

2026 - RULES

Tournament Format and Eligibility

1. Tournaments sanctioned by The Northern Ontario Walleye Trail (NOWT) follow a two (2) day – one (1) or two (2) person team format. Each angler in the boat (max 2 anglers) weigh-in limit will follow the FMZ regulations for 1 anglers daily possession limit applicable to each competition body of water. For your area, the FMZ regulation for 1 angler daily possession limit is 4 walleyes max with only 1 walleye over 46 cm. This means only 4 walleyes come to the scale and only 1 walleye can be over 46 cm, always check the Ontario Fishing Regulations.

Teams will have a daily livewell limit of max 5 walleyes with only 1 walleye over 46 cm during the day. At no time may any team possess more than one walleye over 46 cm in the livewell during the day. Any fish weighed-in early are deducted from your daily livewell limit(example: 1 walleye over 46 cm and 1 under 46 cm are weighed-in early, this means your new livewell limit for the day is 3 walleyes with no walleye over 46 cm).

2. **Note:** if a team is comprised of only 1 angler in the boat then the daily livewell limit/possession is reduced to 4 walleyes with only 1 walleye over 46 cm. same rules apply when a walleye is weigh-in early. **ANGLER REPLACEMENT PROVISIONS** - If, after the competition has started and a team member is unable to compete because of medical or family emergency, or other justified reason, the remaining team member will be given the option to replace the leaving team member with another angler or finish the tournament alone. If the angler chooses to continue to fish alone, they must abide by Ontario Fishing Regulations (ex. they can only retain a maximum of one fish over 46cm and three under 46cm). If the angler chooses to replace the missing angler, the replacement angler must not have been on tournament waters during the competition. The Tournament Director must approve all angler replacements.
3. Entry fee – (determined by host) per team
4. Winners are determined by the largest combined two (2) day weight.
5. Fishing hours – **DAY 1** (determined by host) / **DAY 2** (Determined by host)
6. Host communities must have an official registration form signed by each team member showing payment details. The Tournament Director can refuse registrations at their discretion.
7. Disqualification from the tournament for any reason will result in forfeiture of the entry fee. No refunds or credits are extended to teams that choose not to fish due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances.
8. All anglers and boats registered to compete in the tournament must be off the tournament waters effective (time determined by host). No fishing will be allowed before or after the posted tournament hours on competition days. Please advise an Official if you must go on the tournament body of water for any reason.
9. The Tournament Directors retain the right to change and/or amend these rules at their discretion without prior notification. **The final approved tournament rules will be reviewed at the rules meeting.**

Orientation / Rules meeting

10. At least one team member MUST attend the rules meeting on (date and location determined by host). If neither registered angler is able to attend on time, the host committee must be notified in advance. Any teams missing the rule meeting without planning with an official will not be allowed to leave tournament morning until the rules are read. This could result in waiting until after morning departure.
11. Tournaments may accept last minute registration and waiver signing at the discretion of the Tournament Director.
12. **BOTH TEAM MEMBERS MUST SIGN THE ENTRY AND THE WAIVER FORM, RELEASE AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT. If any member fails to sign the waiver, that team will be disqualified.**

Live Release of Fish

13. Every effort must be made to keep the walleye alive using built-in or securely fastened, properly aerated or circulating livewells.
14. Fish, which are brought to the weight scale, must be alive to be weighed-in as part of the team's Tournament daily limit. A fish is deemed alive & weighable if the gills are consistently moving in and out (breathing). Dead fish will not be weighed but are the angler's responsibility and will count towards daily possession limits. Fish that cannot be released or dead fish may be returned to the angler.
15. Under no circumstances can fish be purposely altered. Any fish mauled, strung, injected with water or other fluids, containing foreign matter to add weight, or showing white gill or soft flesh that causes suspicion that it is being fraudulently entered into the Tournament can result in that team's immediate disqualification. **Any participant found violating this rule, may be disqualified. Each case will be reviewed by the NOWT board.**
16. All fish weighed must be released back into the tournament body of water by tournament officials.

Morning Equipment Inspections

17. Boat inspections will occur each morning (**location determined by host**). Boat inspections will start at (**time determined by host**)
18. For easy inspection, Teams MUST open all coolers, hatches, and live wells.
19. Upon completion of the daily inspection, tournament officials will give the boat proof of inspection. Any boat that is not inspected or fails inspection, will be disqualified for that day.
20. Following inspection, boats will stage inside the designated area on the tournament body of water.
21. Once a team's boat is inspected, under no circumstances will a competitor's boat pull alongside another competitor's boat.

Starting Procedure

22. The Official Starter will release the teams one at a time using a trickle start or following host tournament procedure, beginning at (**time determined by host**)
23. **The Official Starter** will raise the boat numbers as teams prepare to leave. One boat member must raise their hand and get the announcer's attention. Boat numbers **MUST BE** affixed in a location on the boat that is visible to official starter and other teams.

First Day Start (time and date determined by host)

- **Early Start** (**time determined by host**)
- **FISHING HOURS** (**time determined by host**)
- Boats will start one at a time. The starting order will be determined by their team number or by host tournament.

Day Two Start (time determined by host)

- **Early Start** (**time determined by host**)
- **FISHING HOURS** (**time determined by host**)
- Boats will again start one at a time. The boat lineup will be determined according to **DAY ONE RANKING** or by host tournament

Ties in Ranking will be determined by the earlier registration/lower team number. Host Tournaments may hand out a starting list sheet during morning inspection.

Boundaries

24. See the map for the tournament boundaries.

WEIGHING FISH/Scoring

25. All teams that are not in the designated finishing area on time at the end of the fishing day, will be disqualified for that day. That means the team will not be allowed to weigh in their catch for that day.
26. At the end of each day, anglers must stop at the host committee designated location to get your weigh-in ticket number.
27. Anglers will weigh-in in the order assigned by the organizing committee.

28. Only walleye qualify for weigh-in.
29. No culling, measuring or weighing of fish once the boat is on the dock for weigh-ins. Teams will be asked to leave the dock. Teams will lose their spot in line and be issued a new weigh-in ticket at the end of the line.
30. Both members of a team must remain in their boat until a tournament official comes to the boat with a weigh-in bag. *Please double-check your bags for possible damage.
31. Team's fish must be presented to the Weigh Master or his/her Assistants in the bag supplied by the Tournament Organizers.
32. Each team is responsible for placing their fish in the weigh-in bag and carrying them to the weigh scale. Volunteers/Dock Hands can come to the aid if permission is given by one of the anglers and a witness is present. Dock hands/volunteers are never responsible for the walleye.
33. Only 1 min will be permitted to assess the health/condition of a fish to deem whether it is alive or dead. The gills of the fish must be moving in a consistent motion to be deemed alive. Weigh in officials are allowed at any time to refuse a walleye in a bad condition. Weigh-in official decisions are final.
34. A dead walleye brought to the weigh-in will be refused to be weighed. This dead fish will count towards the tournament daily limit without any other penalty. If this dead fish is over 46cm, it will count towards the tournament limit of 1 fish over 46cm.
35. At the end of each competition day, it is the responsibility of the team to count and place their walleyes in the official weigh-in bag. Any walleyes remaining in the livewell must be released (if releasable) before leaving the weigh-in dock or as instructed by host officials. Walleyes that are not releasable for health condition reasons are the responsibility of the team unless option to donate is available through tournament host.
36. If a team has weighed in during the day those fish count towards their tournament daily limit.
37. When measuring fish at the weigh-in, the tail must be pinched to fall between the designated lines shown on the NOWT Bump Board. The tail should neither touch nor exceed these lines. If a fishtail, while being pinched, touches or exceeds the 46 cm line, the fish will be deemed an "over". Weigh-in official decisions are final. This rule can vary depending on waterbody, always check the Ontario Fishing Regulations.
38. An angler may request a fish be re-measured or re-weighed. Should this request be made, each fish may only be measured or weighed one additional time at the weigh-in station. The Weigh master AND the Fish Measurer Officials will conduct the requested second measurement together. Once the second measurement or weight is completed, the decision will be final, and no further measurements or weights will be allowed.
39. After fishing is complete each day, once an angler leaves the boat with the official weigh-in bag they are not permitted to return to the boat until that bag has been weighed. Each team will be permitted to weigh only once at the end of each day.
40. Once the fish are delivered to the weigh-in station, they shall not be touched by the anglers. Only authorized weigh-in Officials are permitted to handle the fish until an official weigh-in slip has been issued.
41. Every walleye close to 46cm will be measured before weighing.
42. All fish brought to the station are counted in the daily total weight. The Officials will not measure or weigh any fish just to verify with our equipment. **The official tournament measuring device will be available the night of the rules meeting if anglers wish to check their measuring device against the tournament measuring device for accuracy/consistency.**
43. The Weigh Master must confirm the walleyes are alive and fill out the weigh-in form appropriately.
44. The members of the team are responsible for making sure that the weigh scale results and the official form are the same. One team member must witness the weigh-in form recording the weight of the catch.
45. Anglers must remain at least 3 feet away from the weigh-in station officials and always stay in front of the station. Anglers are not permitted to go behind the weigh-in station under any circumstances.
46. WEIGH-IN OFFICIAL DECISIONS ARE FINAL. Once a call is made final by the weigh-in officials, the anglers will receive their weigh-in slip and should leave the weigh-in station immediately.
47. For non-protestable calls, the team's fish bag will not be weighed once a team is deemed disqualified

by the weigh-in officials. This decision is final and cannot be contested.

48. Only walleye are allowed in the boat unless a foul hook issue or the health of fish is in question. All necessary action should be taken to release all fish. Any other species kept besides walleye must be declared at the weigh-in station with an explanation, failure to do so could result in a penalty or disqualification once reviewed by the Tournament Director and/or committee.

Sportsmanship and Courtesy

49. Using cell phones during fishing hours to share information is prohibited (i.e. Anglers, officials, volunteers, etc.). Cell phones should be used for emergency purposes only.

50. It is prohibited for any competitor to give, offer, accept, or suggest the exchange of any item including weighable fish to, from, or with any competitor or non-competitor.

51. Maximum courtesy must be practiced, particularly about boating and fishing in the vicinity of a non-competitor.

52. There is "Zero Tolerance" for unsportsmanlike conduct and disqualification could result without refund if an angler is found to be acting in an unsportsmanlike way. (Unsportsmanlike conduct must not be confused with ethics). Participants will conduct themselves in a true sportsmanlike, courteous, safe, and ethical manner at all times maintaining a professional demeanor in public and communication with tournament officials. Any unfavorable conduct, speech, or action by a participant could be grounds for disqualification or rejection of entry application. Every participant is expected to participate in the marshaling of the field to maintain the highest integrity of the competition while representing themselves, the tournament, the Northern Ontario Walleye Trail, and all associated Sponsors.

53. All competitors must respect fellow anglers and maintain a safe distance so as not to cause issues with others angling.

Rules(s) Violations, Protests, and Appeals

54. Any incidents observed during tournament hours should be reported to the Tournament Director.

55. Participants have the right to enter a formal protest. A protest form will be available from the Tournament Director (TD) and must be completed and presented to the TD within 1 hour of daily posted results. \$150.00 protest fee must accompany the form. The fee will be returned if the protest is found to be valid or at the discretion of the tournament director.

56. An infraction witnessed by a competitor and reported to the Tournament Director in a formal protest will be investigated by the Tournament Director and/or a three-person Protest Committee. The committee will be appointed and approved by NOWT Executive before the Tournament.

57. Where a team is charged with a rule infraction by the Tournament Director which could result in disqualification of the daily catch or tournament disqualification, the team has the right to appeal the decision to the Tournament Protest and Appeals Committee. Appeals must be submitted to Tournament Director within 1 hour after that day's weigh in.

58. Witness(es) may be called to appear before the Protest Committee or Tournament Director to provide evidence relating to the alleged rule infraction.

59. The Protest and Appeals Committee will interpret the rules according to their spirit and intent. The decision of the Protest Committee and/or Tournament Director is final and not subject to review of any kind.

60. "SPIRIT OF THE RULE". NOWT intends to provide an honest, sportsman-like tournament. In the interest of good sportsmanship, contestants are reminded that the "spirit of the rule" will prevail in all judgment cases.

Safety

61. The Tournament Director has the right to delay, shorten or lengthen the Tournament, subject to weather and/or safety considerations or due to reasons deemed necessary.

62. All competitors must always practice safe boating during practice and tournament fishing.

63. Your tether kill switch strap must be worn on plane.

64. Proof of boat insurance is required.

65. ALL TEAMS, whether weighing fish in or not, must check in with a tournament official at the end of the day. You can check out at (location determined by host).

66. Every competitor must wear a fully secured Coast Guard-approved life jacket or chest-type floating device on plane. .

67. No alcoholic beverages or controlled substances may be consumed by competitors during the tournament fishing hours. In case of intoxication, the Tournament Director has the right to refuse the team to compete until they are safe to leave. NO DRINKING & DRIVING!

68. In the event of a thunderstorm, lightning, or severe weather, teams may pull onto the nearest shoreline until it is safe to continue fishing.

69. Competitors may not leave their boats during the tournament except at the Official weigh-in site or if severe weather forces them ashore.

70. Only official tournament boats are allowed to tow a competitor's boat during fishing hours if the team wishes to weigh in their catch. However, those boats requiring to be towed by tournament officials are still required to check their catch before the end of day fishing time. **The tournament official is not responsible to get the towed boat back in time.**

71. A team that has a mechanical problem may use a different boat to finish the day's fishing. The switch must be made at the weigh-in station and must have an official with them for inspection. Proof of inspection will be provided before rejoining the competition.

72. Teams must notify a tournament official if an emergency or breakdown has occurred by calling or sending a text message to (host to add phone numbers of emergency contacts)

Tackle and Equipment

73. Live bait and artificial lures, manufactured baits, pork rind, and commercially available liquid attractants may be used.

74. Landing nets may be used.

75. The use, in live wells, of commercially available fish care chemicals is permitted.

76. Live transducers and underwater cameras are allowed during fishing hours

Tie Breakers

77. If teams weigh-in the same two-day weight the teams will be deemed tied. All prizes will be split equally between the tied teams.

Tournament Cancellation and Carry Overs

Each host committee will have their own registration, cancellation and carry over policies. Please refer to the host committee for these details.

TOURNAMENT INTEGRITY POLICY & SAFETY:

The Sanction NOWT tournaments, its promoters, employees, sponsors, organizers, hosts, Directors, Officers, and affiliated organizations assisting the operations of any of the Tournament, their agents and/or agents and assigns are not responsible for any death, injury, damage, liability, fire, theft or loss that may result before, during or after the Tournament howsoever caused.

Host Tournament Specific Rules/Exceptions/Changes (see below)