

MINUTES OF THE IHSA BASS FISHING ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
September 11, 2019

The IHSA Bass Fishing Advisory Committee met at the IHSA Office, Bloomington, Illinois, on September 11, 2019, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Committee members present were: Jim Bagnell El Paso (E.P.-Gridley); Marc Eckmann, Belvidere (North); Erik Frederiksen, Braidwood (Reed-Custer); Ted Lowery, Chicago (Brother Rice); David Markwell, Fithian (Oakwood); Joe Sornberger, Oneida (ROWVA); and Scott Steward, Salem. Also in attendance were Kurt Gibson, IHSA Associate Executive Director and Mike Garthaus, Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**1. VIII. Tournament Rules. V**

**Recommendation:** On the day of competition at either the sectional or state finals tournaments, schools will be limited to putting into the water the number of boats entered, or, in the case of the state finals, the number of boats the school qualified. No additional boats containing coaches or other competitors from a school can be put into the water on days of competition. On the pre-fish day for the state finals, schools can only put into the water boats that are captained by a district employee or board-approved coach/captain. **For the pre-fish day at the state finals, schools can put a maximum of 1 boat for each qualified roster on the water.** Contestants may not obtain fishing patterns or locations from non-competitors, follow a non-competitor's boat or participate in the practice

**Rationale:** Over the years, schools have been putting more and more boats in the water for pre-fish day, putting those schools who may not have access to extra boats at a disadvantage. Absent any wording in the Terms and Conditions to prevent that, the committee believes this recommendation will bring clarity and consistency to pre-fish day, making the practice day fairer for all competitors.

Approved by Consent

**2. VIII. Tournament Rules. H (new; if approved all other sub-sections will need to be re-organized)**

**Recommendation:** **At the state finals, the state finals manager can allow boats to exit the water at a location other than the pre-determined return site in the event severe weather occurs/may occur that may shorten a day of the state finals. The state finals manager will notify schools if he/she invokes this option. If used, a boat may only leave the water when tournament personnel are present and have checked the boat's live well. Once a boat has left the water, it may not re-enter the water to fish any more for that day and must report to the weigh-in area for weigh-ins. Any fish caught and brought to weigh-ins will not be weighed until the established start time for weigh-ins. The state finals manager will be responsible for identifying any other exit locations for the state finals lake and notifying schools of those in advance of the state finals.**

**Rationale:** This recommendation attempts to provide an avenue for boats at the state finals to leave the water in potentially severe weather and still have fish weighed. The recommendation attempts to strike a balance between traditionally accepted tournament expectations/rules and recognizing situations that can happen on large bodies of water, particularly when potentially severe weather occurs.

Approved by Consent

## **ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

None.

## **ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:**

1. The committee reviewed the minutes of the 2018 meeting.
2. The committee discussed the 2018 state series. The committee discussed the importance of coaches and captains exercising caution when determining specific locations to fish during the state series. When the threat of possibly severe weather exists, coaches and captains need to ensure the safety of participants, even if that means fishing areas that may not be as desirable as others. The committee also suggested that IHSA staff offer some additional safety strategies for coaches and captains in its state finals safety video and at the state finals safety meeting.
3. The committee discussed whether or not there is a need for any kind of rule concerning a short fish being brought to weigh-ins. The committee made a recommendation in 2018 to assess a penalty for bringing a short fish to weigh-ins, but it was not approved by the IHSA Board of Directors. After the continuation of discussion this year, the committee believes this is a situation to continue monitoring and will consider bringing forward another recommendation if the situation becomes more prevalent.
4. The committee reviewed the revised state series dates for the 2020 state series. In 2020, sectional tournaments will be held on Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at 25 sites around the state (The sectional rain date will be Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>). The state finals will be held on May 15-16, with pre-fish day being May 14<sup>th</sup>. During this discussion, IHSA staff indicated that, due to rising participation numbers, three additional sectionals will be added for the up-coming season. Assuming a maximum of three boats qualify for the state finals from each sectional tournament, this will result in 75 boats participating at the state finals in 2020. The addition of three sectionals will create new assignments for some schools, and IHSA staff will post tentative sectional assignments as soon as possible, hopefully before the end of 2019.
5. The committee discussed the location of sectional lakes and the state finals location and how those sites are chosen. For sectional tournament, IHSA staff works closely with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to find locations with good bass populations in all areas of the state. IHSA has been fortunate to have a good relationship with the DNR for the bass fishing program's 12 years, and without the support of the DNR, this program wouldn't exist. In making those sectional lake selections, IHSA and DNR do consider requests from participating schools about moving to other lakes, and sometimes moves occur. Other times, though, for a variety of reasons, moves don't occur. In terms of the state finals, the current contract with Carlyle Lake has two years remaining on it, meaning the 2020 and 2021 state finals will be held there. It is expected that in the early part of the 2020-21 school year, the IHSA Board of Directors will put out a RFP (Request for Proposals) for the bass fishing state finals to allow interested communities the opportunity to bid on the event.
6. The committee continued its discussion from last year regarding the current state series structure. With rising participation among member schools, it appears that some kind of change will need to occur in the next few years to accommodate the program's growth. There are many challenges associated with considering how to develop a 'new' state series that attempts to manage travel for schools, assigns an appropriate number of schools to each sectional tournament, continues to find bodies of water with good bass populations, and ultimately qualifies a manageable and appropriate number of boats to the state finals. During their discussion, the committee considered whether adding regional tournaments to the state series was necessary at this time, or if making better use of larger lakes by assigning more schools to those sectionals (and qualifying more boats for the state finals from those potentially-larger sectionals) would help the state series. Currently, some sectional lakes are likely over-saturated with boats, which is one reason why three sectional sites will be added in 2020, but the committee recognizes that simply adding sectionals as participation numbers grow is likely not the best way to handle this growth. The committee asked IHSA staff to generate some questions for the annual coaches' survey to gather some information the committee can review at their next meeting.
7. The committee discussed a proposal that would add a day to the state finals and make the final day a "championship"-type day, where only a top number of boats would fish. The top number would be determined based on each boat's performance on the first two days of the state finals. The committee took no action on this proposal.
8. The committee thanked out-going members Bagnell, Eckmann, and Sornberger for their service.