats or watercraft (except patrol boats and weigh boats) during tournament hours. **NON-SPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT, TAIL PIPING, RECKLESS AND CARELESS BOAT HANDLING IS GROUNDS FOR**

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DISQUALIFICATION. Teams are to approach all weigh boats in a careful and prudent manner. If a participating team approaches a weigh boat in any sort of reckless manner, the weigh boat may refuse to measure that team's fish. The team will then have to find another weigh boat and try to get their fish measured. Repeat offenders can be disqualified by the tournament director.

16. FISHING: The tournaments will be operated under a "catch and release" format. Teams will catch measure (at a measuring boat) and release as many walleye as they choose. However, only the largest five (5) walleye per team, per day, will count toward the teams overall score. **WALLEYE MUST BE a MINIMUM OF 14 INCHES IN LENGTH** to be counted. The length of a fish that breaks a ¼ inch mark will be scored at the next 1/4 inch mark. This does not stand for fish measured at 13 3/4 inches. The length of the fish must break the 14 inch mark to be scored a legal fish. (So in reality, there will be no 14 inch fish shown on weigh cards. The smallest recorded weight will be 14 1/4. Official measuring boats will be positioned at various places around the lake. **Teams will not be allowed more than five (5) walleye onboard in the livewell(s) at any time. Teams discovered to have more than five (5) walleye in their livewell(s) at one time will be immediately disqualified from the tournament. However culling is allowed in Montana Walleyes Unlimited tournaments and one additional (6th) fish may be caught and brought on board but must be immediately released or exchanged with another fish currently on board that is releasable.** Dead or un-releasable walleye must be recorded and tagged at a measuring boat and they will count toward the team's five walleye limit with a score of zero weight. Any team caught releasing dead fish or fish that will not survive will be immediately disqualified. All measuring records are to be verified by tournament officials and a team member. During the two days of tournament competition, each contestant may keep one "trophy" walleye (30) inches or over in length. Trophy fish must be tagged as such by weigh boat personnel and they will count towards the five (5) walleye in the boat limit. Trophy walleye can be counted as part of the team's daily score, but only if the fish is otherwise releasable. **This is a catch and release tournament meaning all fish caught are to be released each day and are not to be kept during the tournament except as noted above.**

17. WEIGH BOATS OR WEIGH STATION: It is the responsibility of the weigh boat/ weigh station personnel to not only measure and record accurately all fish, but also to determine if fish presented to the weigh boats are **the correct species and are in releasable condition.** Once a fish has been determined to be releasable by weigh boat personnel and is then weighed, recorded and released or tagged, the weigh card is signed and the tournament boat leaves, that entry becomes a legally scored fish, even if that fish surfaces and is found to be non-releasable at a later time. It is the responsibility of weigh boat personnel to properly determine if fish are releasable, and **ALL WEIGH BOAT/WEIGH STATION PERSONNEL DECISIONS ARE FINAL.** As part of Walleyes Unlimited of Montana's commitment to the preservation of habitat and management of fish and wildlife all tournament directors are required to educate their weigh boat personnel on proper fish handling, measuring, species identification and evaluation techniques. Fish must be swimming upright with no weights attached and in releasable condition to be counted towards a tournament angler's score. Tournament directors are encouraged to provide belly weights to tournament entrants if possible, and to educate fishermen as to the proper use of the weights and handling to keep fish alive and healthy.

18. SCORING AND PRIZES: Daily scores will be the total measurement converted to weight of up to five (5) walleyes which will be selected by the team from all of the fish measured and recorded for that team for that day. Anglers as well as weigh boat personnel are required to initial each measured fish on the score card. **A NON-INITIALED FISH WILL BE CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE BY THE ANGLER AND WILL BE DEEMED NON-DISPUTABLE AND NON-CHALLENGEABLE** once the angler has left that weigh boat or weigh station. Prizes will be awarded based on team scores as determined by the tournament director. In the event that one of the fishing days is cancelled, prizes will be awarded on the standings from one day of

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fishing. A minimum of eighty percent of the entry fees, excluding conservation fee and circuit fees, will be paid out in prizes.

19. CHECK-IN, LATE PENALTIES: For safety reasons all boats must check in each day at a location specified by tournament officials, regardless of whether the team has caught and weighed fish or not. The team number and time of arrival will be recorded at the check-in station. **Late arrivals WILL BE DISQUALIFIED for that day and will be ineligible from any prizes.** In the event of a backlog of boats at the check-in station, boats that have arrived prior to the deadline and are waiting in line will not be penalized.

20. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: Records of fish caught (weigh cards) must be turned in at the point designated by the tournament officials at the mandatory rules meeting within 30 minutes of a team's check-in time each day. On the final day, the boat boards must also be turned in with the weigh cards.

Loss of weigh cards – weigh cards are issued each morning at the required boat inspections. Any team losing their weigh card during the day will be required to be inspected again with no fish in the livewell/s and will be given a new weigh card and start over. All previously measured fish on the lost card are forfeited and the team will start over for the day. Each tournament will designate where a replacement card may be obtained. If a card is handed to a weigh boat official and is lost, this rule will not apply and the weigh boat will replace the card.

21. ALCOHOL: No alcoholic beverages will be allowed in contestants boats during hours of competition.

22. COMMUNICATIONS: Marine radios are to be used only in emergency situations and for conducting tournament business. Unlawful use may constitute grounds for disqualification. Cellular phones, CB or two way radios may not be used to relay tournament fishing information in any fashion and can be used for emergency transmissions only during tournament hours.

23. SPIRIT OF THE RULE: It is the intention of Walleye's Unlimited of Montana to promote good sportsmanship and fair play in all tournament events. Unsportsmanlike conduct and cheating will not be tolerated and will result in disqualification. Any angler found cheating will be immediately disqualified from that particular tournament, and will become subject to disqualification from all Montana Walleye Circuit events for a time period to be determined by the Montana Walleye Circuit Board of Directors. Interpretation of tournament rules shall be left as the exclusive responsibility of the tournament officials and all decisions will be final.

24. PROTEST POLICY: Only contestants and circuit officials have the right to contest the actions of another team or contestant. Protests by the contestants must be filed in writing with the Tournament Director, in person, no later than 1/2 hour after the close of fishing for that day. A \$100 cash protest fee must accompany any protest offered by a contestant. A five person committee appointed by, and including, the tournament director will convene to investigate and make a decision regarding the protest. The protest committee and their agents are authorized to utilize polygraph examinations, photographs - still or moving, or any other investigative technique in order to determine the validity of the protest or the charge against any contestant. The decision of the Protest Committee shall be by majority vote and shall be final in all cases. Contestants waive any right to appeal the decision of the Protest Committee to a higher authority, including any court of jurisdiction in this or any other state. If a protest by a contestant is found to be valid, the protest fee will be returned. If the protest is found invalid, the fee will not be returned. Any person found guilty of

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violating the rules may be immediately disqualified and the reasons for the said disqualifications announced at the tournament headquarters.

25. **WITHDRAWAL POLICY:** Entry fee refunds will be made only if the team gives written notification of withdrawal two (2) weeks prior to the tournament starting date. A service charge of 20% plus the \$10 conservation fee will be assessed against refunds made due to withdrawal from the tournament. Withdrawals later than 14 days from the tournament's starting days will receive NO REFUNDS.

26. **VIOLATION** of these rules may be cause for subsequent denial of application to compete in future Montana Walleye Circuit events. If disqualified for any violations of the above rules, future participation must be reviewed by the Montana Walleye Circuit and approved by a majority of Montana Walleye Circuit Directors.

NOTE: The above rules for the 2019 Montana Walleye Circuit cover the basics of all tournament events, but may vary slightly due to local regulations. Please pay special attention to the highlighted, underlined, and/or bold face items in the above rules, as most are extremely important segments.

Photo & Video Release: I understand and agree that any and all photographs, videos or films taken during the course of my participation in the tournament which include me, my name and/or my boat may be used by the tournament organizers, sponsors or media without my prior consent and without royalties.

Dated: December 3, 2011

Updated: October 18, 2019