

Piney Woods Team Bass Trail

2026 Team Tournament Rules

Effective February 2026

Entry Fees:

- One-Day – \$150 per team: includes Big Bass
- 2026 Annual Membership Fee
- No off limits
- 85% payback and 100% payback on Big Bass

Registration and Rule Interpretation

These rules are subject to change by the Tournament Director at any time, with notice provided to all anglers. The **interpretation and enforcement** of all rules fall solely under the authority of the Tournament Director.

Rule Violations

In the event of a rule violation, the Tournament Director may impose **sanctions deemed appropriate**, which may include but are not limited to:

- Loss of one or more fish in question
- Disqualification of the day's catch
- Disqualification from the event
- Forfeiture of prizes and/or entry fees

The decision of the Tournament Director is **final** in all matters.

All teams are required to **report any rule violations**—whether by self-reporting or by reporting another team. Failure to report, false reporting, or encouraging another team not to report a violation is grounds for disqualification.

Rule violations must be reported:

- **Immediately**, whether self-reported or reporting another contestant
- **In writing within 15 minutes** of the announcement, "The scales are closed" for all others

1. Penalties

1.1 Penalties for rule violations may include, but are not limited to:

1. Loss of one or more fish in question
2. Loss of entire daily catch
3. Disqualification from the current tournament
4. Disqualification from future events
5. Additional penalties determined by the Tournament Director, including but not limited to **monetary forfeiture**

1.2 Tournament officials will determine and enforce penalties as deemed appropriate.

2. Eligibility and Participation

2.1 Team Composition

Each team must consist of **two members per boat**:

- One **Captain**, age 18 or older
- One **Partner**, age 10 or older

Partners aged 10 to 17 must have a parent/guardian—or an adult approved by the parent—serve as the team Captain. Both the minor and the supervising adult must sign an additional liability release waiver. Proof of age and all required documentation are the sole responsibility of the anglers and must meet tournament officials' standards.

2.2 Solo Anglers

An angler may fish solo but must still pay the **full team entry fee of \$150.00**.

2.3 Guide Restrictions

Anyone who has worked as a guide—or received compensation for guiding—on tournament waters within **30 days prior** to the event is not eligible to compete.

2.4 Insurance Requirement

Each team must provide documented proof of **at least \$100,000 in boating liability insurance** for the boat being used. Proof of insurance:

- Must be on board the vessel during the event
 - Must cover the specific team competing
 - May be randomly inspected at registration or weigh-in
- Teams without proper documentation will be **disqualified**

3. Pre-registration and on-site Registration

3.1 Anglers can pre-register on the Piney Woods website at <https://www.pineywoodsbasstrail.com/>.

Anglers can register at the tournament site, which opens one hour before the start of the tournament, unless otherwise specified by the Tournament Director.

3.2 On-site registration is limited to **cash or credit card** payments only.

3.3 A **\$10.00 convenience fee** applies to all credit card payments.

4. Communication

4.1 During tournament hours, teams are **prohibited** from using any communication devices—including CB radios, VHF marine-band radios, cell phones, or text messaging—for the purpose of locating or catching fish.

4.2 Communication is only permitted during tournament hours in the event of an **emergency**.

4.3 Teams may use **smart devices** to access information such as:

- Weather conditions
- Dam power generation schedules

However, **smart devices may not be used** to locate fish through:

- Social media
- Blogs
- Photos or videos

4.4 A **designated tournament official** must be granted access to a team's boat and cell phone at any time during the competition.

5. Hole Sitting

5.1 **Hole sitting**—the practice of reserving or obstructing fishing areas—is strictly prohibited during tournament hours.

- **Teams may not follow non-competitor boats** for the purpose of gaining assistance in locating fish.
- **No person, competitor or otherwise**, may obstruct, reserve, or “sit on” a fishing spot on behalf of a team.
- **Blocking access** to fishing locations in any manner is grounds for disqualification.

6. Safety

Safety is the top priority. Anglers must acknowledge that fishing from an open boat involves inherent risk. These rules are designed to mitigate hazards as much as reasonably possible.

6.1 Boat Operation

Only anglers **18 years or older** may operate the combustion engine during official practice or tournament hours.

6.2 Life Jackets and Kill Switch

- All team members must **wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved chest-type life preserver** any time the combustion engine is engaged.
- The life jacket must be **secured (strapped, snapped, or zippered)** and properly worn.
- A functioning **kill switch must be attached to the boat operator** while the engine is running.
- **“Fanny pack”-style preservers are not allowed.**
- If a boat is being towed, all occupants must wear an approved life preserver.

Failure to comply may result in disqualification.

6.3 Weather and Water Conditions

The Tournament Director may delay, shorten, or cancel competition days—or restrict access to certain waters—due to severe weather or unsafe conditions.

6.4 Speed Limits

The Tournament Director reserves the right to impose **boat speed limits** during competition at their sole discretion, including specific areas and maximum speeds.

6.5 Emergency Protocol

- In an emergency, call **911 immediately**.
- Then contact the Tournament Director at **214-538-1929**.
- If weather creates unsafe conditions, teams may **seek shelter** but must cease fishing immediately.

7. Sportsmanship & Code of Conduct

7.1 General Conduct

All anglers must conduct themselves in a professional, courteous, and sportsmanlike manner throughout

the event. Any action that reflects poorly on the sport, the event, or its officials may result in penalties, including suspension from future tournaments.

7.2 Harassment Policy

Harassment of any kind—toward competitors or non-competitors—will not be tolerated and may result in immediate disqualification or rejection of entry.

7.3 Drug and Alcohol Use

The **use, possession, or influence of illegal drugs** is strictly prohibited during tournament hours as well as at any pre- or post-tournament activities.

Medications legally prescribed by a licensed physician are exempt.

Alcohol consumption and possession are prohibited during tournament hours, which begin at official morning check-out and end after all fish have been weighed.

7.4 Courtesy and Conservation

Maximum courtesy must be shown, especially when boating or fishing near non-competitors. Any act that undermines water safety, fisheries conservation, or general boating etiquette is grounds for disqualification.

8. State Requirements

All participants must comply with the laws and regulations of the **State of Texas**, including possession of a valid Texas fishing license.

9. Tackle and Equipment

9.1 Use of a **landing net** is permitted; use of **grippers** to land bass is not.

9.2 **Artificial lures only.** No live or prepared bait is allowed, **except pork strips or rinds.**

9.3 Anglers may use only **one rod and reel** at a time; rods may not exceed **10 feet** from butt to tip.

9.4 All bass must be caught **alive and by conventional sporting methods.**

9.5 When visually targeting bedding bass, the fish must be **hooked inside the mouth.**

10. Boat, Motor, and Equipment

10.1 Boats must carry **all required U.S. Coast Guard safety equipment.**

10.2 Boats must have a **working kill switch with a lanyard**, which must be attached to the driver when the combustion engine is in gear.

10.3 Boats must have a **properly aerated live well** capable of sustaining a tournament limit.

10.4 **Raised decks** may not exceed the gunnel height; no fishing from outboards or boat seats.

10.5 **Electric trolling motors** may be used for positioning, but **trolling as a method of fishing is prohibited.**

10.6 Auxiliary fuel tanks not installed by the manufacturer are prohibited. Non-factory tank boats are limited to **18 gallons**, properly secured and compliant with USCG standards.

10.7 **No barges, stick-steering boats**, or boats under **16 feet** in length are permitted. Acceptability is at the Tournament Director's sole discretion.

11. Boat Inspection

Boats will be inspected each tournament day before launch. It is each team's responsibility to **check in and check out properly**.

12. Permitted Fishing Locations

12.1 Only **public waters accessible by boat** may be fished.

12.2 **All fishing must be conducted from the boat.**

12.3 Teams must maintain a minimum **50-yard distance** from other boats, anchored or not.

13. Team Members Must Remain in Boat

13.1 Teams must **depart from and return to the official checkpoint by boat**.

13.2 Anglers may not leave the boat to land fish or to access fishing waters.

13.3 Boats may not leave tournament waters during tournament hours.

13.4 **Trailer**ing is **not allowed** during tournament hours unless directed by tournament staff.

14. Official Checkpoint

14.1 A **single designated location** will be used for morning check-out and afternoon check-in.

14.2 Boats must meet all competition rules before launch.

14.3 All teams must **check in with the Tournament Director**, whether or not fish are weighed.

Failure to check in may result in penalties at future events.

15. Scoring

15.1 Scoring is based on the **total weight** (pounds and hundredths) of each team's catch.

15.2 **Only largemouth, smallmouth, or spotted bass** are eligible for weigh-in.

15.3 The **creel limit is three (5) bass**, 14 inches minimum length.

15.4 Upon catching a fourth fish, teams must **immediately cull** to maintain the limit.

- Possession of more than 5 fish will result in tournament officials culling the largest fish.
- A **1-pound penalty** applies for short fish.
- Mutilated fish are subject to tournament officials' discretion.

15.5 Once weighed, **no additional fish may be added**. No stringers allowed. Use **non-piercing culling tags** only.

15.6 In case of mechanical failure:

- **Method 1:** Boat towed to weigh-in site

- **Method 2:** The boat is secured, and anglers are transported by another team. In either case, notify tournament staff as soon as possible.

15.7 Bass may not be transferred between teams.

15.8 Mechanical issues **do not extend weigh-in deadlines.**

16. Catch and Release

16.1 Culling of dead bass is prohibited.

16.2 A **0.5 lb. penalty** will be assessed for each dead fish, including "big bass".

16.3 The Tournament Director has final say on live fish rulings.

16.4 Use of **T-H Marine G-JUICE** and **G-Force Conservation Cull clips** is strongly encouraged for fish care.

17. Late Penalty

- A **1-pound deduction per minute** will be applied for late check-ins.
- Being over 15 minutes late will disqualify the catch for the day.
- The start and check-in times will be provided on the morning of the tournament.

18. Tiebreakers

Ties will be broken in this order:

- Most legal fish weighed
- Most live fish weighed
- In the event of a tie, payouts will be divided equally.

19. Waiver and Release

All competitors must sign a **waiver of liability** and a **name and likeness release** prior to participating.