**Nebraska Walleye Trail**

**Tournament Rules**

**(Merritt Open and 2017 NWT State Championship)**

1. **Participation and Eligibility**
2. All Entries must be received by the end of the tournament registration period, prior to the mandatory rules meeting the evening before the tournament is scheduled to begin.

B. Any Person 16 years or younger must be accompanied by an adult to participate.

C. Entrants must have in their possession a valid fishing license.

D. Each team must consist of two members, unless prior permission is obtained from the NWT board, before the start of the tournament. Only the two members can be in the boat during tournament fishing hours. Substitutions are permitted prior to the start of the tournament, only if the new member executes an entry form properly filled out with the substitution information.

E. Substitutions. Each Team is allowed 1 substitute per year. Teams are allowed a substitute for the State championship only with prior board approval.

F. At least one member of the team must check-in and attend the rules meeting prior to the tournament.

G. The NWT has the right to refuse acceptance of entry applications.

**2. Boat, Fish, and Equipment**

A. All teams are subject to inspection during tournament hours. NWT patrol boats may come alongside and conduct in‐boat inspections.

B. CB, Marine Band Radios and Cell Phones are for emergency use only. Any transmission via phone or radio that is non‐emergency is grounds for disqualification. The NWT may inspect phones for use during tournament hours. If there has been use, this will be grounds for disqualification and violators could be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

C. All fish must be kept in aerated live wells to keep fish alive and healthy for eventual release. The use of fish stringers or wire baskets is not permissible. The showing of white gills, soft flesh, or sunken eyes, may result in disqualification. The final determination will be by the Bump Master during tournament weigh‐ins.

D. Only live fish will be weighed. Each dead fish will be omitted from total weight. The bump master will have final say if fish is dead or alive. Teams will not be allowed to re-place dead fish with live fish.

E. Only fish that are of legal length for the body of water will be eligible for weigh-in. Any fish that fails to meet length requirements will be grounds for disqualification.

F. All state fishing regulations will apply and will be discussed at the mandatory rules meeting prior to the tournament.

**3. Good Sportsmanship and Safety**

A. High standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, and safety are expected from all participants. Any contestant who displays poor sportsmanship may be disqualified.

B. All boats must meet U.S. Coast Guard safety regulations.

C. In the event of a storm or lightning, teams may pull into shore for safety.

D. No alcohol beverages may be consumed during tournament hours.

E. All contestants must wear life jackets when the boat is operating above trolling speeds.

**4. Boat Release and Fishing Hours**

A. All boats released from the flight holding area, must idle out past the marked buoys or release boat. Any boat not complying with this rule and risking the safety of other teams may be disqualified.

B. Boats will be released in flights pursuant to assigned team numbers. This will be discussed at the rules meeting.

C. Tournament fishing hours will be announced at the rules meetings. Teams who leave early will be automatically disqualified. Teams who return late will receive a zero for that day’s weight.

D. Tournament practice is allowed until 5:00 p.m. local time, the day before the tournament.

E. The morning of the tournament, all boats will be allowed to use any ramp, on the lake, but they must navigate directly to the designated starting point. Any boats dropping buoy markers or searching possible fishing areas may be disqualified.

F. Boundaries will be explained at rules meetings.

**5. Prizes and Scoring**

A. All prizes will be awarded by total team weight, with the exception of Big Fish prize, which will be awarded individually for the heaviest walleye. At least one team member must accompany the catch to the scale.

B. In the event of a tie, final placing will be determined by the heaviest single fish.

C. In the event of the largest fish tie, winner will be determined by the heaviest total weight.

**6. Protest and Waiver**

A. The tournament committee, or any contestant, has the right to protest another team or contestant. The protest must be filed in writing with the tournament committee no later than ½ hour after the close of tournament fishing hours. The tournament committee will convene to hear both sides of the protest. A polygraph may be utilized if so decided by the tournament committee. The decision of the tournament committee shall be final in all cases. A $250.00 protest fee must accompany each written protest. The fee will be returned if the protest is found valid. If the protest is valid, the disqualified party must pay all investigative cost, including the polygraph. If the protest is invalid, the fee will not be returned.

B. Promoters, Tournament Directors, Sponsors, Tournament Committee, Organizations and

Individuals assisting in the tournament operation, their agencies, agents, etc. are not responsible for deaths, injuries, damages, liability, theft, fire, or any loss of any kind to entrants. Each entrant upon signing an entry form will be signing a waiver form.

C. Disqualification from the tournament will result in forfeiture of entry fee.

D. All rules have “loopholes”. In the interest of good sportsmanship, contestants are reminded that the “spirit of the rule” will prevail in all judgment cases.

**7. Miscellaneous**

A. No refund of entry fee for cancellation will be issued within one week prior to tournament. There will be a $25.00 service charge per team retained on all refunds of entry fees regardless of cancellation date.

B. Catch and release is required.

C. During tournament hours both contestants must stay on the boat, unless weighing in fish early or at the weigh in marina, or taking shelter due to weather.

D. Any teams, that try, to gain an unfair advantage in any way not mentioned may be subject to disqualification.

E. Each contestant agrees to submit to and pay for a truth verification test. Refusal to submit to and pay for such a test may result in disqualification.

F. The tournament committee has the right to delay, reschedule, or cancel any tournament due to unforeseen or unsafe conditions.

G. The tournament committee has the right to change tournament lake location 10 days prior to the scheduled tournament date. In this situation, entry fees will not be refunded and teams are required to fish the new location.

H. Contestants are responsible for all applicable taxes.

I. The tournament committee has the right to review any requests that are exceptions to the above rules and regulations.