



## **2023 ARMED FORCES FISHING LEAGUE RULES, REGULATIONS, AND GUIDELINES**

**COVID-19 PROCEDURES WHILE INDOORS AND IN SPACE RESTRICTED AREAS:** We encourage every member of the Armed Forces Fishing League to follow all local, state, and CDC Guidelines when possible.

### **PARTICIPATION:**

- 1.) The AFFL is a team tournament trail. A team is consisted of two anglers fishing from the same boat. You may fish our events as an individual angler. Entry fees remain the same whether you fish solo or as a team of two.
- 2.) 18 Years of age, or 16 years of age and are a qualifying military dependent fishing with the veteran.
- 3.) Substitutions are allowed up to two times a year. Substitute team members must meet the required criteria to fish with the AFFL and must pay the membership fee.
- 4.) All the tournaments are for current members, in good standing with the AFFL. The AFFL reserves the right to deny membership and tournament entries for any reason at any time.
- 5.) No AFFL member may buy or barter a fishing location from any other AFFL member during any competition day.

- 6.) Fishing guides for the tournament body of water may not be used within 30 days prior to the event.
- 7.) During the official practice and competition days of any AFFL tournament, no member may operate a boat unless that member has documented proof of \$100,000 / \$300,000 liability insurance per occurrence covering the boat being used. A copy of the insurance must be provided upon check in of every event. Any competitor that does not provide a copy of the required insurance will be disqualified with no refund.
- 8.) A properly completed AFFL tournament entry form (via the website) and entry fee must be received by the AFFL prior to the event registration deadline date. Registration deadline date for each event will be 5 pm EST, 7 days prior to the event. **Any entries received after the registration deadline will not be accepted.** Please register for events here: [armedforcesfishing.com/tournaments/](http://armedforcesfishing.com/tournaments/)
- 9.) Refunds will only be issued if the AFFL Tournament Staff is notified prior to the registration cutoff noted above. NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE.

#### **INFRACTION OF RULES:**

In the event of a rule infraction, the AFFL may impose a penalty/sanction, as deemed appropriate, including, and without limitation to, disqualification, forfeiture of prizes and/or entry fee, probation, and may prohibit the member in violation, from participation in any future Armed Forces Fishing League events. The decision of the AFFL director and staff shall be final in all matters. Each AFFL member agrees to report to the Tournament Director or an official AFFL staff member, any violation or infraction of any Tournament Rules. Failure to report infractions, false reporting, or suggestions to another member of an un-reported violation of these rules will be cause for disqualification. Any infraction must be reported to the Tournament Director or an official AFFL staff member on site and in writing within 30 minutes after the scales close. It is up to the member to realize when the last competitor weighs in and the scales officially close for the day.

#### **PENALTIES FOR ANY INFRACTION OF THE RULES:**

- 1.) Loss of one or more fish in question.
- 2.) Loss of catch for the day
- 3.) Disqualification from the tournament in question
- 4.) Disqualification from future AFFL events.
- 5.) Any different or additional penalties determined by the Tournament Director including but not limited to monetary forfeiture, probation and/or loss of Team of the Year points.

## **PRACTICE, COMMUNICATIONS, AND OFF-LIMITS:**

- 1.) **Practice/Assistance:** During official practice for an event, contestants may only pre-fish alone, with a member of his/her immediate family, another contestant of the tournament, a sponsor of the Armed Forces Fishing League or a member of AFFL staff. Contestants may not receive assistance from anyone other than another contestant for the purpose of locating or catching fish during competition days. Buying or bartering for fishing locations is prohibited. During the official practice and the competition days of the event, competitors may not "SKIN DIVE" OR "SCUBA DIVE" in the tournament waters. Contestants are not allowed to practice after the start of the tournament briefings.
  
- 2.) **Communications:** During official competition day(s), a competitor may not use a CB radio, a VHF marine-band radio, a cellular phone, texting, or any other type of communication device for locating or catching fish. Competitors are permitted to transmit by radio or telephone only in the event of an emergency. A designated AFFL tournament official must be granted access to the competitor's boat at any time during the competition. Failure to grant such access will result in immediate disqualification. Competitors may not follow non-competitor's boats for the purpose of a non-competitor assisting in locating fish.
  
- 3.) **Off Limits:** Off limits areas will be designated and announcement upon the creation of each event.

## **ONSITE SIGN IN:**

- 1.) **Sign In:** All registered members for the event are required to sign in, at the latest, 1 hour before the start of each event (unless dictated otherwise by the State Director). We strongly encourage you to arrive earlier than this to ensure a smooth check in and take off. Each individual member will need to provide the following documentation:
  - a.) Armed Forces Fishing League digital membership card.
  
  - b.) Current and valid Boat registration
  
  - c.) Required fishing license for the body of water that the event is being held on.
  
- 2.) **Mandatory Meeting for Regional and National Championships:** The pre-tournament Safety and Rules meeting is mandatory for all competitors and will be at a designated

time at 18:30 the night before the tournament start date. Failure to attend will result in the forfeiture of entry fees and disqualification for the event. No exceptions.

**SAFETY:** Safety is at the forefront of every event, and all anglers must recognize that; fishing from an open boat is inherently dangerous, and as a result, the Armed Forces Fishing League seeks to minimize those hazards with these general safety rules.

- Safe boat conduct and speed limits must always be observed by competitors. During official practice and competition, competitors must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved chest-type life preserver and must always be worn while the combustion engine is in gear. This life preserver must also be properly secured and maintained in that condition until the combustion engine is no longer in gear. Violation of this rule shall be a reason for disqualification. "Fanny Pack" preservers are not allowed. In the event a boat is being towed, all anglers in the towed boat must wear a life preserver.
- Tournament officials may delay, shorten, restrict tournament waters, or cancel the start of an official tournament day because of bad weather or other factors that would endanger the safety of the competitors.
- The AFFL reserves the right to impose boat speed limits during any or all tournaments. The decision to impose a speed limit, the area covered by the speed limit and/or the actual speed limit shall be left exclusively to the discretion of the tournament director.
- In the event of an emergency, competitors should call 911 immediately and then notify tournament officials. Competitors may leave the boat and seek safe shelter in bad weather when danger may be imminent, at which time all fishing must cease.

**SPORTSMANSHIP:** Anglers participating in an AFFL sanctioned event are expected to uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety, and conservation and shall always conduct themselves in a professional manner. Members shall use their best efforts to demonstrate professionalism and integrity in support of the sport of bass fishing and the Armed Forces Fishing League. Any angler who does not carry themselves as such, will be subject to fines, forfeiture of tournament winnings, probation, suspension from competing in AFFL events, permanently banned from the league, or any combination the outlined consequences above deemed appropriate by the Armed Forces Fishing League.

1.) The use, possession of, or consumption of illegal drugs or alcohol by any competitor during official practice or tournament hours will be cause for automatic and immediate disqualification from this and all future tournaments. (Exception; medication prescribed to the angler by a licensed physician). If a contestant is prescribed a

medication that hinders their ability to safely operate a motor vehicle, they will not be allowed to partake in the event without a note from their physician stating that they are able to safely operate a boat.

2.) Courtesy must be practiced, especially about boating and angling near non-competitors. Any act of a competitor which reflects unfavorably upon efforts to promote water safety, conservation, clean waters, and courtesy will be a reason for immediate disqualification.

3.) All competitors are bound by the prevailing statutes and regulations of the state within which the tournament is being held, and all participants are required to have the appropriate state fishing license. A copy of the fishing license will be verified upon the event check-in.

4.) Chemical substance addiction or abuse, crimes involving moral turpitude, a conviction of a felony not specifically exempted by the AFFL, or other conduct reflecting unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, fair competition, and compliance with tournament rules shall be grounds for rejecting any application for participation and/or for disqualification. Any disqualification, suspension from, or disciplinary action imposed by any fishing organization will be grounds for rejecting applications for participation in a tournament and/or disqualification from a tournament after circumstances are reviewed by the AFFL Tournament Director.

**TACKLE AND EQUIPMENT:** The use of a landing net is allowed. The use of grippers in landing bass is prohibited. Only artificial lures may be used. Only one rod (8-foot maximum length) and reel may be used at any one time per angler. All bass must be caught live and in a conventional sporting manner. When visually fishing for bedding bass, bass must be hooked inside the mouth and must be verified by your partner before being unhooked to have a bass counted as a legal fish.

**HORSEPOWER REGULATIONS:** Maximum horsepower for all outboard motorboats used in official tournament practice and in tournament competition will be 250 HP. Horsepower cannot exceed the limitations set by the U.S. Coast Guard or the manufacturer's rating plate or the maximum horsepower set by AFFL. In the event there is reason to suspect the horsepower is exceeded, competitor agrees to submit their boat and outboard motor used in the tournament, to an inspection by factory-trained personnel. Changing or altering standard factory parts of a competitor's engine to increase the horsepower over the factory horsepower rating is forbidden and will result in immediate disqualification.

**BOAT AND MOTOR:** During official practice and competition, all boats must be equipped with an operational and approved type of ignition kill switch and a single

lanyard. Lanyard must be attached to the driver's body any time the combustion engine is in gear, and the driver must be in the driver's seat in full control of the boat. Fishing boats that are less than 16 feet in length may not be used. Any raised platforms or decks cannot be higher than the gunnels of the boat. Fishing while standing on the outboard motor or boat seats is not allowed. Trolling motors may be used for slow maneuvering; however, trolling as a method of fishing is prohibited. All bladder tanks and any auxiliary gas tanks that are not installed by the boat manufacturer are prohibited. Boats that do not have factory-installed gas tanks are restricted to a maximum of 18 gallons of gasoline in tanks, properly secured or strapped, and meet U.S. Coast Guard regulations. No portable gas tanks or containers capable of holding gasoline can be placed anywhere on tournament waters or shorelines for use by any tournament competitor. No "barges" or similar craft or "stick steering boats will be permitted.

**BASIC BOAT EQUIPMENT:** During official practice and competition, every boat must have all the required U.S. Coast Guard safety equipment. During the competition, every boat must have live-well space, with a functioning aerator, to safely maintain a limit of bass. The AFFL tournament officials shall have the sole responsibility for determining whether aeration and capacity is proper and adequate.

**BOAT IDENTIFICATION:** Prior to each day's start, every boat will be inspected and checked by a tournament official. Boaters will be given their launch numbered by text or by a card, and it is the boater's responsibility to ensure they are checked-out and checked-in by an AFFL official.

**BOAT OPERATION:** You may fish as an individual or a team; Co-anglers are only allowed to operate the boat if they are covered under the boat owner's insurance policy.

**PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS:** Tournament waters and off-limits areas shall be established by the Tournament Director for each tournament. Specifically, any water within tournament waters posted "Off-Limits" or "No Fishing" by state or federal agencies will be OFF-LIMITS. Only that water open to all public fishing will be considered tournament waters. All angling must be done from the boat. No fishing within 50 yards of any other competitor's boat, anchored or not.

**COMPETITORS MUST REMAIN IN BOAT:** Competitors must leave from and return to the official checkpoints by boat and must not depart the boat to land fish or to make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. Boats must remain in tournament waters during tournament hours. Team members must remain together in the boat and in insight of each other and each partner's catch, except in case of dire emergency or with permission from the Tournament Director. If an emergency occurs, competitors must call 911 immediately then contact a Tournament Director, at which time all fishing will cease. If after the emergency has been resolved, tournament officials may allow

competitors to resume fishing. Trailering boats during tournament hours is prohibited. You may leave the boat if "duty calls" but fishing from both team members must cease until they are both back in the boat. Do not leave the boat and go onto private property. It is up to the competitor to know whether the land is private property. If any competitor trespasses, it may be grounds for immediate disqualification from the event.

**OFFICIAL CHECKPOINT:** There will be only one official check in and check out location for check-out in the morning and check-in in the afternoon and will be designated by the AFFL tournament officials. At the time of check-out, all boats must be in full compliance with all the rules set forth by the Armed Forces Fishing League. At check-in, all boats shall identify themselves by means of the numbers described in the "Boat identification" section above and all fishing must cease. If fishing as a team, partners must stay together through the weigh-in process.

**LATE PENALTY:** Anglers who are not in the official checkpoint area appointed before the start of the tournament, at the appointed time shall be penalized at the rate of one pound (1 lb) for each minute. The late penalty will be deducted from the total weight of their catch for that day, including any weight to be counted toward "Lunker". No weight will be awarded if the net weight after penalties is zero or less. Any angler arriving more than 15 minutes late will weigh in zero pounds (0 lbs.) for that day. Exact starting and check-in times and locations will be announced by an AFFL tournament official.

**SCORING:** Tournament standings, awards, and final winners shall be determined by the weight of each team's catch during the competition days of the tournament. Only Largemouth, Smallmouth, Spotted or Redeye bass will be weighed. The limit for team or solo anglers shall be 5 bass of the above species and varieties per day unless otherwise established by the tournament director and/or state laws. The official length for bass shall be established by the Tournament Director. Culling must be performed immediately upon catching a sixth fish for teams/solo anglers. In the event tournament officials observe more than the allowable limit is in the boat or at weigh-in, tournament officials will cull beginning with the largest fish. Only bass measuring the official length or more on the longest straight line, shall be weighed. Short fish will accrue a penalty of 1 pound and that bass will not be weighed. Any bass that appears to have been mangled, mashed, mauled, or otherwise altered will be weighed only at the discretion of tournament officials. Once a competitor's catch is verified by, no additional fish may be added to the catch. Placing bass on a stringer is prohibited, however culling tags or clips may be used. In the event of a mechanical failure (boat is inoperable) anglers may have their catch counted by one of the following methods only:

- 1) Boat is towed to the weigh-in site by another boat.

2) One partner may take the catches (clearly marked) and board another competitors' boat only for a ride to weigh-in. If the team is a solo angler, the competitor must ride with their fish to weigh-in and designate another individual to ride in the boat being towed. The tournament director must be notified immediately. Competitors must not allow any bass caught by them to be counted on the score of another competitor. Mechanical failures do not extend the established check-in times.

**TIEBREAKERS:** Ties will be broken using the following criteria:

- 1.) The largest number of legal fish weighed during the event.
- 2.) The largest number of legal live fish weighed during the event.
- 3.) The heaviest single day catch during the event
- 4.) If the tie is not broken by applying the foregoing procedures, prizes will be awarded according to AFFL tournament officials.

**CATCH AND RELEASE:** CULLING OF DEAD BASS IS PROHIBITED. For each legal dead bass brought to weigh-in, a penalty of one half of a pound (1/2 lb.) per dead fish will be assessed and deducted from the day's total weight. A dead fish cannot be weighed in for lunker.

\*For fish care, the AFFL recommends the use of a cull system with clips that do not puncture\*

**SCORING SYSTEM AND QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENTS:** Points are awarded and based on place of finish from the five 1-day events, with one drop, and cannot be combined or transferred from one event to another. Any angler/team disqualified from an event will not receive points for that event.

- 1.) **BRIGADE LEVEL EVENTS (One-Day events):** These events are worth 100 points to first place anglers. Points will be awarded in 1-point decreasing increments. Contestants not weighing fish will receive 10 points behind the last place that weighed in. Total points accumulated from Brigade events will determine the Brigades team/angler of the year. Each Brigade will host five qualifying events per year with 1 drop. **\*\* Anglers may fish in another Brigades events, however, points earned in that state will remain there and do not carry over to your home state. \*\***

2.) **DIVISION LEVEL CHAMPIONSHIP (2-Day Regional)** – Teams with 385 points or greater will qualify for the Division Level Championship. Anglers qualifying as a team must fish as a team. Division Level Championship events are worth 200 points to first place anglers. Points will be awarded in 1-point decreasing increments. Contestants not weighing fish will receive 10 points behind the last place that weighed in. Total points accumulated from Brigade events plus the Division Championship points will determine the Divisions team/angler of the year.



3). MICHAEL B. RICHARD CHAMPIONSHIP (3 Day Championship) –Qualifying for the Michael B. Richard Championship will be by point and by place of the teams/anglers finish in the Divisional standings. Anglers must have fished their Divisions Championship. The top 15 teams from each Division will compete in the Michael B. Richard Championship event.

A.) Qualifying by Points: The top 15 teams by points from each Division after the Divisional Championship will advance to the Michael B. Richard Championship event. If any of the top point holders do not accept the invitation the next highest team by points will be invited.

4.) TEAM OF THE YEAR (TOY): Total points accumulated from one-day events within a division plus Brigade championship will determine Brigade team of the year (TOY).

**TIEBREAKERS:** Ties will be broken using the following criteria:

- 1.) The largest number of legal fished weighed during the event.
- 2.) The largest number of legal live fish weighed during the event.
- 3.) The heaviest single day catch during the event
- 4.) If the tie is not broken by applying the foregoing procedures, prizes will be awarded according to AFFL tournament officials.

**ARMED FORCES FISHING LEAGUE LOGO:**

- AFFL encourages (not mandatory) the wearing of the AFFL Logo. The suggested placement for AFFL logo is centered on the left chest, the top of the patch should hit the top center of the left collarbone.
- The AFFL encourages the use of patches and logos to promote the angler's sponsors. The AFFL may, however, restrict the use of patches, logos, signage, etc., that promote or advertise products which are in competition with the products or services of official tour sponsors, or which are, in the AFFL's sole judgment, in poor taste.

**TAXES:** Where and when state laws require, income tax may be automatically deducted prior to any awards being presented. Anglers are responsible for all applicable taxes for both cash and merchandise awards.

**LIABILITY WAIVER AND RELEASE FORMS:** To participate in any of the Armed Forces Fishing Leagues events, members must read, understand, and sign a liability release waiver and release form.

**MEDIA COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTACKS:**

The favorable public reputation of the Armed Forces Fishing League as a sanctioning organization in the sport of fishing, the integrity of its officials, and the reputation of its media properties are valuable assets and tangible benefits for the AFFL. Accordingly, it is an obligation of competitors to refrain from comments to the news media that unreasonably attack or disparage the integrity of tournaments, tournament officials, sponsors, fellow members, fellow anglers, or the AFFL organization. Competitors are encouraged to express themselves and have the right to question rules officials. Responsible expressions of legitimate disagreement with AFFL policies are encouraged as opposed to attacks upon the integrity of the rules or officials. However, public comments that an angler knows, or should reasonably know, will harm the reputation of AFFL, AFFL officials or sponsors shall be considered conduct unbecoming a professional and will result in disciplinary action.

I, THE UNDERSIGNED PARTICIPANT, AFFIRM THAT I AM OF THE AGE OF 18 YEARS OR OLDER, AND THAT I AM FREELY SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT. I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE READ 2023 ARMED FORCES FISHING LEAGUE RULES, REGULATIONS, AND GUIDELINES, THAT I FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENT AND THAT I AM SIGNING IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

