

# **OFFICIAL AFC/CWT TOURNAMENT RULES**

## **ALL RULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The eTournament Fishing app is *mandatory* for all AFC events. Available for both iPhone and Android, at least one team member *must* download and install the app. It is *strongly recommended* that *both* team members install the app on separate devices as a backup.

### **AMERICAN FISHING CLUB (AFC)**

The American Fishing Club (AFC), a 501(c)(7) non-profit organization, promotes and supports sport fishing. All AFC tournaments are permitted and promoted through the club. A \$50 membership fee is used to support competitive fishing and AFC members. Learn more at [www.AmericanFishingClub.com](http://www.AmericanFishingClub.com).

### **PARTICIPATION**

Teams must consist of one Captain or two anglers (Captain/Co-Angler) sharing a single motorized watercraft (minimum 12ft in length, 10hp motor). Anglers under 18 must be paired with a parent or guardian. Personal watercraft (Jet Skis), kayaks, float tubes, and other non-motorized single-occupant vessels are *not* permitted.

### **CPRV FORMAT**

All AFC/CWT events utilize a Catch, Photo, Release Video (CPRV) format unless otherwise specified by AFC staff. Holding fish on stringers, in baskets, coolers, or livewells is *strictly prohibited* during tournament hours. Possession of any fish species (excluding minnow-type bait) is also forbidden. All fish must be immediately released after digital documentation. This CPRV format promotes conservation and eliminates fish harvest. Livewells and portable containers are *not* permitted to hold any fish species other than minnow-type bait.

### **EVENT REGISTRATION**

To register for 2026 AFC events, anglers can use the **eTournament Fishing app** or visit the "Tournaments" tab on the **AFC website**. For the best value and guaranteed entry into all five scheduled events, you can purchase an **Angler Season Pass (ASP)** at a discounted rate before January 1, 2026. Securing a pass is highly recommended, as field sizes are limited to 40 boats for the first two events at Pueblo and Cherry Creek, and 25 boats for the remaining events at Pueblo and Chatfield.

If you prefer to register for single events, the window opens in the app 15 days before each tournament for all non-season pass holders and closes at **11:59 PM on SUNDAY prior to the tournament**. Captains and teams should register via the app for \$325, which includes an AFC membership. Only one person needs to register the team, but it is vital to provide an accurate cell phone number to ensure proper team recognition and fish submission authorization. Registration will reopen for ASP holders on Monday morning prior to the tournament and will close on Wednesday morning at or around **8 AM OR A TIME OF OUR CHOOSING. ALL TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AND WILL BE POSTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA**. All ASP holders will receive an *email* notifying them that the tournament registration is open and providing them with the access code to enter the event.

While you can manage and change team members within the app until the registration deadline, any partner changes requested after the entry cutoff must be handled directly by contacting Tournament Director **Mitch Petersen**.

## **REFUNDS**

Entry fee refunds (less a \$100 withdrawal fee) will only be issued for written cancellations received by AFC staff at least 7 days prior to the tournament date. *No refunds will be issued for the subscription purchased through the eTournament Fishing app.*

## **PIN SYSTEM**

(After registering in the eTournament Fishing app, your team number and a unique PIN will be automatically generated. This PIN is for accessing the live leaderboard and ensures anonymity until after the event. *Do not share your PIN.* AFC staff will *not* disclose your PIN to other participants until the tournament's conclusion.

## **OFFICIAL AFC MEASURING BOARDS**

Official AFC measuring boards are mandatory and the only boards permitted (unless otherwise directed by the Tournament Director). Each team will receive a board and boat number on the morning of Day 1. Boards *must* be returned to AFC staff at the event's end. Failure to return a board will incur a \$100 replacement fee.

## **TOURNAMENT CANCELLATION**

Tournaments with fewer than 10 registered teams will be canceled and rescheduled. Rescheduling/cancellations are possible up to the event's start. Events will also be rescheduled due to extreme weather, unsafe travel, or hazardous lake conditions. Registrations automatically transfer to the new date/location. The standard refund policy applies to teams unable to attend the rescheduled event. Partially canceled or time-limited events will be considered complete

## **PRIZES AND AWARDS**

Tournament prizes and awards are determined by the number of participating teams. Prizes will be awarded at the tournament's conclusion during an awards ceremony, if feasible. Prize money will be distributed at the conclusion of the event when possible. If prize checks are issued by mail, they will be mailed to winning teams within 7-10 business days following the event. Winners must cash their checks within 60 days of issuance, or the prize money will be forfeited to the AFC.

## **TIES AND TIEBREAKERS**

In case of a tie, the tiebreaker will be the team with the highest total weight from Day 1. If still tied, the largest single fish caught during the tournament will determine the winner. If a winner remains undetermined, the tied teams will split the combined prize money for the tied position and the next lower position equally.

## **SAFETY**

All participants must adhere to safe boating practices, applicable state laws, and the rules of the governing body of water. Alcohol, marijuana products, and illegal drugs are prohibited in tournament boats and vehicles during fishing hours. Citations for game and fish or state park regulation violations between 6:00 PM Friday and 6:00 PM Sunday may result in disqualification, at the discretion of AFC staff. All boats must carry US Coast Guard-required safety equipment (Type IV throwable cushion, fire extinguisher, distress horn/flag/whistle). Marine radios are recommended. Boats may only launch from designated locations. No off-site or on-the-water inspections will occur unless directed by AFC staff. All contestants *must* wear a US Coast Guard-approved PFD when the main motor is operating above idle and creating a wake (TBF requirement). Violation will result in disqualification for the day. All US Coast Guard safety rules apply, including local liability insurance requirements.

## **SEVERE WEATHER**

During severe weather (thunderstorms, lightning, high winds, etc.), participants may seek shelter at the nearest shoreline until it's safe to resume fishing. Leaving boats during tournament hours is prohibited except for severe weather or with AFC staff permission. If severe weather is predicted, AFC staff will travel the lake and sound an air horn, signaling all participants to immediately stop fishing, return to the launch, and load their boats. This officially ends the day's fishing.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP**

Participants must maintain a 75-foot distance from marker buoys used by other tournament boats. Dropping a buoy without actively fishing within 75 feet is prohibited and may result in penalties from a warning to disqualification. No fishing information may be shared during tournament hours. Cellular phones are allowed *only* for safety, documenting violations, and the eTournament Fishing app. Communication (calls, texts, messages) between participants and non-participants is prohibited. Binoculars/monocular, internet access, texting, paging, and walkie-talkies are also prohibited. Boats should maintain a respectable distance (approximately 75 feet) while fishing near each other.

## **PARTICIPANTS RESPONSIBILITIES**

All participants are responsible for reading and understanding the tournament rules. Participants must have a functional cell phone with sufficient power and storage for the eTournament Fishing app. ***Watching the eTournament Fishing app tutorials under “the app” tab, before Day 1 is strongly encouraged.***

## **PRE-TOURNAMENT OFF THE WATER RULES**

All AFC tournament participants must have their boats trailered and be off the water by 6:00 PM on the Friday before the tournament. Plan accordingly. In emergencies or unforeseen circumstances preventing compliance, contact AFC staff *before* 6:00 PM at 970-227-0401 or 303-514-1078 for guidance. Teams violating this rule will be limited to four fish counting per day during the tournament.

## **TOURNAMENT FISHING HOURS**

Tournament hours are listed for each event in the app. Official time will be based on GPS/cellular device time; no other timekeeping methods will be accepted. The app prevents fish submissions before the start time or after the end time each day. *Fishing outside scheduled tournament hours is strictly prohibited and will result in disqualification.*

## **MANDATORY ANS INSPECTIONS**

All watercraft used in AFC tournaments must undergo a mandatory Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) inspection and comply with regulations for the specific body of water. Participants are solely responsible for following ANS procedures and being ready by the official start time. Teams without a pre-event inspection or those failing inspection will forfeit their launch order and launch *only* after successfully passing the required ANS inspection, going to the end of the launch line. *Pre-event ANS tagging is strongly recommended.*

## **MANDATORY RULES MEETING**

A mandatory rules meeting will be held at 5:30 AM on the first day of each event. The location will be announced after registration closes. At least one team member *must* attend to check in and receive their tournament bag, which includes an official AFC measuring board and laminated boat number.

## **PRE-LAUNCH BOAT INSPECTION**

A mandatory boat inspection will occur each morning before launch, beginning at 6:00 AM, typically while participants are on the launch line. *Please have all livewells open and ready for inspection to expedite the process.*

## **BOAT LAUNCHING PROCESS**

Following the rules meeting, participants will line up for the start. Any boat not checked in, inspected, and tagged by 6:30 AM will forfeit its launch position and launch *after* all other boats have left the starting area.

## **TRICKLE START PROCESS**

The official start time is listed in the app but may be adjusted based on launch efficiency. A faster launch may result in an earlier start; a slower launch may delay it. Once all boats are launched, an air horn will sound, signaling boats to line up by boat number (e.g., 1-50 on Day 1, reversed 50-1 on Day 2). The start

boat will lead the fleet to the starting location, maintaining a close, single-file line. The start boat will then move to the lake's center, away from shore, with tournament boats following. When safe, the start boat will make a 180-degree turn and proceed back toward the field, parallel to the line. As the start boat passes each tournament boat, it will signal them to take off.

### **BOAT CHECK-IN**

Check-in location and times will be communicated before the tournament. Teams must be within clear visual sight of and acknowledged by AFC staff at the designated location 30 minutes prior to the listed finish time and checked in via the eTournament Fishing app within 30 minutes after the completion of fishing for the day, using their provided laminated team number card to signal check-in personnel. Early check-in requires contacting the AFC tournament director or designee to arrange a meeting at the loading ramps. Failure to check in on time will result in disqualification for the day. Check-in is mandatory for safety, ensuring all participants have returned safely.

### **ON THE WATER CWT INSPECTIONS**

AFC Tournament Staff may board and inspect any boat's livewells at any time during the event.

### **LENGTH TO WEIGHT CONVERSION**

The eTournament Fishing app automatically converts fish length (in quarter-inch increments) to weight. When submitting fish, teams select the length, which is then converted to weight for calculating all results.

### **DAILY VIRTUAL LIVEWELL LIMIT**

Teams may submit a maximum of 8 fish per day. Each submission counts toward the daily virtual livewell limit. The app will prevent submissions exceeding this limit.

### **DAILY BASKET**

Of the 8 submitted fish, the team's 5 longest will comprise their daily basket. The app automatically selects the 5 longest for calculating the daily total weight. Final standings are determined by the combined total weight from Day 1 and Day 2.

### **CHECK-IN TO THE EVENT**

**Participants *must* check in to the event via the eTournament Fishing app before the start, while a strong cellular or Wi-Fi connection is available. This enables the app's online functionality when service is good and offline mode when service is poor or nonexistent. To check in, open the app, navigate to your registered event, and tap the "Check-In" box. Refer to the eTournament Fishing participant tutorial videos for detailed instructions.**

### **SUBMITTING FISH**

It is *strongly recommended* to watch the eTournament Fishing participant tutorial videos and familiarize yourself with the fish submission process. Participating in the free practice tournament within the app is also recommended to practice submitting fish before any live event.

## **CPRV REQUIRED FISH SUBMISSION ELEMENTS**

For the CPRV format, a measurement photo *and* a release video are required for each fish submission.

### **MEASUREMENT PHOTO**

Immediately after catching a fish to be submitted, the participant *must* take the measurement photo.

- The measurement photo *must* be taken from directly overhead ("straight down perspective") with no angle. Avoid casting shadows on the fish.
- The measurement photo *must* clearly show the entire fish and be in focus. Providing a clear photo for accurate verification is the participant's sole responsibility.

- The measurement photo *must* show the fish's mouth (open or closed) touching the "bump end" of the measuring board. Failure to clearly show the mouth touching will result in a 1/2-inch deduction from the submitted length.
- Your hand *must* be placed behind the fish's gill plate, holding the fish flat against the measuring board.
- The measurement photo *must* clearly show the fish's tail (pinched or unpinched) on the measuring board for accurate length measurement. If the tail touches or crosses a graduation line, rounding up to the nearest 1/4 inch is permitted.
- The minimum length for fish submission is 14 inches. If a fish's tail touches the 13 3/4-inch mark, rounding up to 14 inches is allowed for submission. Fish not reaching the 13 3/4-inch mark do not meet the minimum length requirement and cannot be submitted.

## **TROPHY PHOTO**

If a trophy photo is required, follow the sequence shown in the eTournament Fishing app. The trophy photo should clearly showcase the fish, emphasizing its size and clearly identifying the angler who caught it. Trophy photos may be used for promoting future events and by anglers in their in-app profiles. Clear, professional-quality photos are highly encouraged.

## **RELEASE VIDEO**

After taking the measurement photo and/or trophy photo, the participant will take the release video.

- If no trophy photo is required, the release video *must* show the fish being lifted off the measuring board and completely released back into the water.
- If a trophy photo is required, the release video may begin immediately after the photo is taken.
- **CRITICAL: Verify your video recorder's timer is actively running *after* pressing record to guarantee the video is capturing.**
- Failure to clearly show the fish's release in the video will result in the submission being rejected, but the fish will still count towards your daily virtual livewell limit.
- If a legal fish cannot be released due to its condition, the team must retrieve the fish and remove a significant portion of its tail fin. This marks the fish as already submitted and accounted for. Anglers *must* immediately notify tournament officials, providing the corresponding fish number from their app submission.

## **TAP THE SUBMIT BUTTON**

After taking the measurement photo and release video, tap the green "SUBMIT" button, then tap "OK" to begin uploading the fish submission.

## **FISH SUBMISSION STATUS**

You can track your fish submission status. "Being Uploaded" indicates the submission is in progress. "Pending Review" confirms the upload is complete and the tournament director has received it.

## **AT THE END OF THE DAY**

At the end of the day or after your final submission, ensure all submissions are "PENDING REVIEW." If any are still "Being Uploaded," log out and back into the app to restart the upload. Once all submissions are "PENDING REVIEW," they have been successfully uploaded.

## **ATTENTION ALL PARTICIPANTS**

Participants are responsible for ensuring all fish submission elements comply with the guidelines. Visit [www.eTournamentFishing.com](http://www.eTournamentFishing.com) for participant tutorials on app functionality and the fish submission process.

### **APP USE IN AREA WITH POOR OR NO CELLULAR SERVICE**

The eTournament Fishing app records your catch with or without a cellular data or Wi-Fi connection. However, you *must* check in before the event starts while connected to cellular data or Wi-Fi. Open the app, go to your registered event, and tap the "Check-In" box. See the user tutorials at [www.eTournamentFishing.com](http://www.eTournamentFishing.com) for more information.

### **PROTESTS OR ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT**

Protests must be submitted to AFC staff in writing within 45 minutes of the boat check-in time. The written protest must detail the alleged violation, identify the angler involved, and state the time of the violation. A \$100 cash protest fee is required, refundable if the protest is upheld. AFC staff will investigate and make a final, non-appealable ruling. Unfounded or inconclusive protests forfeit the \$100 fee, which will be added to the event payout. Contestants agree to provide phone records if requested by AFC staff during an investigation.

### **LIVE LEADERBOARD**

A leaderboard will be published at the end of Day 1, displaying individual team weights associated with confidential PINs, but *without* boat numbers or names.

### **CAPTAIN OF THE YEAR**

To determine the "Captain of the Year," all five AFC points tournaments are considered. However, only a team's best three finishes across those five tournaments will count towards their final standing.

Here's how it works:

1. **Tournament Participation: CAPTAINS** participate in all five AFC points tournaments. Points will be awarded to CAPTAINS based on their final position in each tournament as follows: 1st place = 100 points, 2<sup>nd</sup> place = 99 points, 3<sup>rd</sup> place 98 points and so on.
2. **Points Earned:** CAPTAINS earn points based on their performance in each tournament.
3. **Best Three Finishes:** Out of the five tournaments, only the CAPTAINS top three highest point totals are considered.
4. **CAPTAIN of the Year:** The CAPTAIN with the highest cumulative points from their best three finishes is crowned "CAPTAIN of the Year." The team of the year could be awarded additional money and/or prizes.

This system ensures that CAPTAINS are rewarded for consistent performance throughout the year, while also allowing for a single bad tournament without severely impacting their overall standing.

### **NTC INVITATIONS**

National Team Championship (NTC) invitations will *only* be offered to participants who are registered and in good standing with The Walleye Federation (TWF) *before* the start of the AFC season. Those not registered with TWF will be ineligible for the NTC. The "captain" (Angler 1) on the entry accrues all points.

For example, if Angler 1 fishes all four points tournaments with different partners and finishes in the top four-point earners, *that captain* earns an NTC spot.

- Angler #2 has no claim to the points earned during the points tournaments.
- NTC invitations are offered to the "CAPTAIN of the Year" and the next three highest-ranking captains (who are current TWF members before the season starts). If any of these three spots cannot be filled, the invitation will be offered to the 4th highest-ranking captain, and so on, down to the 10th-place captain. If no captain up to 10th place accepts the invitation, the NTC funds will be used at AFC's discretion.
- Those wishing to become active TWF members can register using the Jot Form posted on the AFC website [www.americanfishingclub.net](http://www.americanfishingclub.net) by April 1, 2026.

### **BIG FISH SIDE POT**

A daily big fish payout will be awarded to the team with the largest fish. Ties will be broken by comparing the teams' second-largest fish, then the third, and so on, until the tie is broken. If all five fish are tied, a coin toss will determine the winner.

### **OPTIONAL CALCUTTA SIDE POT**

Each Calcutta entry costs \$20. Participating teams will be randomly divided into smaller groups. The team with the highest weight in each group on Day 1 wins that group's Calcutta and will be paid on the morning of Day 2.

### **SPONSOR MONIES/PRODUCT DONATIONS**

Individual sponsors may contribute funds or products to each side pot. Teams must enter side pots to be eligible to win (all teams are automatically entered into the big fish side pot). Sponsor contributions to each side pot will be announced before each event.

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