

Black Bass Live-Release Tournament Director/Sponsor Checklist:

► Tournament organization:

If tournament has over 50 participants:

- Structure weigh-in and departure times in small groups to avoid long waits at the weigh-in facility.

All tournaments:

- Structure departure and weigh-in time concisely to avoid long waits at the weigh-in facility.
- Identify specific release locations and provide release instructions (See “Keeping Bass Alive” in Appendix’).
- Prominently display surface water temperatures, at all times of day.

► Choosing a good weigh-in site:

- Contestants can walk from boats to weigh-in area in less than one minute.
- The site is close to a good release site: a low pier within a short walk, or situated near the live-release boat, truck, or trailer (good water quality, adequate depth, low traffic area).
- The weigh-in site is shaded (a portable event tent or tarp is a good investment).
- The site allows room for spectators without interfering with the movement of contestants.

► The weigh-in process:

If the weigh-in facility uses a Life Support Tank:

- Ensure weigh-in bags are strong, reinforced, **perforated**, and reusable plastic.

If the weigh-in facility does not use a Life Support Tank:

- Ensure weigh-in bags are strong, reinforced, and reusable plastic with no holes. Fish must not remain in bags without holes for longer than one minute. Dissolved oxygen declines dramatically in un-perforated bags over a very, very short time.

Life Support Tanks should contain:

- 12V bilge pump used to circulate and aerate water. (Simply holding perforated weigh-in bags in a tank does not ensure exchange with fresh oxygenated water, contestants must be encouraged to scoop or dip fresh water into perforated bags.)
- 1 pound of salt per 25 gallons of water (0.5% salt solution).
- At least 100-gallon capacity tank for every 20 contestants.

If the lake water temperature is 75° F (23.9° C) or cooler:

- Maintain the Life Support Tank at that temperature.

If the lake water temperature is above 75° F (23.9° C):

- Maintain the Life Support Tank temperature 5-10° F cooler than lake/river temperature, but not colder (8 pound of block ice will cool 30 gallons of water about 10° F for 3 hours).

Handling of fish:

- Handle fish with wet hands and minimize duration of handling.
- Use a drainable fish weighing basket outfitted with a measuring board and plastic lid.
- Ensure dead fish are used or disposed of at home, not the weigh-in site.
- “Fish slides” set up to quickly return fish to the lake or river must contain a continuous flow of water to prevent injury to the fishes’ skin. See “Keeping Bass Alive” in Appendix for more information†.

► **Clean and decontaminate fish holding equipment and boats after the weigh-in process.**

► **Basic information describing how to clean gear is available at:**

[Clean Your Gear \(fishandboat.com\)](http://fishandboat.com)

Within Pennsylvania, cleaning and drying fishing gear, boats, fish handling and fish holding equipment are now a requirement and are mandatory. Please visit our web site for new requirements/changes as introduced here: [PFBC APPROVES FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS AND PROTECTIONS AGAINST SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES, ... \(pa.gov\)](#). Note especially the last section §71a.12, watercraft requirements and prohibitions. This section states that watercraft may be subject to inspection and potentially confined until invasive plants or animals are removed or subject to other provisions to insure aquatic invasive species are not transported to other Commonwealth waters. The character of our aquatic resources and the fisheries they yield are everyone’s responsibility, including Pennsylvania anglers and boaters. Our 2024 Fishing Summary Book and 2024 Boating Handbook also contain more information and explanations about the new Chapter 71a Regulations. We summarize some methods for basic gear cleaning and decontamination below, but encourage those seeking more detailed information to visit our “Clean Your Gear” website through the link here: [Clean Your Gear \(fishandboat.com\)](#)

When a boat is retrieved from the water, or fish holding tanks and gear are loaded into a trailer, remove plants and debris, clean, drain, thoroughly dry, and if necessary, use hot water to disinfect boats, boat trailers, fish holding tanks, fish holding equipment (scales and nets), and all fishing and boating gear exposed to water. Such vigilance will prevent inadvertent transport of aquatic invasive species, from water to water, when boats, tanks, pumps, and hoses are moved from one fishing location to another. Some non-native plants can become established by introducing a single plant fragment, and some microscopic organisms can be transported in damp environments. Thus, cleaning and thoroughly drying boats, trailers, fish holding tanks, fish holding equipment (scales and nets), and all fishing and boating gear exposed to water is essential. Within Pennsylvania, non-native animals, plants, fish, and disease microorganisms have been detected; thus, vigilant cleaning and drying is essential when moving boats and fish holding gear from water to water. Never move fish, aquatic plants, or any organism from one waterway to another. The potential to unintentionally introduce an invasive aquatic species is too great. Pennsylvania Sea Grant has posted photos and provides links to information about known aquatic invaders now occurring in Pennsylvania with tips about how various users can best prevent their spread: [Aquatic Invasive Species - Sea Grant Pennsylvania \(psu.edu\)](#)

The information that follows includes practical advice and guidance for decontamination; however, decontamination methods change frequently in response to effectiveness testing, and as new invasive organisms are detected. We caution that all cleaning and decontamination actions described below may

not eliminate all invasive species but will eliminate most. The application of cleaning and decontamination protocols carries inherent risk to those engaged and those nearby, particularly at the conclusion of a tiring day on the water. We advise caution and safety when engaged in any cleaning and decontamination activity and that you **proceed at your own risk**.

Basic Cleaning, Drying, and Decontamination:

- I. While at the fishing location, after the event has concluded and boats have been retrieved onto trailers, prior to inspection to remove all debris and plant fragments adhering to boats, trailers, fish holding tanks, fish holding equipment (scales and nets), and all fishing and boating gear exposed to water: To accomplish, ensure tow vehicles, boats, and trailers are securely, safely, and legally parked away from traffic with engine off and emergency brake on with wheel chocks in place as necessary, to prevent unintended vehicle and trailer movement during debris removal, cleaning and inspection.
- II. Thoroughly inspect and remove all aquatic plant debris and mud. Drain and rinse any water holding tanks and fish life support equipment or containers. Do not discard any live baitfish, live non-native fish, live crayfish, amphibian, or invertebrate (hellgrammites, etc.) baits into the waterway. Do not discard, or deposit, any dead fish or dead organisms into the waterway or adjacent trash bins. Any oil or fuel contaminated bilge water should be retained and disposed of properly.
- III. Live bait may not be released into Commonwealth waters unless baited on a hook for angling. Excess live bait of any species **MAY NOT BE RELEASED INTO COMMONWEALTH WATERS** and must be retained and disposed of away from waterways. For example, dead fish (for consumption), dead fish bait, dead crayfish, dead amphibians, or dead invertebrates should be placed in a cooler, or on ice, for later consumption or properly disposed of when you return home or to your point of embarkation (camp, hotel, etc.). **For all crayfish species, the head must be immediately removed behind the eyes upon capture unless used as bait in the water from which taken. Crayfish head removal/regulations are mandated state law under Title 58 Pa Code Chapter 71a. Additionally, anglers should be aware of unlawful baitfish, such as the Round Goby, Tubenose Goby, European Rudd, Common Carp, Goldfish, Koi, and Comets, and other species banned under state law under Title 58 Pa Code* various Chapters.**
- IV. Entrails of any retained organisms and removed crayfish heads should be disposed of at home in municipal trash. Dead fish, fish bait, invertebrates, amphibians, crayfish heads and carcasses, and/or fish entrails should never be disposed of in waste containers at access areas.
- V. Upon returning home, or to point of embarkation, and prior to launch in a different river or lake, fish holding tanks, fish life support equipment, boats, and trailers should be thoroughly decontaminated. For boats, tanks, and fish life support equipment typically stored outside, follow the procedures for decontamination described below. Decontamination may include one or more of the following: (2a) thorough drying (or freezing), (2b) hot water cleaning, or (2c) chemical washing. Boats and equipment typically stored by mooring in a waterway (e.g., at a marina) and destined for use elsewhere require more aggressive cleaning and decontamination procedures; see “Clean Your Gear” link above.

- (1) Cleaning at the fishing/boating site:
 - a. Remove all clinging plant fragments, clinging/attached animals (snails, mussels), debris, and mud from boats, trailers, fish life support tanks, fish life support equipment, fishing gear, anchors, lines, or safety gear that has become wet. For moored vessels, pressure washing, scrubbing and/or scraping may be required to remove encrusted materials. Professional hull cleaning may be a best option for moored vessels. Conduct this cleaning activity at the waterway where the boat has been operated.

- (2) Decontamination at home where procedures may include one or more of the following (see “Clean Your Gear” link above for additional detail):
 - a. Complete drying where fish holding tanks, fish life support equipment, boats, and trailers are dried to touch and then allowed to dry for another 48 hours. Complete freezing for a 24-hour period or longer provides necessary decontamination; therefore, boats and fish holding equipment stored out of the water overwinter at ambient Pennsylvania air temperatures may be considered decontaminated following a period of 24 hours of freezing temperatures. One potential method for drying a live-well and tubing is to place a vacuum cleaner hose exhaust air (exhaust air only) or a fan into, or over, tubing openings for a period necessary to thoroughly dry tubing and tank, consistent with live-well and tubing manufacturer recommendations.
 - b. Hot water (140° F or hotter^a) pressure washing in a manner consistent with life support tank, boat, and boat trailer manufacturer recommendations, followed by complete drying. Boat engine cooling systems, water intakes, and internal live well tubing may require alternate disinfection. In a manner consistent with manufacturer recommendations, flush the engine with 140° F^a water for at least 10 minutes; and in a manner consistent with manufacturer recommendations, run 140° F^a water through the boat live wells and live well tubing, boat bilges, and all other areas that could contain water.
^aNOTE: To ensure 100% mortality of AIS, applied water temperature needs to be 140° F at the point of contact thus higher (hotter) at the nozzle[‡].
 - c. Chemical washing may include use of several compounds that typically require follow-up rinsing and/or neutralization. We restrict our guidance to household bleach, which is a readily available chemical. Although household bleach is readily available to consumers. We caution that use at certain concentrations makes it corrosive and hazardous; therefore, use and application must be carried out with extreme caution and safety. Thorough rinsing and, where necessary, neutralization should be consistent with manufacturer recommendations where applied:

| Product ¹ | Concentration ^{1, 2} | Contact time ^{1,3} |
|--|---|--|
| Household Bleach (5.25% liquid sodium hypochlorite) | (1:1 or 50%) add 1 part bleach to 1 part water | Dip, wipe, or spray on item to be treated, wait 5 minutes, then rinse thoroughly with water or neutralize ³ and allow to dry. |
| Household Bleach (5.25% liquid sodium hypochlorite) | (1:9 or 10%) add 1 part bleach to 9 parts water | Immersion for 10 minutes for items to be treated, then rinse thoroughly with water or neutralize ³ and allow to dry. |
| <p>¹Application and use of these products carries inherent health risks to both the applicant and those in the immediate area where chemicals are applied. Necessary protective clothing, respirators, protective gloves, protective boots, and eye protection are required for the applicant and others who may be affected by application. These chemicals may have adverse effects upon boat, live well, and boat trailer components. Consult the equipment manufacturer for guidance. Consult Material Safety Data Sheets and/or manufacturer instructions for guidance associated with safe use and handling of these chemicals.</p> <p>²Compounds should be unsealed and mixed immediately before use to be effective; use these compounds at described concentrations at your own risk. Application or exposure requires use of protective clothing and other apparatus. Consult the Material Safety Data Sheet of the product used for specific details.</p> <p>³Chlorine solution compounds are corrosive to metal and rubber and are toxic to fish, other aquatic and terrestrial organisms, and to humans if used or handled incorrectly. Rinse all treated boats, trailers, and fish holding equipment with water after the necessary contact period or neutralize by spraying with sodium thiosulfate at 800ppm solution (3 grams per gallon of water) on all chlorine treated surfaces. Sodium thiosulfate is available from swimming pool supply sources. Follow all label precautions pertaining to neutralization; use this compound at your own risk. Application or exposure to sodium thiosulfate requires use of protective clothing and other apparatus. Consult the Material Safety Data Sheet of the product used for specific details.</p> | | |

CAUTION: Exercise care when handling and using hot water, chlorine compounds, and chlorine neutralizing compounds which can burn or harm unprotected skin, eyes, nose, and respiratory tract. Handling and use of high temperature water, high temperature water spray (steam), and chlorine compounds can be hazardous. Therefore, necessary precautions and safety procedures must be carefully adhered to so that burns and other harm to oneself and others is prevented. Also, some equipment may melt, crack, or corrode in conjunction with exposure to hot water, steam, and/or chlorine compound cleaning. Some waterproof fabrics can delaminate or deteriorate with exposure to hot water and chlorine compounds. Consult manufacturer recommendations regarding use of hot water and/or chlorine compounds in conjunction with decontamination described above. Chlorine and neutralization compounds must be applied away from waterways and storm sewers so that untreated drainage into a waterway will not occur. **Hot water and chlorine compound cleaning and follow-up neutralization and any methods to enhance fish survival and prevent AIS contamination should be conducted at your own risk.**

Appendix

† For more information about tournament hosting and guidance in fish handling please refer to: Gilliland, G., & H. Schramm. (2009) Keeping Bass Alive. B.A.S.S. Birmingham, AL. Online at: [keepingbassalive_guidebook_comp.pdf\(bassmaster.com\)](http://keepingbassalive_guidebook_comp.pdf(bassmaster.com))

‡ California Department of Fish and Wildlife Aquatic Invasive Species Decontamination Protocol: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=43333>

* Title 58 Chapter 61 58 Pa. Code § 61.1. Commonwealth inland waters. [Online Transportation of live fish...link](#)