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## **Pro-Fishing Tournaments in the U.S. Waters of the Great Lakes, Mississippi River, and Ohio River Basins**

**July 2012**



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

*Product of the GLMRIS Team*

The Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) Team consists of a regional, collaborative effort led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), including various District and Division offices, as well as Corps Centers of Expertise and Research Laboratories. Products of the GLMRIS Team are also made possible in collaboration with various federal, state, local, and non-governmental stakeholders.

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## **I. Report Purpose**

This report is a complement to the *Commercial Fisheries Baseline Economic Assessment* of the Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) and summarizes the elements of fishing tournaments which occur on the Great Lakes, the Ohio River, and the Upper Mississippi River. Results from this effort will form the baseline from which future conditions will be compared to determine impacts from Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS). If it is determined that ANS could affect fishing tournaments, additional information will be gathered to evaluate the consequences for the future without-project conditions.

The purpose of this report is to provide descriptions of the types of tournaments which occur in the study area as well as information on the rules and other elements which characterize fishing tournaments. The report attempts to illustrate the details of the various types of tournaments which occur by examining a small sample of tournaments. Fishing tournaments occur frequently in the study area, as indicated by the cursory results of this qualitative analysis, and undoubtedly have an economic impact to the overall region. However, this report does not attempt to measure the monetary impacts or effects of fishing tournaments. Some statistics are provided for individual tournament participation and entry fees, but these numbers are by no means comprehensive and should not be assumed a representation of economic value of this industry. This report serves to acquaint its audience with the general elements of fishing tournaments, not to provide economic valuation of the activity.

This document uses a common definition of fishing “tournament” based on the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources:

*an organized fishing event, in which anglers fish for prizes or recognition in addition to the satisfaction of catching fish.<sup>1</sup>*

## **II. GLMRIS Background Information**

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), in consultation with other federal agencies, Native American tribes, state agencies, local governments, and non-governmental organizations, is conducting the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS). In accordance with the study authorization, USACE will evaluate a range of options and technologies (collectively known as "ANS controls") to prevent the spread of aquatic nuisance species between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River by aquatic pathways. In this context, the term "prevent" includes the reduction of risk to the maximum extent possible, because it may not be technologically feasible to achieve an absolute solution. As part of this study, USACE will conduct a detailed analysis of various ANS controls, including hydrologic separation.

An aquatic nuisance species (ANS) is a nonindigenous species that threatens the diversity or abundance of native species or the ecological stability of infested waters, or commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activities dependent on such waters. See 16 U.S.C. § 4702(1) (2010).

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<sup>1</sup> State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources. “Order of the State of Wisconsin Natural Resources Board Repealing and Recreating Rules”. <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/fish/fishingtournaments/FH-22-06A-10-3-2008.pdf>

As a result of international commerce, travel and local practices, ANS have been introduced throughout the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins. These two basins are connected by man-made channels that, in the past, exhibited poor water quality, which was an impediment to the transfer of organisms between the basins. Now that water quality has improved, these canals allow the transfer of both indigenous and nonindigenous invasive species.

USACE is conducting a comprehensive analysis of ANS controls and will analyze the effects each ANS control or combination of ANS controls may have on current uses of: i) the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS), the only known continuous aquatic pathway between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins; and ii) other aquatic pathways between these basins.

Following the *Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resource Implementation Studies*, Water Resource Council, March 10, 1983, USACE will:

- Inventory current and forecast future conditions within the study area;
- Identify aquatic pathways that may exist between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins;
- Inventory current and future potential aquatic nuisance species;
- Analyze possible ANS controls to prevent ANS transfer, to include hydrologic separation of the basins;
- Analyze the impacts each ANS control may have on significant natural resources and existing and forecasted uses of the lakes and waterways within the study area; and
- Recommend a plan to prevent ANS transfer between the basins. If necessary, the plan will include mitigation measures for impacted waterway uses and significant natural resources.

Significant issues associated with GLMRIS may include, but are not limited to:

- Significant natural resources such as ecosystems and threatened and endangered species;
- Commercial and recreational fisheries;
- Current recreational uses of the lakes and waterways;
- ANS effects on water users;
- Effects of potential ANS controls on current waterway uses such as flood risk management, commercial and recreational navigation, recreation, water supply, hydropower and conveyance of effluent from wastewater treatment plants and other industries; and
- Statutory and legal responsibilities relative to the lakes and waterways.

### **III. Tournament Boundaries and Governance**

Figure 1 shows the Great Lakes. For this analysis, only American waters of the Great Lakes were considered. Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, and Lake Erie fall under the jurisdiction of more than one state. For example, the majority of Lake Michigan is under the jurisdiction of either Wisconsin (west) or Michigan (east), with a small portion under Illinois's jurisdiction (the southwest portion of the lake), and an even smaller portion is Indiana's jurisdiction (the very southern tip of the lake). The lakes' borders were determined by collaboration between the U.S. Federal Government, applicable state governments, and Canada.



**Figure 1. Great Lakes Map**  
*Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

For fishing contests held on the Great Lakes, a tournament's boundaries are typically limited to the waters of the state in which the tournament is held. For fishing events held on the Ohio and Upper Mississippi Rivers, these state boundaries do not apply and most states have reciprocity with regard to fishing licenses and other fishing regulations from bordering states. In most tournaments, anglers are required to have global positioning systems (GPS) tracking systems on their boats to ensure they stay within the tournament boundaries.

Specific criteria for fishing tournaments are available on a state-by-state basis. These are often state statutes used to regulate permitting associated with the tournaments. Criteria such as the number of participants, number of boats, and prize value are used to determine if each fishing tournament requires a permit from the state government.<sup>2</sup> Tournament fishing is regulated by each state's Department of Natural Resources (or equivalent - in New York it is the Department of Environmental Conservation).

State governments require the purchase of tournament permits in order to cover the cost of the fishing tournament programs and other administrative tasks. Permitting by state governments also serves as a limiting factor to the number of tournaments. Tournaments may be limited by a state in order to prevent over-fishing on a particular water-body or of a particular fishery, to maintain the viability of the fishery or water-body, and prevent over-crowding for non-

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<sup>2</sup> These are permits obtained by the tournament organizer for the tournament as a whole. Each angler is also required to obtain a state fishing license for the state in which the tournament takes place.

tournament anglers. In the Great Lakes states<sup>3</sup> as well as states bordering the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, fishing tournaments are often prohibited on holiday weekends and on the opening days of popular fishing seasons. As part of the permitting process, some states require tournament organizers describe how a tournament will be beneficial to the local economy and how harm to the fishery resource will be avoided.

General tournament permitting regulations are maintained by state governments, but each tournament is regulated by its own set of rules. The general elements covered in the tournament rules include:

- Entry fees, application procedures and deadlines, and eligibility
- Tournament dates, times, and allowable fishing hours
- Bad weather rules, contingency procedures, and emergency procedures
- Tournament fishing boundaries
- Team structures, including definitions of different competition categories
- Boat size restrictions
- Equipment descriptions (rod and lines, lures, engines, live wells<sup>4</sup>, etc.)
- Limitations on number of fish caught (generally based on species) and rules for catch-and-release, catch-and-hold, and other restrictions
- Fish weigh-in or measurement procedures
- Points calculation, winner determination, tie-breaking procedure, and awarding prizes
- Sportsmanship, misconduct, and disqualification rules

#### **IV. General Tournament Formats and Characteristics**

Fishing tournaments are usually held for the purpose of competing and winning prizes. Some tournaments also serve as fundraisers for local charities, where proceeds are donated rather than given to the tournament winner as a prize. Some fishing tournaments are organized locally by fishing clubs, private businesses (e.g. resorts, sporting goods stores), and local government organizations (e.g. chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus).<sup>5</sup> Other tournaments are organized by national organizations as part of a nationwide or regional series of tournaments. In the Great Lakes states, tournaments are held at all times of the year, on open water and on ice. In states bordering the Ohio and Upper Mississippi Rivers, tournaments typically occur in early spring (March or April) through fall (September or October).

There are several formats used for tournament fishing. For some tournaments, fish are held in live wells by anglers, brought to a central location at the end of the fishing day to be weighed, and subsequently released; the heaviest total weight wins. In many catch-and-release tournaments, fish are measured boat-side by a witness. The witness may be a fishing partner in

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<sup>3</sup> For this analysis, “Great Lakes states” refers to the U.S. states which border the Great Lakes, specifically: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York.

<sup>4</sup> A live well is a container designed to hold live fish on a boat. It is a small tank incorporated in the boat with an aerator and water pump to keep fish alive during tournament fishing.

<sup>5</sup> State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources. “Contemplating Competition, Do fishing tournaments fit on Wisconsin waters?”. <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/wnrmag/html/stories/2006/jun06/fishcon.htm>

the same boat or a tournament official summoned to the angler's boat. Each fish is released immediately after it is measured and the longest total length wins. In other catch-and-release tournaments, anglers measure their own fish with a tournament-provided ruler and document their catch with a digital camera. Other tournaments award prizes for the single largest fish caught. In other tournament types, fish are harvested and displayed, kept by anglers for their use, or the fish is donated to local charities.<sup>6</sup>

Some tournaments are events put on over one day or one weekend annually, while other tournaments are structured more like derbies, where anglers fish and record their catch with a derby official over the course of a season and the largest recorded fish at the end of the timeframe wins a prize. Still other tournaments are formatted as "trails" or series of tournaments. A tournament "trail" is usually comprised of several individual tournament events over the course of one fishing season. Anglers (or teams of anglers, as applicable) must compete in a minimum number of tournaments which are defined as part of the tournament trail to be eligible for trail prizes. Overall winners of the tournament trail are determined by their cumulative performance in the individual events over the course of the fishing season. For all tournament types, winners are determined and prizes awarded by the greatest weight, length, or number of fish caught. Prizes are typically monetary awards or merchandise furnished by tournament sponsors and tournament fees.

Tournaments often have different levels of competition based on the seriousness and competitiveness of the angler, the cost of participating in the tournament, the strictness of the rules, and the size of the prize or payout. These divisions also provide limits on the number of fish that can be harvested. "Recreational", "open", or "amateur" divisions of fishing tournaments are typically for novice or recreational fishermen, have the most relaxed rules, the smallest entry fee, and the lowest prize earning potential. Professional divisions are comprised of the most competitive anglers competing for the largest prizes. Often, professional division entrants are licensed boat captains, fishing guides, or commercial fishermen, who are required to enter themselves as "professionals" in fishing competitions. Many smaller, local tournaments do not separate tournaments into different divisions, but may have a rule declaring whether "professional" fishermen are allowed to compete. In some tournaments, pro-fishermen are required to be paired with a co-angler. Co-anglers either enter the tournament independently and are paired with pro-anglers or are partners with the pro-anglers and are exchanged between teams based on a random drawing. Co-anglers can be amateur fishermen who compete in a lower division of the tournament than the professionals or they can be dedicated observers who do not compete in any level of the tournament. The purpose of a co-angler is to observe pro-anglers, ensure rules are being followed, and to record details of the catch on official tournament score sheets.

Most non-ice fishing tournaments which occur on the Great Lakes, Ohio River, and Upper Mississippi River involve fishing from a boat, rather than fishing from shore. As such, most tournament rules indicate that more than one angler must be in each boat for safety reasons. In some tournaments, anglers may fish from the same boat, but tournament results are based on

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

individual scores. Another tournament type is a team format where groups compete from the same boat and the total scores of each boat determines the winning team.

Many tournaments organized by local fishing groups are small events geared to interest anglers only. Other types of fishing events incorporate a festival-like atmosphere including non-fishing related activities to attract family members or other spectators not involved in fishing.<sup>7</sup> These types of tournaments typically attract larger crowds, which may bring in more revenue for host organizations. The popularity of a fishing tournament is dependent on the type of atmosphere perceived by both fishermen and non-fishermen spectators, as well as the level of advertising or media coverage. Local tournaments with small levels of participation and few spectators may only be advertised through a flier at the local sporting goods store. On the other hand, larger tournament events or series of events may be advertised on websites, through tournament sponsors, and may be broadcast via regional or national television networks, depending on the scale of tournament.

Television broadcasts of fishing events have increased in number and in audience popularity with the recent rise of cable and satellite television stations which are dedicated to outdoor activities. Some tournaments are broadcast on regional television stations, while some events have nation-wide television coverage. Using television to increase the viewing audience increases interest in tournament fishing which likely creates larger sponsorship interest and payouts and leads to an increase in value in the overall tournament. For example, the Forrest L. Woods (FLW) fishing organization hosts many tournaments annually and includes sponsors such as Wal-Mart, the US National Guard, and Everstart. As part of its tournament coverage, FLW hosts a weekly television program which is broadcast in more than 75 million homes in the US and Canada, and over 429 million homes in Europe, Africa, and Asia.<sup>8</sup>

## **V. Fishing Tournaments by Great Lake**

Some states in the Great Lakes region have detailed information available regarding tournament fishing. For example, the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conducted several studies of fishing tournaments, and has a large online database of tournaments. According to one such study, permitted tournament fishing in Wisconsin is only mildly popular; 17 percent of surveyed anglers participated in some kind of fishing tournament in 2010.<sup>9</sup> In Wisconsin, fisheries biologists estimate that there are between 350 and 400 permitted tournaments each year, throughout the state, not exclusive to the Great Lakes.<sup>9</sup> However, small fishing events do not require permits and fisheries biologists estimate there are a total of 600 to 700 fishing tournaments each year in Wisconsin (including both permitted and non-permitted events).<sup>10</sup> This implies that approximately 42 percent of tournaments in the region were events which were small enough to not require permits. Wisconsin DNR also estimates that there are 600 to 700

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<sup>7</sup> O'Keefe, Daniel M. and Steven R. Miller. Michigan Sea Grant. "2009 Lake Michigan Tournament Fishing Study". January 2011. <http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/downloads/fisheries/11-201-Lk-MI-Tournament-Fishing-Study.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> FLW Outdoors. <http://www.collegefishing.com/tournament/versus.cfm>

<sup>9</sup> State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources. "Public Awareness of, Participation in, and Opinions about Fishing Tournaments in Wisconsin". <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/publications/PUB-SS-1064-2010.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources. "Contemplating Competition, Do fishing tournaments fit on Wisconsin waters?". <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/wnrmag/html/stories/2006/jun06/fishcon.htm>

permitted and non-permitted tournaments each year in Minnesota and Michigan, but five to six times less in states such as Illinois and Indiana.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reports that the popularity of fishing tournaments has increased in the past few years and between 450 and 600 fishing tournaments now occur annually in the state.<sup>11</sup>

Some states have limited information available regarding fishing tournaments. Given the vast number of tournaments which occur on the Great Lakes and the varying information available, this analysis provides only a snapshot of the fishing tournaments which take place on the Great Lakes. This section attempts to illustrate the details of the various types of tournaments which occur on the Great Lakes by examining a sample of tournaments. Any statistics provided were found readily available from some states' DNR (or equivalent) or from tournament publications. Along the same lines, if statistics regarding tournament fishing were not readily available from an appropriate source, no attempt was made to calculate or quantify additional findings. The tournaments presented in this report should not be considered a statistically representative sample and summary statistics of these tournaments would not be representative of all tournaments in the region. The level of research required to calculate and analyze meaningful statistics related to fishing tournaments is beyond the scope of this report. The focus of this effort is to provide a qualitative assessment of the characteristics of fishing tournaments to serve as a baseline against which to compare future effects. In the section below, tournaments are presented based on the Great Lake in which they occur.

## **A. Lake Superior**

Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan border Lake Superior. Fisheries harvested during tournaments on Lake Superior include lake trout, brown trout, coho salmon, King (Chinook) salmon, bass, and walleye. Most tournaments on Lake Superior occur during the summer months (May through September).

### **1. Bay Mills Invitational**

One such tournament that occurs on Lake Superior is the Anglers Insight Marketing (AIM) Pro Walleye Series™ Bay Mills Invitational. The 2011 tournament marked the second annual occurrence of this tournament. The Bay Mills Invitational took place from June 2 through June 4, 2011 at the Bay Mills Casino in Brimley, Michigan. The AIM Pro Walleye Series™ is a series of four walleye fishing tournaments which occur annually. Anglers take part in any or all of the four events, with the overall winner (the “Angler of the Year”) determined by overall points standings at the last tournament of the year. The Bay Mills Invitational is the only event in the Pro Walleye Series™ which takes place on the Great Lakes.<sup>12</sup>

The 2011 Bay Mills Invitational had 31 competitors while the 2010 tournament had 43 entrants. The total payout for the event in 2011 was \$96,500, and each pro angler received at least \$300 in prizes. The first prize angler won \$40,000 and the remaining payouts were to the rest of the top sixteen pro anglers according to a payout schedule. The Bay Mills Invitational is an invitation-

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<sup>11</sup> State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources. Fishing Tournament Information. <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/tournaments/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> Anglers Insight Marketing (AIM) Fishing tournaments. <http://www.aimfishing.com/>

only professional fishing tournament. Each professional angler must pay a \$1,500 entry fee to compete. Tournament fishing begins each day at the Bay Mills Casino, located off of Brimley Bay in Michigan. Anglers can fish in Brimley Bay, Lake Superior, or the nearby St. Mary's River. Daily weigh-in occurs at 4:30 PM at the Bay Mills Casino. The tournament utilizes artificial bait only and is a walleye-only tournament. Anglers in AIM tournaments utilize the AIM Catch-Record-Release™ (CRR™) format. In CRR™, anglers measure each walleye caught on an official AIM ruler and take a digital photograph, record the length of each walleye on the official scorecard, and then immediately release the live fish. No fish are brought to the weigh-in stage, and each angler selects the seven largest walleyes to be tallied for his daily weight (the length of each walleye is converted to pounds and ounces using a standardized formula). This CRR™ method reduces tournament-related fish mortality.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. Lake Superior Salmon Classic**

The City of Silver Bay, Minnesota hosts the annual Lake Superior Salmon Classic Fishing Tournament (LSSC). This is an example of a smaller, locally-supported tournament which is not part of a national tournament trail and typically has less stringent rules, smaller entry fees, and lower prize amounts. The 2012 tournament is scheduled for July 21-22, 2012 and the 2011 event on July 16 and 17 marked the 11<sup>th</sup> annual occurrence of this tournament.<sup>14</sup> According to permit information from Minnesota DNR, there are an estimated 200 anglers and 100 boats expected to enter the 2012 tournament.<sup>15</sup> Competitors must purchase a \$20 ticket to enter the tournament and there are three divisions: coho salmon, King salmon, and lake trout. Only fish of these species will be counted in tournament standings. Raffle tickets are also available. Proceeds from the tournament and raffle benefit the Silver Bay Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO). Fishing is allowed from 4:00 AM to 6:00 PM on the first day of the tournament and from 4:00 AM to 2:00 PM on the second day. All tournament boats must begin the tournament at the Silver Bay Marina. Each angler can enter one fish in each division (King, coho, and lake trout), and the heaviest fish wins. Anglers bring their fish to be weighed-in at any point during the tournament and can then replace their entered fish with a heavier fish at any time during the tournament hours. In the event of a tie, the fish that was weighed-in first will be the winner. The anglers to catch the top five fish in each division win cash prizes and merchandise, with a portion of entry fees benefitting the Silver Bay PTSO.<sup>14</sup>

### **B. Lake Michigan**

Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan border Lake Michigan. Most tournaments on Lake Michigan occur during April through September, but there are some ice-fishing tournaments during the winter, particularly December through February. Fishing contests in the winter and spring/early summer tend to focus on trout, particularly rainbow and brown trout. Tournaments on Lake Michigan in the summer and fall (June through September) harvest Chinook and coho salmon, brown trout, rainbow trout, lake trout, brook trout, bass and yellow perch. A cursory

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Silver Bay Marina Fish Tournament, Lake Superior Salmon Classic. <http://www.silverbay.com/lsscfc.htm>

<sup>15</sup> State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources. 2012 Fishing Tournament List. As of March 29, 2012. <http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/recreation/fishing/tournaments/tourneylest.pdf>

analysis of fishing tournaments suggests that July is the most popular month for tournaments to be held.

### **1. Dream Weaver Charity Tournament**

While many fishing tournaments take place solely for the purpose of earning money and prizes, some serve as charitable fundraisers. The Dreamweaver Charity Tournament took place July 23, 2011 at Muskegon, Michigan on Lake Michigan as an annual fundraiser for the Benefits4Kids organization. The tournament is limited to 60 boats. For the 2011 tournament, entrants paid \$75 each to register. Fishing is open on any port on Lake Michigan. Fishing begins at 5:00 AM and entrants must be in line for weigh-in at Muskegon by 1:00 PM. There is a Michigan DNR limit of three anglers per boat and nine fishing rods per boat in the water at any one time (maximum of three rods per angler). Lures are limited to those provided in the “lure pack” by tournament organizers. Anglers fish for the largest fish and are allowed to weigh-in up to five fish of any of the following species: King salmon, coho salmon, steelhead trout, brown trout, and lake trout. Each fish weighed-in is worth 10 points, plus one additional point per pound of each fish. The anglers with the top-10 scores are rewarded with raffle tickets (1<sup>st</sup> place wins 20 tickets, 2<sup>nd</sup> place wins 18 tickets, 3<sup>rd</sup> place wins 16 tickets, and etc.) which are good for prizes donated by tournament sponsors. The angler who catches the single heaviest fish of the tournament will also be awarded with a cash prize.<sup>16</sup> In the 2010 Dreamweaver Charity Tournament, 58 boats fished, and \$9,600 was raised for Benefits4Kids.

### **2. Tight Lines for Troops**

Another charity fishing event is the Tight Lines for Troops fishing tournament. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Tournament was scheduled for May 18-19, 2012 in Manistee, Michigan, on Lake Michigan. In this tournament, veterans fish for free and local charter operators and other businesses associated with fishing in the area donate their time and equipment to host the event. Non-veteran fishermen also fish in a traditional tournament event where prizes are available and all proceeds benefit disabled veterans. Tournament anglers fish for salmon and prizes are awarded based on the heaviest fish caught in the various divisions.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. Hoosier Coho Club Events**

The Indiana portion of Lake Michigan is the smallest of the four states which border the lake at 1 percent of the lake area and 43 miles of shoreline. Most of the area is highly industrialized, except for Dunes National Lakeshore and the Indiana Dunes State Park.<sup>18</sup>

In Indiana, the Hoosier Coho Club hosts a few annual fishing tournaments at Michigan City, Indiana on Lake Michigan. The 2011 Hoosier Coho Club Pro-Am Tournament was held on April 23, 2011 and there were 14 entrants in the pro division and 17 in the amateur division. The Club also held the Hoosier Coho Classic event on April 29-30, 2011. There were 29 competitors in the

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<sup>16</sup> Dreamweaver Charity Tournament, on “Michigan Sportsman”. <http://www.michigan-sportsman.com/forum/showthread.php?t=362754>

<sup>17</sup> Tight Lines for Troops. <http://www.tightlinesfortroops.com/>

<sup>18</sup> State of Indiana, Department of Natural Resources. Lake Michigan Fishing. <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/3625.htm>

Pro Division, 19 anglers in the Amateur Division, and 18 anglers in the vessel length 24-feet and below category. The entry fees for the 2011 event were \$425 for the Pro Division, \$225 for the Amateur Division, and \$100 for the 24-feet and under category. The first-place prizes for those categories are \$7,500, \$2,500, and \$1,250, respectively.

The Hoosier Coho Club also hosts the annual Salmon Slam contest which occurred on September 17, 2011. Anglers are limited to 10-fish in the 1-day tournament, and the winner receives a \$500 cash prize for the largest combined catch, and there is a contest for the single largest fish caught during the competition. The Club also hosts a Powder Puff Derby for female anglers. This derby was on August 21, 2011 and awards prizes based on the single largest fish caught by each angler. The top angler won \$200, and prizes are awarded for the top 10 finishers. There were 31 competitors in the 2011 Powder Puff Derby.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hoosier Coho Club. <http://www.hoosiercohoclub.org/home.html>

#### **4. Lake Michigan Tournament Trail**

The Lake Michigan Tournament Trail is a series of fishing tournaments which take place from May through September at various locations on Lake Michigan. Table 1 shows the tournaments scheduled for the 2012 Lake Michigan Tournament Trail, as well as their scheduled dates and locations. The 2011 Tournament Trail was comprised of the same tournaments. Figure 2 shows a map of all the tournament locations.

**Table 1. Lake Michigan Tournament Trail, 2012 Tournaments**

<b>Date (2012)</b>	<b>Tournament Name</b>	<b>Location</b>
May 5-6	Hoosier Coho Club Classic	Michigan City, IN
May 11-12	SW MI Steelheaders' Summer Challenge	St. Joseph, MI
May 25-27	Onekama Marine Memorial Weekend Shake Down	Onekama, MI
June 1-3	Offshore Challenge	Grand Haven, MI
June 8-10	Sheboygan Salmon Cup	Sheboygan, WI
June 22-24	MCSFA Budweiser Pro/Am	Manistee, MI
July 7-8	Miesfeld's Super Salmon Weekend	Sheboygan, WI
July 14-15	Salmon Shoot Out	Muskegon, MI
July 19-22	Ludington Offshore Classic	Ludington, MI
July 25-29	Salmon Splash Tournament Week	Manistee, MI
August 3-5	Big Red Classic	Holland, MI
August 11-12	Waypoint Big Lake Classic	Saugatuck, MI
August 17-19	Sturgeon Bay Offshore Challenge	Sturgeon Bay, WI
August 24-26	Benzie Fishing Frenzie	Frankfort, MI
August 31 – Sept 2	Big Jon Salmon Classic	Traverse City, MI

Source: Tournament Trail/333 Championship Series, <http://www.tournamenttrail.net/2012-dates/>



Figure 2. Lake Michigan Tournament Trail fishing tournament locations, 2012

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-generated map. Tournament locations from: <http://www.tournamenttrail.net/2012-dates/>

Each tournament is an independent, local event sponsored and hosted by local organizations. So anglers can compete in a single event or can enter several tournaments in the series and use their combined scores to compete in the 333 Championship Series. The 333 Championship Series combines anglers' scores from their Tournament Trail events to a total at the end of the season, and prizes are awarded to the team with the highest cumulative score. Teams compete in the local tournaments for prizes and catch additional fish during the tournaments for the 333 Championship which are scored using different criteria. 333 Championship winners are eligible for large cash prizes (up to \$10,000 for the overall winner) as well as merchandise prizes provided by sponsors. In 2011, almost 1,200 teams participated in all Lake Michigan Tournament Trail fishing tournaments. Teams usually include between two and four anglers each, meaning that between 2,400 and 4,800 anglers participated in the tournaments in 2011.<sup>20</sup> These numbers do not account for teams which may have entered more than one tournament and may include double-counting.

The 333 Championship Series is a larger tournament event, and as of the 2011 fishing season, it began television broadcasts. The tournament developed a series called 333 TV which airs weekly

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<sup>20</sup> Lake Michigan Tournament Trail Series. <http://www.tournamenttrail.net/>

episodes during the fishing season on regional channels and episodes are syndicated on a national sports network, Legacy Broadcast Network. Tournament organizers formatted the show as a reality television series which follows fourteen teams through various tournaments on the trail. In order to facilitate the show, the tournament has added a level of competition called the 333 Broadcast Championship in which the contestants on the reality show participate. According to the 333 Series' website, the long term goals for the television show include increased sponsorship, better payouts for contestants, bigger audiences for bigger events, and nationwide top-level network coverage of fishing events.<sup>21</sup>

### **C. Lake Huron**

Lake Huron is bordered by Michigan. Lake Huron fisheries include King salmon, coho salmon, Atlantic salmon, steelhead, lake trout, brown trout, bass, and walleye. Most tournament fisheries in Lake Huron target walleye in the Saginaw Bay area of Michigan during the summer months.

#### **1. Harbor Beach Can-2-Can Salmon-Trout Fishing**

In Michigan, the Thumb Area Steelheaders group hosts the Harbor Beach Can-2-Can Salmon-Trout Fishing Tournament, sponsored by the Harbor Beach, Michigan Parks and Recreation Department. The Thumb Area chapter of the Steelheaders is a non-profit group dedicated to protecting, maintaining, and improving the Lake Huron sport fishery. Work by the group includes raising salmon and trout fingerlings and purchasing pens for fish.

In 2011, the event began at 5:00 AM on May 14<sup>th</sup> and all boats were to return to the harbor by 1:00 PM. The tournament begins with an official boat check, and anglers can begin fishing as soon as their boat has been cleared by tournament officials. The entry fee for the tournament is \$250 per person; 90 percent of collected fees are used for tournament prizes and the remaining 10 percent of proceeds go to the Thumb Area Steelheaders. Of the 90 percent of funds allocated for prizes, 50 percent goes to the top angler, 20 percent to second place, 15 percent to third place, 10 percent to fourth place, and 5 percent to fifth place. Tournament sponsors also provide additional cash or merchandise prizes and the anglers who catch the four largest fish of the tournament each receive \$250. Each vessel is limited to a maximum of 12 fishing rods and only salmon or trout species will be weighed for tournament standings. Upon returning to the harbor, fish are weighed and tagged by officials who record the total weight of the catch and weight of the largest single fish for each angler. The tournament is limited to Michigan waters on Lake Huron between the Light House Park Green Can and the Forestville Water Tower Can.<sup>22</sup>

#### **2. Michigan Walleye Tour**

The Saginaw Bay Walleye Club, Inc. hosts the annual "Michigan Walleye Tour". The Walleye Tour consists of five weekend fishing tournaments (four qualifying events and one state championship) between April and September, two of which take place on Lake Huron. In the 2011 Walleye Tour, the Lund/Mercury Qualifier was held June 11-12 in Linwood, Michigan on Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron, and the Lund/Mercury Qualifier was held July 16-17 in East

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<sup>21</sup> Lake Michigan Tournament Trail Series, "The Vision". <http://www.tournamenttrail.net/333-tv/the-%e2%80%9cvision%e2%80%9d/>

<sup>22</sup> Harbor Beach Can-2-Can Salmon-Trout Fishing Tournament. <http://hbcan2can.com/>

Tawas/Tawas City, Michigan on Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron. In both of these tournaments, entrants compete in teams of two anglers over the two-day tournament. In the 2011 Linwood tournament, there were 36 teams in the competition which caught a combined total of 328 walleye, or 775 pounds of fish. In the 2011 Tawas City tournament, there were 35 teams in the competition with 334 total walleye or 1,100 pounds caught. For the tournament qualifying events (which includes the Linwood and Tawas City events), cash prizes are given to the top ten teams, with the first place team receiving \$8,000, 2<sup>nd</sup> place \$4,000, and third place \$1,800. Teams can also win a \$200 “Cool Under Pressure Award” for advancing the most from day one to day two of the tournament. The “Team of the Year” based on the four qualifying events wins a \$2,000 cash prize. At the State Championship event, there is up to \$45,000 available in cash and prizes. Anglers must be a member of the Saginaw Bay Walleye Club, and have paid the current \$25 registration fee in order to compete in the tournaments. Anglers are limited to five walleye per team at the weigh-in. All fish caught during the tournament and retained for the weigh-in must be kept in an aerated live well or cooler to keep fish alive so they can be released after weigh-in. There is a penalty for dead fish of 0.25 pounds per dead fish. Tournament winners are determined based on the largest overall weight of all the fish.<sup>23</sup>

### **3. Annual Walleye Bonanza**

The Sterling Sportsmen Association also holds an annual walleye tournament on Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron. The 2011 event was the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Walleye Bonanza and was held August 6, 2011. The tournament is held from 6:30 AM to 2:30 PM beginning and ending at the Eagle Bay Marina in Standish, Michigan. Anglers pay \$20 per person and must compete in teams of at least two anglers per boat. There is no maximum limit on the number of anglers per boat, but each person is limited to three fishing lines. Teams submit their largest five walleye to be weighed and prizes are awarded based on the largest total weight. The prize for the top team is at least \$1,000 depending on the number of entrants. Event organizers expected between 50 and 100 boats for the 2011 tournament. Proceeds from the tournament go toward the operating costs of the Sterling Sportsmen Association as well as the scholarship fund and hunting safety courses. This tournament is designated as an “all-amateur event” and professional fishermen were asked not to compete.<sup>24</sup>

### **4. Au Gres Fireman’s Walleye Tournament**

Similar walleye tournaments are held throughout the Saginaw Bay region during the summer. On June 18, 2011, there was the Au Gres Fireman’s Walleye Tournament. The 2011 event had 51 boats enter. The top angler won \$1,000 for the top five walleye. Entrance fees are \$25 per angler for the one-day event.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Saginaw Bay Walleye Club, Inc., Michigan Walleye Tour. <http://www.michiganwalleyetour.com/>

<sup>24</sup> The Arenac County Independent, “11<sup>th</sup> Annual Walleye Bonanza to be held Aug. 6”. July 22, 2011. [http://www.arenacindependent.com/detail/89361.html?content\\_source=&category\\_id=1&search\\_filter=&list\\_type=&order\\_by=&order\\_sort=&content\\_class=1&sub\\_type=&town\\_id=8](http://www.arenacindependent.com/detail/89361.html?content_source=&category_id=1&search_filter=&list_type=&order_by=&order_sort=&content_class=1&sub_type=&town_id=8)

<sup>25</sup> Saginaw Bay Area Up To-date Fishing Report Forum Index – Fishing Tournament Board. Au Gres Fireman Tournament. <http://www.saginawbay.com/appiesboard/viewtopic.php?t=7903>

## **D. Lake Erie**

Lake Erie is bordered by Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. Tournament fisheries on Lake Erie include bass, trout, walleye, perch, salmon, and steelhead. The majority of these tournaments occur in the summer months; however ice fishing is available on Lake Erie during the winter.

### **1. Tom Morrison Steelhead Catch and Release**

In Erie, Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Steelhead Association holds an annual tournament. The Tom Morrison Steelhead Catch and Release Tournament was held March 26, 2011. The tournament is an informal format, where teams of two or more catch steelhead, record the fish length and time caught, and immediately return the fish to the water alive and uninjured. The tournament begins at sun-up and ends at 5 PM. The tournament is only open to members of the Steelhead Association and registration is not required.<sup>26</sup>

### **2. Bassmaster Weekend Series**

The American Bass Anglers (ABA) hosts one of its annual Bassmaster Weekend Series tournaments on Lake Erie. The Bassmaster Weekend Series is an example of a large, national fishing series which takes place on the Great Lakes. The 2012 Lake Erie event is scheduled for August 25-26, 2012 and begins at the Sandusky/Shelby Street Ramp in Sandusky, Ohio. The Lake Erie tournament is part of the Ohio Division of the American Bass Anglers Bassmaster Weekend Series. The Bassmaster Weekend Series tournaments are comprised of 20 different divisions, most of which are in the southeastern United States. There are 105 individual tournament events scheduled for 2012 from January through November. The Lake Erie ABA tournament is a two-day tournament event. There is only one two-day event per division and the rest of the events are one-day tournaments. Some of the tournaments in the Bassmaster Series are featured on the national television network, World Fishing Network. These broadcasts have increased the audience and interest in the tournaments which has increased the level of participation, sponsorships, and payouts.

Bassmaster Weekend Series tournaments are open to members of Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S) and ABA who are age 16 and older. Professional anglers who have fished two or more tournaments with an entry fee of more than \$1,500 in the previous six months are excluded from participating in the Weekend Series tournaments. The entry fee for the 2012 Lake Erie Weekend Series Tournament is \$300 per angler and \$150 per co-angler. The top 20 percent of anglers receive cash prizes with first place angler receiving up to \$16,000 including cash prizes and other sponsor awards. The top 40 boaters and co-anglers (by points) in each divisional two-day qualifier advance to the regional qualifier event. There are four regional qualifying events held per year. The regional qualifier for the Ohio Division is scheduled for October 19-20, 2012 at Smith Mountain, Virginia. The top 50 anglers in each regional qualifier advance to the Bassmaster Weekend Series Championship. The Series Championship is scheduled for November 4-10, 2012 in Jasper, Texas. The winner of the Series Championship wins \$205,000

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<sup>26</sup> PA Steelhead Association, Tom Morrison Steelhead Catch and Release Tournament. <http://pasteelhead.com/Default.aspx?pageId=942837>

in cash and sponsorship prizes and is automatically eligible for the next year's Series Championship.<sup>27</sup>

National tournament series such as the ABA Bassmaster Weekend Series tournaments are subject to much more stringent rules than smaller, locally-organized fishing events. Some of the rules include:

- Tournament waters are off-limits up to 14 days prior to competitions
- Anglers are prohibited from using their cell phones or VHF radios for the purpose of locating fish during competitions
- Cell phones can only be used if the phone is on speaker mode so the co-angler can hear the conversation and ensure that fishing locations are not being exchanged
- A designated tournament official must be granted access to competitors' boats and cell phones during the competition
- Anglers may be subjected to polygraph tests at the discretion of the tournament director
- Outboard motors cannot exceed 250 horsepower
- Competitors agree to have their boats subjected to an inspection by tournament officials to verify that boats and motors are consistent with Coast Guard, State, and tournament regulations
- Changing or altering standard factory parts of an engine to increase the horsepower over the factory horsepower is prohibited
- Fishing while standing on the outboard motor or boat seats is not allowed
- An electric trolling motor may be used for slow maneuvering, but trolling is prohibited as a method of fishing
- Boaters will fish from the front deck and co-anglers will fish from the back deck, no exceptions
- Co-anglers are prohibited from operating the boat except in emergencies and for loading and un-loading from trailers
- Tournament standings, awards, and final winners are determined by the pounds-and-hundredths weight of each competitor's catch during the competition days of the tournament
- Only largemouth, smallmouth, spotted, or redeye bass will be counted
- Boaters are limited to five fish per tournament day and co-anglers are limited to three fish<sup>27</sup>

### **3. Erie Pennsylvania Sport Fishing Association, Spring Trout Challenge**

The Erie Pennsylvania Sport Fishing Association (EPSFA) has hosted several annual fishing tournaments on Lake Erie since 2006. In 2011 the EPSFA hosted the Spring Trout Challenge, the Walleye Challenge, the Summer Slam, the Fall Trout Challenge, the Team of the Year, and the Big Fish Derby. The 2011 Spring Trout Challenge was scheduled for April 17, but the tournament was canceled due to poor weather. The 2010 Spring Trout Challenge was held April 18, 2010 and 19 teams participated in the event. Competitors must pay a \$75 entry fee to participate in this one-day tournament which occurred from 7:30 AM to 2:30 PM. A maximum

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<sup>27</sup> American Bass Anglers. <http://www.americanbassanglers.com/>

of 6 fish at least 15 inches in length per angler are allowed to be weighed in and allowable species are steelhead, brown trout, palamino, and salmon. Each fish brought to the weigh-in receives 10 points plus 1 point per pound and winning team will be determined based on the highest number of points. Cash prizes are awarded to the winning teams and 90 percent of entry fees are returned to entrants as prize money. Ten percent of entry fees are retained by the EPSFA for tournament administration fees. Fishing is only permitted in the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie. A “big fish” award is also up for grabs for an additional \$10 entry fee. All contestants must fish from a boat, but there are no restrictions on the size of the boat. Each team must consist of at least two participants and each boat (team) is limited to 6 rods in the water, with 2 lures per rod.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. EPSFA Walleye Challenge**

The EPSFA 2011 Walleye Challenge was held June 18, 2011 from 6:00 AM until 2:00 PM. Thirty-five teams participated in the 2011 tournament. Competitors must pay a \$150 entry fee to participate in the one-day tournament. A maximum of 9 walleye at least 18-inches in length can be weighed in for tournament points. Each boat can fish at most eight rods, however, only two rods per angler are allowed, and each rod can use two lures. Points per fish and cash prizes are determined in the same manner as for the EPSFA Trout tournament. The angler who catches the largest walleye will also receive a trophy and a \$75 cash prize. For this walleye tournament, each boat must be at least 16-feet in length and all participants must fish from a boat. All boats must launch from and fish in Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie; any fish caught outside of Pennsylvania boundaries will be disqualified.<sup>28</sup>

#### **5. EPSFA Summer Slam**

The 2011 EPSFA Summer Slam tournament occurred on August 6 and 7, 2011. Unlike the other EPSFA tournaments, the Summer Slam includes an Open Division and an Amateur Division. In the 2011 event, 22 teams competed in the Open Division and 32 teams in the Amateur Division. The entry fee is \$400 per boat in the Open Division and \$200 per boat in the Amateur Division. The fishing tournament takes place from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM over both fishing days; Amateur Division fishing ends at 1:30 PM on both days of the tournament. Fishing in both divisions is limited to the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie. Teams must be a minimum of two anglers, and there is no maximum team size, though each boat is limited to eight fishing rods in the Open Division and six in the Amateur Division with two lures per line allowed in both divisions. In the Open Division only, each team must provide an observer. Observers are exchanged between teams via drawing and will log each fish caught including time, estimated weight, species, lure used, and which angler caught the fish. Observers must stay with the catch until weigh-in in order to ensure the validity of the fish caught. Observers are not required in the Amateur Division, but a team member must log the catch information. In both divisions, boats must be at least 17-feet in length and all boats must be equipped with a tournament flag, GPS system, and VHF radio.<sup>28</sup>

According to Pennsylvania State rules, a maximum of 24 walleye and 20 trout can be kept per four-person team. Only the 12 best fish (with no more than 6 being steelhead) can be weighed-in

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<sup>28</sup> Erie Pennsylvania Sport Fish Association. <http://www.epsfa.com/>

for points, but each team may weigh-in up to 12 walleye if they are not weighing any trout. All fish must be at least 18-inches in length. This tournament does not allow culling; the first legal fish caught must be kept and fish cannot be swapped or returned to the water once caught in place of a larger fish. In the Amateur Division, no more than 18 walleye and 15 trout can be kept per 3-person team and the 8 best fish (no more than 4 steelhead) can be weighed-in for points. A team can weigh-in 8 walleye if they have no trout. The minimum length of 18 inches is the same for both divisions. Fish under 18-inches will be disqualified and will receive a 10-point penalty. Each legal fish will score 10 points plus one point per pound. The first place team in the Open Division will win \$10,000 in cash and merchandise and prize payouts will be given to the top-ten teams. Daily prizes will also be given for the largest fish of the day. The first place team in the Amateur Division will receive \$2,000 in cash and merchandise, and prizes will be given for the top-ten teams and additional daily prizes for the largest fish.<sup>29</sup>

According to the tournament rules, any captain or team member, excluding an observer, who is a licensed fishing charter boat captain or ex-fishing charter boat captain, fishing guide, commercial fisherman, currently represents a major fishing related product or who currently promotes a major fishing product whose sales may be increased by fishing this tournament will be required to enter the Open Division only. All others may enter the Amateur Division. Individuals, who possess a Coast Guard license but never used that for fishing related purposes, may enter the Amateur Division. Amateurs may enter the Open Division if they choose.<sup>29</sup>

## **6. EPSFA Fall Trout Challenge**

The EPSFA 2011 Fall Trout Challenge was held October 23, 2011. In the 2011 occurrence of this annual tournament, 14 teams participated; there were four three-man teams, nine two-man teams, and one one-man team. The rules for the Fall Trout Challenge are the same as for the Spring Trout Challenge.<sup>29</sup>

## **7. EPSFA Team of the Year**

The EPSFA “Team of the Year” is a challenge that rewards fishermen who participate in at least three of the four EPSFA annual fishing tournaments (Spring Trout Challenge, Walleye Challenge, Summer Slam, and Fall Trout Challenge). Teams must enter the “Team of the Year” Challenge before Walleye Challenge, and must submit an additional \$80 entry fee to be eligible for Team of the Year prizes. The winner is determined by combining anglers’ best scores from three out of the five possible tournament days and the winner is announced at the end of the Fall Trout Challenge. The winning team will receive four jackets, a trophy, and a cash prize. The top three teams are awarded cash prizes as a percentage of the Team of the Year entry fees, less the cost of the jackets and trophies. This is a team award, and at least two of the same EPSFA members must participate in the qualifying tournaments to be eligible for the Team of the Year Award.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Erie Pennsylvania Sport Fish Association. <http://www.epsfa.com/>

## **8. EPSFA Big Fish Derby**

The EPSFA also hosts an annual “Big Fish Derby” in both walleye and steelhead divisions for EPSFA members. The derby runs each year from the day after the Spring Trout Challenge until December 31<sup>st</sup> of that year. Competitors must submit an entry form and \$10 for each division to be eligible for the derby. Fish eligible for the derby will be taken only from the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie. Fish caught for other EPSFA tournaments are not eligible for the Big Fish Derby. All fish caught for the derby will be weighed in and verified at either Poor Richards or the East End Angler sporting goods stores in Erie, Pennsylvania. Each angler can re-submit a larger fish at any time during the derby, but only one walleye and one steelhead entry will be on the score board for each competitor at any time. The derby features a 90 percent payback for each division (walleye and steelhead) and the top three anglers, based on fish length, in each division will receive cash prizes. First place receives 50 percent of remaining entry fees, second place receives 30 percent, and third place 20 percent. Winners are determined and prizes awarded at the January monthly EPSFA meeting.<sup>29</sup>

## **9. Southtowns Walleye Tournament**

In the state of New York, the Southtowns Walleye Association of Western New York, Inc. began hosting an annual walleye tournament on Lake Erie in 1985. The tournament has grown to be one of the largest of its kind in North America. In 2010, the club gave over \$34,000 in cash and prizes. The Southtowns Walleye Association also sponsors the annual Lake Erie Eastern Basin Fishing Championship in August which is a charity benefit for the Roswell Park Cancer Institute.<sup>30</sup>

## **10. Annual Greater Niagara Basseye Celebrity Challenge**

On July 8, 2011, the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Greater Niagara Basseye Celebrity Challenge was held in Niagara, New York on Lake Erie as a fundraiser for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. This tournament pairs celebrities and anglers with professional fishing guides for this one-day catch and release tournament. More than 40 boats and 200 anglers and captains participated in the 2011 event for bass and walleye. Each boat contains two anglers and a celebrity (or three anglers) and one professional fishing guide and tries to catch as many fish as possible. Boat, bait, tackle, and food for competitors are donated by event sponsors. After the fishing day, the tournament concludes with an awards dinner and fundraiser. Anglers receive points based on the number of fish caught; a walleye is worth 100 points, a bass is worth 50 points, and a “BassEye” worth 150 points. Therefore, if an angler catches one bass and one walleye (a Basseye), the angler receives 300 points – 100 for the walleye, 50 for the bass, and 150 for the Basseye.<sup>31</sup>

## **E. Lake Ontario**

Lake Ontario is bordered by New York. Fisheries on Lake Ontario utilized for tournaments include walleye, salmon (King, coho, and Atlantic), brown trout, lake trout, silver fish, pike, perch, muskellunge (also known as muskie or musky), bass, and steelhead. Rainbow trout and

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<sup>30</sup> Southtowns Walleye Association of WNY Inc. <http://www.southtownswalleye.org/index.html>

<sup>31</sup> Greater Niagara Basseye Celebrity Challenge. <http://www.basseye.org/>

steelhead are generally considered to be the same species for tournament harvests. Similar to the other Great Lakes, the majority of fishing tournaments occur during the spring and summer months (April through September), but some small ice fishing tournaments do occur during the winter.

### **1. Sodus Point Bait and Tackle Shop Ice Fishing Derby**

At Sodus Point, New York on Lake Ontario, the Sodus Point Bait and Tackle Shop (also known as Warren's Hook, Line, and Sinker) sponsors and hosts an ice fishing derby and tournament. The derby occurs every weekend during ice fishing season. Anglers fish for pike and perch on alternating weekends, and the largest fish of the weekend wins a prize. For each weekend derby, there is a \$5 entry fee, and the winner receives \$25 worth of tackle.<sup>32</sup>

### **2. Sodus Point Ice Fishing Tournament**

The Sodus Point ice fishing tournament event took place on February 12-13, 2011. The 2012 Sodus Point Lodge Polar Ice Fishing Tournament is scheduled for February 25-26, 2012. There were 138 anglers who participated in the 2010 tournament. This tournament has an entry fee of \$10, with the possibility of winning thousands of dollars in prizes including trout and salmon charters. All fishing is done on Sodus Bay of Lake Ontario. Fishing begins at 6:00 AM and ends at 3:00 PM on Saturday, and 1:00 PM on Sunday. Anglers can catch pike, no less than 5 pounds, and perch, no less than 10 ounces. There is a daily weigh-in for the tournament, and daily and overall tournament winners will be chosen based on the overall weight of the catch. The winner of the Pike division wins \$500 and the winner of the perch division wins \$360, with the top five fishermen receiving trophies.<sup>32</sup>

### **3. Lake Ontario Pro-Am Series**

Lake Ontario is also home to the large Lake Ontario Pro-Am Series. This is a series of tournaments which take place at four different locations in New York State on the shore of Lake Ontario during the summer. The four fishing events occur in four different New York counties: Niagara, Orleans, Oswego, and Wayne. The tournament is restricted to the New York State waters of Lake Ontario. Tournaments of this magnitude have more strict rules than local or charitable tournaments.<sup>33</sup>

Anglers in the Lake Ontario Pro-Am compete in the Pro, Amateur, or Open Divisions. Any captain or team member, excluding observer, who is (or has been within the past 5 years) a licensed charter boat captain, fishing guide, or commercial fishermen, is required to enter the Pro Division. All others may enter the Amateur Division. Amateurs may enter the Pro Division if openings are available. Scores for the Pro-Am competition are calculated by adding 10 points per fish, then one point per pound. Anglers can participate in any or all events.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sodus Point Lodge, Sodus Point, New York. <http://www.asoduspointlodge.com/index.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Lake Ontario Pro-Am Series, New York State. <http://www.lakeontarioproam.net/>

#### **4. Lake Ontario Pro-Am Series Challenge Cup**

Teams can compete in any number of tournaments they wish. If teams compete in all four events, they are eligible for the Challenge Cup. The Lake Ontario Pro-Am Series Challenge Cup is designed to determine the most consistent fishermen on the lake. Contestants pay a separate entry fee (\$300 for Pros and \$200 for Amateurs) and commit their team for all four of the Pro-Am Tournaments. The Challenge Cup is divided into the Western Division comprised of the Orleans and Niagara Tournaments, and the Eastern Division which includes the Oswego and Wayne Tournaments. Each division will have a winner and the Challenge Cup will go to the Professional and Amateur teams compiling the highest number of points after all four tournaments. Points are determined based on the place each team finished in each tournament, not the points accumulated in each tournament. For example, the first place team receives 100 points, the second place team gets 97, the third place team gets 94, and this trend continues except all teams below twentieth place receive 62 points. The points are awarded after each fishing day, and additional points are awarded for bonuses and based on each team's placement in relation to other Challenge Cup participants. The Challenge Cup Champion will be awarded after the second leg of the Eastern Division Tournament (Wayne County). Each portion of the Pro-Am tournament also features additional sponsored contests for the biggest overall fish and the biggest come-back award for the greatest point differential between day one and day two.<sup>34</sup>

For all four portions of the Lake Ontario Pro-Am, tournament fishing lasts two days, with scheduled fishing time from 5:30 AM to 2:00 PM. Tournament fishing is limited to the US waters of Lake Ontario only and no fishing on tributaries is allowed. Each team is responsible for staying inside the tournament boundaries. There is no limit on the number of anglers per team, but each angler is allowed no more than two fishing rods, and each boat is allowed no more than eight fishing rods in the professional (Pro) division. In the amateur (Am) division, each boat can have only six fishing rods. Each team is required to provide an observer who serves to record the information of each fish caught on the official score sheet but are not allowed to operate boats or assist teams. Observers will be exchanged between teams on a random basis. All boats must be a minimum length of 18-feet and equipped with VHF radio and GPS unit in order to record catch locations on the official score sheet. The day's catch will be stored in a cooler and the cooler will be transported immediately to the weigh-in site after returning to port.<sup>34</sup>

Anglers in the Pro Division are limited to 12 fish per boat including a maximum of 3 silverfish per angler and 2 lake trout per angler. The first legal limit of 12 fish brought on board the boat must be kept. Anglers in the Amateur Division are limited to 9 fish per boat including a maximum of 3 silverfish per angler and 1 lake trout. The first legal limit of 9 fish brought on board must be kept. Anglers in the recreational division are limited to 3 fish and a maximum of 1 lake trout. "Legal" catches are determined by size requirements; the minimum size for steelhead is 21 ½ inches, the minimum size for Atlantic salmon is 25 ½ inches, and the minimum size for all other trout and salmon is 18 inches. Fish are measured using a certified measuring board. Fish submitted for weigh-in that are less than the minimum size will be disallowed and 10 points plus 1 point per pound of the undersized fish will be deducted from the team's overall score.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Lake Ontario Pro-Am Series, New York State. <http://www.lakeontarioproam.net/>

## **5. Skip Harman Memorial Lake Ontario Pro-Am Salmon Team Tournament**

The Niagara County tournament is held in the ports of Wilson and Olcott. The Niagara County portion of the Lake Ontario Pro-Am was held on June 4-5, 2011 and is also known as the annual Skip Hartman Memorial Lake Ontario Pro-Am Salmon Team Tournament. The Niagara Pro-Am tournament is the anchor of “tournament week” in Niagara which includes the Sabres Alumni Spring Salmon Spectacular, the Don Johannes Memorial fishing event, the Pete DeAngelo Three-Fish event, and finally the Pro-Am tournament on Saturday and Sunday.<sup>35</sup>

## **6. Orleans County Lake Ontario Pro-Am**

The Orleans County portion of the Lake Ontario Pro-Am is held at Oak Orchard, New York. The 2011 tournament occurred on June 11-12.<sup>35</sup>

## **7. Oswego County Pro-Am Salmon and Trout Team Tournament**

The Oswego County portion of the Lake Ontario Pro-Am is known as the Oswego County Pro-Am Salmon and Trout Team Tournament. The 2011 tournament was held July 9-10, 2011. Oswego County has a choice of three tournament launch sites: the Lighthouse Marina in Port Ontario, the New York State boat launch at Mexico Point and various marinas on the Little Salmon River, and three marinas in the Port of Oswego. In the 2011 Lake Oswego Pro-Am, 57 tournament teams competed. The Oswego event features the normal Pro-Am tournament rules and configuration, as well as an additional sponsored contest for the biggest steelhead.<sup>35</sup>

## **8. Wayne County Trout and Salmon Team Tournament Series**

The Wayne County portion of the Lake Ontario Pro-Am occurs from Sodus Point. The Wayne County Pro-Am is also known as the annual Wayne County Trout and Salmon Team Tournament Series. Sixty-eight teams participated in the 2011 Wayne County Pro-Am, from July 16 through 17, 2011.<sup>35</sup>

## **9. Niagara River Anglers Tournaments**

The Niagara River Anglers Association hosts two tournaments on Lake Ontario (and the lower Niagara River) at Lewiston Landing in New York. The first is a smallmouth bass tournament which was held in late July 2011. The winner of this tournament is based on the largest combined weight of two smallmouth bass. The top three anglers receive cash prizes, with the amount of prizes determined by the number of entrants, and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place are guaranteed at least \$1,000. Fishing occurs from sunrise until 2:00 PM. Tournament entrance fees are \$30 per angler, which includes two raffle tickets for door prizes.<sup>36</sup>

The Niagara River Anglers Association also hosted a walleye tournament in September 2011. The winners of this tournament are also based on the largest two fish caught. The entrance fee is

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<sup>35</sup> Lake Ontario Pro-Am Series, New York State. <http://www.lakeontarioproam.net/>

<sup>36</sup> Niagara River Anglers Association. <http://www.niagarariveranglers.com/>

\$20 per angler, and the top three anglers receive cash prizes of 50 percent, 30 percent, and 20 percent, respectively, of the total entry fees.<sup>36</sup>

## **10. Pay Every Day Derby**

Lake Ontario is also home to the Pay Every Day Derby, which occurred from May 1, 2011 to September 3, 2011. This derby targets salmon and trout. In the derby, anglers can win \$1,000 per day of the derby for the largest qualifying trout or salmon caught on the lake and weighed in at an authorized weigh station. In the event of poor weather and wave conditions on the lake which precludes fish from being caught on a particular day of the derby, half of the prize money for that day will be rolled over into the following day's prize, and this will continue until a winning fish is caught. There is also an additional prize offered for the largest fish of each month of the derby. Participants must register by 7:00 AM on the day they wish to fish in the derby. Fish eligible for the derby include salmon, brown trout, lake trout, and rainbow (steelhead) trout. Fish must meet minimum weight requirements including 20 pounds from May 1 until June 1, 23 pounds from June 1 through July 15, 26 pounds from July 15 through August 15, and 28 pounds from August 16 through September 3. The Pay Every Day Derby website did not list number of participants in the Derby, but participation levels are likely high as additional prizes are offered when derby participation reaches 2,000 entrants. To participate in the derby, anglers purchase a pass; a season pass is \$100, and a 2-day pass is \$35.<sup>37</sup>

## **11. Other Tournaments**

Additional tournaments scheduled for Lake Ontario in 2011 include:

- 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Buffalo Sabres Alumni Spring Salmon Spectacular, June 2, 2011
- 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Don Johannes Memorial Big Fish Contest, June 3, 2011
- 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Pete DeAngelo Memorial Three-Fish Contest, June 3, 2011
- 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Fish Odyssey Derby, August 20-28, 2011
- Lake Ontario Counties (LOC) derby, May 4-13, June 16-July 29, and August 17-September 3, 2011.

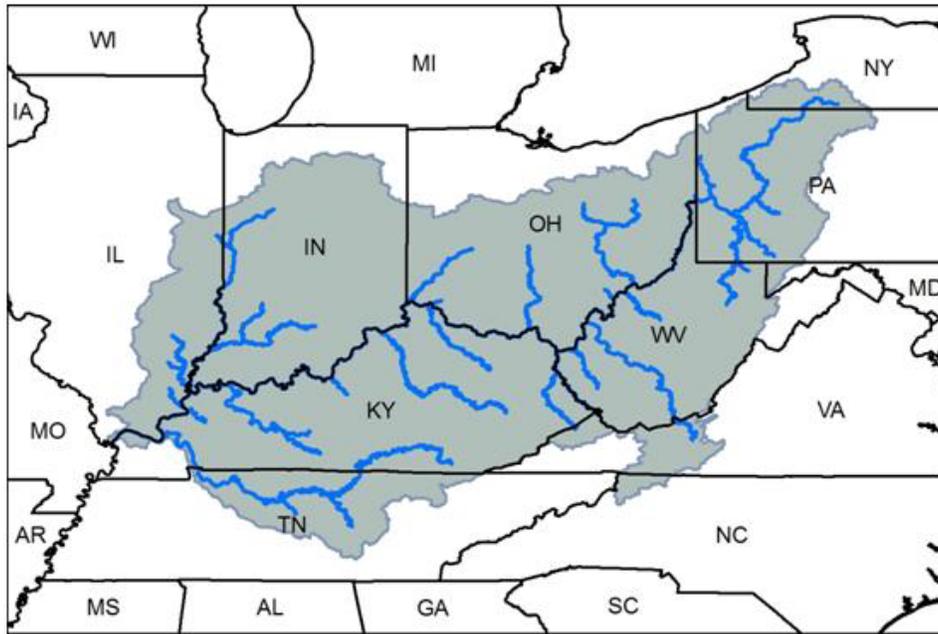
## **VI. Fishing Tournaments in the Ohio River Basin**

The Ohio River begins in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers and flows 981 miles to join the Mississippi River at Cairo, Illinois. The average depth of the Ohio River is 24 feet, its deepest point is 132 feet near Louisville, Kentucky, and the widest point is 1 mile wide at the Smithland Dam. There are 20 dams and 49 power generating facilities along the river. These dams create "pools" which are popular sites to hold fishing tournaments. States which have the Ohio River as a border or through which the river runs are: Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.<sup>38</sup> Figure 3 shows the Ohio River and Ohio River Basin.

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<sup>37</sup> The Pay Every Day Derby. <http://www.payeverydayderby.com/index.php>

<sup>38</sup> The Ohio River, All things fishing on the Ohio River. <http://theohioriver.com/>



**Figure 3. Ohio River and Ohio River Basin**

*Source:* U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

When operating a vessel on the Ohio River, all applicable state laws from the states bordering the river are in effect. For example, a boater on the portion of the Ohio River which borders Ohio and West Virginia is subject to the state laws of both states. The Ohio River is also considered to be “federal waters” and boaters need to comply with all U.S. Coast Guard requirements.<sup>39</sup>

According to the State of Ohio, Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Bass Tournament Report for 2010, the Ohio River ranks as the second most fished water, in terms of number of bass tournaments per year, in the state of Ohio, with 30 bass tournaments in 2010. The total number of bass tournaments in the state of Ohio in 2010 was 227.<sup>40</sup>

The State of West Virginia, Division of Natural Resources (DNR) maintains records of all fishing tournaments which occur in the state as part of their permitting process. According to the West Virginia DNR, there are 426 fishing tournaments scheduled for 2012 throughout the state. Of those, 117 will take place on the Ohio River. The majority of fishing tournaments scheduled to occur on the Ohio River are bass or catfish tournaments. All of the 2012 West Virginia fishing tournaments on the Ohio River will occur on various pools of the Ohio River including the Hannibal Pool, Belleville Pool, Willow Island Pool, Racine Pool, and R.C. Byrd Pool.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> State of Ohio, Department of Natural Resources, “Ohio River Boating”.  
<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/watercraft/ohioriver/tabid/2302/Default.aspx>

<sup>40</sup> State of Ohio, Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Bass Tournament Report 2010.  
[http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Home/FishingSubhomePage/programs\\_activitiesplaceholder/fishingobfdefault/tabid/6145/Default.aspx](http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Home/FishingSubhomePage/programs_activitiesplaceholder/fishingobfdefault/tabid/6145/Default.aspx)

<sup>41</sup> State of West Virginia, Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources, Fishing Tournament Dates.  
<http://www.wvdnr.gov/Fishing/tournaments.shtm>

In Kentucky, the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources has instituted a voluntary Tournament Reporting Program for bass tournaments in which bass tournament organizers can choose to report their tournament statistics. According to the Tournament Reporting Program, there were 35 bass fishing tournaments on the Kentucky portion of the Ohio River in 2009 (the most recent year for which data is available). The majority of tournaments (31) occurred between March and August. Kentucky fishing tournaments on the Ohio River occurred on the following Ohio River Pools: Greenup, Markland, McApline, Meldahl, and Smithland. A total of 998 anglers participated in the tournaments and 1,685 bass were caught. This is a voluntary bass tournament reporting system and should not be assumed to be a complete list of fishing tournaments in Kentucky.

Fisheries harvested during tournaments on the Ohio River include carp, catfish, bass, and walleye. Similar to the analysis of Great Lakes fishing tournaments, this section provides only a snapshot of the fishing tournaments which take place on the Ohio River. This provides a sample of tournament types, not a comprehensive listing of tournaments.

### **1. Paddlefest Kayak Fishing Tournament**

The Northern Kentucky Fly Fishers host the annual Paddlefest Kayak Fishing Tournament in Cincinnati, Ohio. The tenth annual tournament occurred on June 24, 2011 from 4-8 PM. The tournament occurs on the Ohio River in the area surrounding Coney Island near Cincinnati. This is a catch-and-release carp tournament in which anglers provide their own boats, photograph each fish next to a tournament-provided ruler to verify the length of the fish, and record the length of each fish on the official scorecard. All fish must be caught via hook and line on a hand-held rod with bait or an artificial lure. All fish must be caught from a kayak, canoe, or similar non-motorized paddle or pedal boat, and there are a maximum of 2 anglers allowed per boat. One point is awarded for each fish caught and properly documented. If a fish is caught using a fly rod and fly, three bonus points are awarded; two bonus points are awarded for a non-fly rod and an artificial lure. The longest fish of the tournament receives six bonus points. The angler with the most points wins the grand prize of a day of fishing from a custom skiff donated by Knee Deep Expeditions. The Paddlefest Tournament is a charity tournament and all proceeds are donated to The Ohio River Way to promote the Ohio River Water Trail and to help build the Ohio River Bike Trail.<sup>42</sup>

### **2. Catfish Country Tournament Series**

The fishing group Catfish Country hosts an annual series of catfish tournaments on the Ohio River. The tournaments are held from April through October at various locations on the Ohio River. Table 2 shows the 2011 tournament schedule and locations. All tournaments are governed by the same set of rules and every angler must abide by the fishing regulations of the state in which the tournament is held. Every tournament in the series is open to the public. There is a maximum team size of three anglers per boat, and each boat must pay a \$60 entry fee. Only catfish (including flathead, blue, and channel cats) may be weighed in and a maximum of 5 fish can be weighed in, all of which must be alive at the time of weigh-in. All fish over 20 pounds

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<sup>42</sup> The Ohio River Way – Kayak Fishing Tournament. <http://www.ohioriverway.org/paddlefest/schedule-of-events/kayak-fishing-tournament/>

must be released after weighed in. All fish must be caught by rod and reel. The hours of fishing vary by tournament. If there are four or fewer boats entered in a tournament, the first place prize is \$40 per boat entered and second place is \$20 per boat entered. If between five and nine boats enter a tournament the payout is \$35 per boat entered for first place, \$15 per boat entered for second place, and \$10 per boat entered for the single largest fish caught during the competition. If ten or more boats enter a tournament, first prize is \$25 per boat entered, second place is \$15 per boat entered, third place is \$10 per boat entered, and the same \$10 per boat prize for the largest fish.<sup>43</sup>

**Table 2. Catfish Country Tournament Series, 2011 Tournament Schedule**

Date (2011)	Time	Location
April 23	8am-2pm	Big Bone, Kentucky
May 7	8am-2pm	Augusta, Kentucky
May 21	7am-1pm	Tanner’s Creek, Indiana
June 4	7am-1pm	Craig’s Creek, Kentucky
June 18	7pm-1am	Schmidt Field, Ohio
July 2	7pm-1am	Augusta, Kentucky
July 16	7pm-1am	Big Bone, Kentucky
July 30	7pm-1am	Manchester, Ohio
August 13	7pm-1am	Schmidt Field, Ohio
August 27	7pm-1am	Tanner’s Creek, Indiana
September 24	8am-2pm	Aberdeen, Ohio
October 8	8am-4pm	Craig’s Creek, Kentucky

Source: Catfish Country. <http://catfishcountry.com/default.aspx>

### **3. FLW Tournament Series**

The Forrest L. Wood (FLW) Wal-Mart Bass Fishing League hosts some of its tournaments on the Ohio River. The FLW is another example of a large, national tournament series with more stringent rules. One Bass Fishing League event which takes place on the Ohio River occurs at Tanner’s Creek in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. The tournament begins at 6 AM on August 18, 2012 at the Lawrenceburg City Ramp and weigh-in begins at 2 PM in the same location. The entry fee for this tournament is \$200 per angler and \$100 per co-angler. The catch limit for this event is 5 bass, which must be no more than 12-inches each. This tournament is a qualifying event in the Bass Fishing League series, and takes place in the Hoosier Division. The top 40 anglers and co-anglers receive payouts for this tournament and prizes range from \$6,000 to \$200 for anglers and from \$3,000 to \$100 for co-anglers.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Catfish Country. <http://catfishcountry.com/default.aspx>

<sup>44</sup> FLW Walmart Bass Fishing League. <http://www.flwoutdoors.com/bassfishing/bfl/>

There is another Bass Fishing League tournament at Tanner's Creek in Lawrenceburg, Indiana on September 8 and 9, 2012. As a two-day event, this is a "Super Tournament", so entry fees are \$300 per angler and \$150 per co-angler, and payouts range from \$9,000 to \$300 for the top 40 anglers and from \$4,500 to \$150 for the top 40 co-anglers.<sup>44</sup>

Another Bass Fishing League tournament event in the Hoosier Division occurs at the Rocky Point Marina in Cannelton, Indiana. This tournament is scheduled for July 28, 2012. The Rocky Point tournament is a Qualifying Event and has the same entry fees and payout schedule as the Tanner's Creek Qualifying Event. For the Rocky Point Tournament, fishing begins at 6 AM and weigh-in begins at 2 PM at the marina. The same catch limits apply (5 bass, less than 12 inches).<sup>44</sup>

In the Buckeye Division of the Bass Fishing League tournament series, there are two tournaments which occur on the Ohio River. The Maysville Tournament is scheduled for July 14, 2012 at the Maysville River Park in Maysville, Kentucky. Fishing begins at 6:30 AM and weigh-in begins at 2:30 PM. The Maysville Tournament is a Qualifying Event and therefore has a \$200/\$100 entry fee for anglers/co-anglers, same payout schedule, and catch restrictions as the Tanner's Creek Qualifying Event. The other Ohio River tournament in the Buckeye Division is at Tanner's Creek in Lawrenceburg, Indiana on August 4, 2012. Fishing for this tournament begins at 6:30 AM and weigh-in starts at 2:30 PM. This Qualifying Event tournament has the same rules as the August 18, 2012 Tanner's Creek Event.<sup>44</sup>

There is one tournament on the Ohio River in the Illini Division of the Bass Fishing League Tournament Series. This tournament takes place at the Golconda Marina in Galconda, Illinois. The tournament begins at 6 AM on July 14, 2012 and weigh-in begins at 2 PM the same day. This tournament is subject to the rules associated with Qualifying Event tournaments in the Bass Fishing League series.<sup>44</sup>

The Wal-Mart Bass Fishing League is a 24-division league which is a subset of the national FLW tournament series. Top anglers in the Bass Fishing League can move up to the more prestigious (and more competitive) professional EverStart Series or FLW Tour. The Bass Fishing League includes five qualifying events per division (four Saturday tournaments plus one two-day Super Tournament), no-entry-fee regional tournaments, and a no-entry-fee championship tournament. The four Saturday one-day events pair a boater/angler and one co-angler per boat with a maximum field of 200 participants in each tournament. The winners are determined by the heaviest total catch over the one-day tournament. For the two-day Super Tournament events, the full field of anglers competes on Saturday and the top 20 percent of anglers compete in Sunday's final round. The winners are determined by the heaviest two-day catch. The top 40 boaters and the top 40 co-anglers from four Bass Fishing League Divisions advance to one of seven regional championship tournaments. Regional championships are three-day tournament events and the winners are determined by the heaviest three-day catch. The top 24 boaters and 24 co-anglers receive prize money in these events, but only the top six boaters and top six co-anglers from each regional championship advance to the Bass Fishing League All-American Championship. The Championship is a three-day tournament. The full field of anglers from the seven regional tournaments competes in the first two days of the Championship

tournament. Only the top 10 boaters and top 10 co-anglers continue on to the third day of the competition. The winning boater and co-angler are determined by the heaviest total three-day catch.<sup>45</sup>

As a national tournament series, the rules of the Bass Fishing League tournaments are stricter than locally-organized tournaments. Participation in the tournaments is open only to members of the FLW Outdoors organization who are age 16 and older. Boaters and co-anglers can either enter as teams or separately and will be paired based on a random drawing. The winner of each tournament (as determined by overall weight) will be awarded 200 points, second place receives 199 points, third place receives 198 points, and etc. The top boaters and co-anglers who advance to the regional championship tournaments and later the national championship tournaments are determined by overall points. The Bass Fishing League Tournament Series does not allow practice fishing in the tournament area before the tournament begins. Also, once the tournament has begun, contestants cannot solicit or receive information about catching fish in tournament waters from anyone other than the boater or co-angler in their boat. Boaters are allowed to fish from the front deck of the boat only, while co-anglers can only fish from the back deck or seating area of the boat. Boaters will have complete control of boat operation and of waters to be fished. In the event of an emergency, co-anglers may operate the outboard or trolling motor, but may not fish from the front deck at any time.

The use of mobile communications such as radios and cell phones is strictly prohibited during tournament fishing and co-anglers are prohibited from recording GPS waypoints or using any kind of GPS device on the tournament day. All boats must be propeller-driven, a minimum of 16-feet in length, be equipped with wheel steering, meet all U.S. Coast Guard safety requirements, and contain a properly aerated live well. Fishing is defined as having a lure attached to a line and a rod and reel with the lure in the water. All bass must be caught alive, only artificial lures may be used; only one rod may be used at a time, and trolling is prohibited. Every effort must be made to keep bass alive and eight ounces will be deducted from the total weight for each dead bass presented at weigh-in. Anglers who are not at the weigh-in area at the appointed time will be penalized one pound per minute and any angler more than 15 minutes late will lose credit for that day's weight. Scoring is determined by the pounds and ounces of each angler's catch. Only largemouth, spotted, redeye, or smallmouth bass are accepted species, the daily limit of fish is five, and each fish must be 12 inches or less unless state regulations indicate otherwise. Each contestant agrees to submit to a polygraph or voice stress analysis if deemed necessary by tournament officials.<sup>45</sup>

FLW Outdoors is named after Forrest L. Woods, the founder of Ranger Boats, and is regarded as the largest fishing organization in the world. FLW Outdoors offers anglers worldwide the opportunity to compete for millions of dollars in cash and prizes over the course of almost 200 tournaments operated annually. FLW Outdoors offers a hierarchy of tournament circuits to accommodate anglers from novice to professional, which include a series of qualifying circuits that allow anglers to advance to the next level of competition and higher payouts. The organization is regarded as the most lucrative bass fishing tournament organization in the world. FLW Outdoors was founded in 1996 under the premise of answering the demand among bass

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<sup>45</sup> FLW Walmart Bass Fishing League. <http://www.flwoutdoors.com/bassfishing/bfl/>

anglers for an organized tournament circuit. The goal was to increase participation in the sport of bass fishing by supplying tournaments and to increase the sport's fan base using print, online, and television coverage.

The first television broadcast of the FLW Tour occurred in November 1997 on Fox Sports and more than 2 million households watched the live coverage. Today, FLW fishing events and a weekly show are broadcast in more than 75 million homes in the US and Canada and over 430 million homes in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Television broadcasts appear on networks such as World Fishing Network, NBC Sports Network, and Matchroom Sports (international broadcasts). The FLW events are sponsored by large companies including Wal-Mart, the US National Guard, BP, Everstart, and several others.<sup>46</sup>

#### **4. West Virginia Bass Federation Tournaments**

The West Virginia Bass Federation holds an annual tournament series called the Buddy Trail. There are two divisions of the Buddy Trail, with five tournaments in each division. Two of these tournaments occur on the Ohio River; May 21, 2011 on the Belleville Pool of the Ohio River in Belpre, West Virginia and June 4, 2011 on the Willow Island Pool of the Ohio River in New Martinsville, West Virginia were the events in 2011. All Buddy Trail tournaments occur from 7 AM to 4 PM on the tournament day. Entry fees for each Buddy Trail tournament are \$100 per boat. Each tournament is limited to 70 boats and each boat is limited to catching six bass. The winning team is determined by the overall weight of the bass. Of the total entry fees, 74 percent are returned as prizes to the top ten percent of teams in each tournament, 10 percent is used for prize money for the West Virginia Bass Federation Invitational tournament, and 16 percent is used for administrative fees by the West Virginia Bass Federation. In 2011 the Belleville Pool tournament was cancelled due to bad weather, and the Willow Island Pool tournament had 51 two-man-teams participate.<sup>47</sup>

#### **5. H&H Bass Club Tournaments**

In Kentucky, the H&H Bass Club hosts twelve annual tournaments all located on lakes in Kentucky or the Ohio River. According to the club's website, one of their annual tournaments will occur on the Ohio River in 2012. On June 9, 2012 the club will host a bass tournament from 6 AM to 3 PM. Members of the club can compete in the annual tournament series and awards and prizes are given at an end-of-the-year banquet to the year's top finishers based on combined scores. The H&H Bass Club is a not-for-profit organization formed for men, women, and couples who love to fish and enjoy the great outdoors.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> FLW Outdoors. <http://www.collegefishing.com/tournament/versus.cfm>

<sup>47</sup> West Virginia Bass Federation. <http://www.wvbass.com/tournament.html>

<sup>48</sup> Northern Kentucky H&H Bass Club. <http://www.hhbassclub.org/>

## **VII. Fishing Tournaments on the Upper Mississippi River**

The Upper Mississippi River flows approximately 1,300 miles, from Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota to its confluence with the Ohio River at the southern tip of Illinois. This 1,300 miles comprises over half of the length of the entire Mississippi River. There are approximately 500 boat access points and marinas along the Upper Mississippi River and the river supports more than 127 species of fish.<sup>49</sup> Figure 4 shows the Upper Mississippi River, some of the major cities along the river, and the states for which the river forms a border.



**Figure 4. Upper Mississippi River**

*Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

There are 29 locks and dams on the Upper Mississippi River. These locks and dams are numbered sequentially from north to south. The water behind a dam carries a pool name that matches the dam's number. For example, Pool 13 is created by Lock and Dam 13 just north of Clinton, Iowa. These pools created by the lock and dam system are popular locations for fishing tournaments on the Upper Mississippi River.<sup>50</sup>

The organization called Big River Bass maintains a website about bass fishing on the Upper Mississippi River. This website includes a listing of bass tournaments on the Upper Mississippi. According to Big River Bass, there were 113 bass fishing tournaments scheduled to occur on the Upper Mississippi in 2011. These tournaments were scheduled for April through October 2011 from Minnesota to southern Illinois. The tournaments range from elements of large, national

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<sup>49</sup> Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, River and Basin Facts. <http://www.umrba.org/facts.htm>

<sup>50</sup> Big River Bass, Upper Mississippi River Overview. [http://www.bigriverbass.com/UMR\\_overview.php](http://www.bigriverbass.com/UMR_overview.php)

fishing series to small, locally organized tournaments.<sup>51</sup> The Upper Mississippi River is also home to many tournaments for other species including catfish, walleye, carp, bluegill, and crappie. A few of these tournament events are described in more detail below.

### **1. Bass World Sports Tournament Association Team Tournament Trail**

The Bass World Sports Tournament Association hosts an annual series of tournaments called the Team Tournament Trail. The Team Tournament Trail consists of 16 divisions. In 2012, six of these divisions occur on the Mississippi River: Alton Marina in Alton, Illinois; Louisiana, Missouri Boat Ramp at Pool 24; Lansing, Iowa Boat Ramp at Pool 9; Harper's Ferry, Iowa Boat Ramp at Pool 10; Dubuque, Iowa Schmitt Harbor Boat Ramp at Pool 12; and Savanna, Illinois at Pool 13. Each division is comprised of six fishing events which occur throughout the fishing season (typically beginning in April or May and ending in August or September). Each tournament has an entry fee of \$150 per boat. Each boat must be comprised of no more than two anglers, both of whom must be members of the BWSTA. Only artificial lures are allowed, all fish must be caught using a rod and reel, and trolling is not allowed. Boats must be at least 15-foot long with a properly functioning live-well and aerator. Only largemouth, Kentucky, and smallmouth bass are allowed to be weighed and each team can bring a maximum of 5 fish to weigh-in. Tournament winners are determined by the overall weight of the catch. The top 20 percent of teams receive cash prizes. Each team is awarded points based on their finishing position in each tournament event and the top teams from each division advance to the Team Classic Tournament at the end of the season and are eligible for prizes and awards.<sup>52</sup>

### **2. FLW Tournament Series**

The FLW Wal-Mart Bass Fishing League hosts one division of its tournament series on the Mississippi River. The Bass Fishing League tournament series was described in detail in the Ohio River section of this report. In the Mississippi River Division of the Bass Fishing League, there are four events scheduled for 2012: Lacrosse, Wisconsin on May 12, 2012 from 6 AM to 2 PM; July 12, 2012 at the Alma Marina in Alma, Wisconsin; August 25, 2012 at the Washington Street Ramp in Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin; and September 22, 2012 at the West Copeland and Clinton Street Boat Ramp in Lacrosse, Wisconsin. For all Mississippi River tournaments in the Bass Fishing League, anglers are limited to 5 bass, no more than 14-inches in length.<sup>53</sup>

### **3. Children's Therapy Center Charity Bass Tournament**

An example of a small, local tournament organized as a charitable fundraiser is the Children's Therapy Center Charity Bass Tournament in Albany, Illinois. The 2012 event is scheduled to occur on September 22 and will mark the 38<sup>th</sup> annual occurrence of the fundraiser. Tournament check-in begins at 5 AM at the Albany City Ramp and weigh-ins for the final group of anglers begins at 4 PM, with an awards banquet at 4:30 PM. Fishing occurs in Pool 13 near Albany, Illinois. Only artificial lures may be used and fishing rods are limited to 8-feet in length. Each angler is limited to using one fishing rod at a time. All tournament boats must be at least 12-foot

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<sup>51</sup> Big River Bass, Upper Mississippi River Tournament Schedule.

[http://www.bigriverbass.com/UMR\\_tournsched.php](http://www.bigriverbass.com/UMR_tournsched.php)

<sup>52</sup> Bass World Sports Tournament Association. <http://www.bassworldsports.com/>

<sup>53</sup> FLW Walmart Bass Fishing League. <http://www.flwoutdoors.com/bassfishing/bfl/>

in length and combustion engines used to power boats may not exceed the horsepower limitations enacted by the U.S. Coast Guard. All boats must have a tournament-accepted, aerated live well. All fish should be kept alive, and a 1-pound penalty will be assessed at weigh-in for all dead fish. Scoring will be determined by the pounds and ounces accumulated during tournament fishing. Each boat (two anglers per boat are allowed) is limited to weighing in five fish, and all fish must be largemouth, smallmouth, or Kentucky spotted bass. Competitors are not allowed to possess more than five fish at any time during the tournament. The winning team will be determined by heaviest overall catch, and will win \$3,000. The top 15 teams receive cash payouts and other tournament proceeds benefit the Children’s Therapy Center of the Quad Cities. In 2011, 91 two-man teams competed in the tournament, and a total of 297 bass or 671.12 pounds were weighed-in.<sup>54</sup>

#### **4. Mississippi Walleye Club Tournaments**

The Mississippi Walleye Club holds six walleye tournaments on the Mississippi River each year. These six tournaments are for Walleye Club members only. The Club also hosts one tournament at the end of the fishing season which is open to the public. For the six annual member-only tournaments, club members compete in teams of two to catch walleye, which are then released after weigh-in. The tournaments are usually held on Sundays and occur on the Mississippi River from Lansing, Iowa, to Albany, Illinois. Table 3 shows the tournaments scheduled for 2012 for the Mississippi Walleye Club. In 2011, an average of 20 anglers competed in each of the six member-only tournaments.<sup>55</sup>

**Table 3. Mississippi Walleye Club 2012 Tournaments**

<b>Date (2012)</b>	<b>Tournament Location</b>
11-Mar	Hawthorne Ramp, Dubuque, Iowa
22-Apr	Bellevue, Iowa City Ramp
6-May	Guttenberg, Iowa City Ramp
10-Jun	East Dubuque, Illinois
23-Sep	Bellevue, Iowa City Ramp
21-Oct	Massey Ramp, Dubuque, Iowa
18-Nov	Open Tournament, Schmidt Harbor, Dubuque, Iowa

Source: Mississippi Walleye Club. <http://www.mississippiwalleye.com/Tournaments/Tournaments.htm>

#### **5. Great River Golden Reel Fishing Rodeo**

The Great River Golden Reel Fishing Rodeo is scheduled to occur on August 11, 2012 in Burlington, Iowa. The 2012 event marks the first occurrence of this event, but organizers hope the Fishing Rodeo becomes an annual tournament on the Mississippi River. This event is a “mixed bag” tournament in that anglers fish for catfish, bass, bluegill, and crappie. This is a one-day tournament and awards and \$10,000 in cash prizes will be given in several categories including top boat, biggest fish of each species (catfish, bass, bluegill, and crappie), top female

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<sup>54</sup> Children’s Therapy Center of the Quad Cities, 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Charity Bass Tournament. <http://www.ctcbass.com/>

<sup>55</sup> Mississippi Walleye Club. <http://www.mississippiwalleye.com/default.htm>

angler, top junior angler, a Grand Slam prize for catching fish of all species, and “Toilet Bowl” prize for the angler that comes in last.<sup>56</sup>

## **VIII. Summary**

A total of 70 fishing tournaments on the Great Lakes, Upper Mississippi River, and Ohio River were examined as part of this study. This should be considered a small sample of tournaments which occur in the region (Wisconsin DNR identified 600-700 tournaments annually in that state) and should not necessarily be assumed to be a representative sample. For these reasons, no attempt has been made to quantify these data as those calculations would falsely represent the tournament fishing industry. However, the tournaments identified as part of this analysis begin to paint the picture of the varying types of tournaments and the general characteristics associated with different tournament formats. Based on the research conducted, some generalities can be made regarding fishing tournaments in the study area.

Bass and walleye appear to be the most popular targets of tournament fishing in the study area. Tournaments which target salmon and trout are found only on the Great Lakes. Similarly, there were no catfish tournaments found on the Great Lakes, only on the Ohio and Upper Mississippi. Tournaments on the Great Lakes seem to have more variety in the species targeted. These tournaments are more likely to target more than one type of fish per tournament, rather than focusing on only bass or walleye as is more common on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

Ice fishing tournaments are less popular and less frequent than open-water tournaments. As such, nearly all tournaments occurred during the spring, summer, and fall with open-water tournaments occurring between March and November. The majority of tournaments occur in the summer, from May through August.

None of the identified tournaments involved fishing from shore which suggests an overall popularity of fishing from boats. All of the tournaments except one required a motorized fishing vessel. Many tournaments required motors and had rules regarding the specifications of motors, but trolling was generally prohibited as a method of fishing.

The Upper Mississippi and Ohio River showed more occurrences of tournaments which are part of large, tournament trails such as the FLW series. The tournaments examined for the Great Lakes were more likely to be hosted by community organizations or consist of regional tournament trails of smaller magnitude.

In terms of tournament characteristics, on all water-bodies examined, tournament winners are likely to be determined by the weight of the overall catch. Most tournaments identify a maximum number of fish which can be weighed-in by each angler or team and winners are based on heaviest total weight, or most points as determined by the weight of the fish. Traditional catch-and-release tournaments are less common, though some tournaments have strict rules intended to prevent fish mortality, including storing fish in live-wells and returning them to the water after weigh-ins.

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<sup>56</sup> Iowa Sportsman Forum. <http://www.iowasportsman.com/forum/viewtopic.php?showtopic=708360>

Tournament entry fees charged by one-day tournaments hosted by local fishing organizations are typically less than \$100 and range from \$5 to \$50. Tournament trails which include several events or span multiple days charge higher entry fees which range from \$100 to \$400 per angler or team. Similarly, higher entry fees are associated with higher earnings potential. Tournament prize money is typically a percentage of entry fees divided among the top finishers in the tournament. Sponsors also contribute to cash or merchandise prizes, so tournaments with larger, more well-known sponsors also have larger prizes.

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