

Blackwater Angler Tournament Rulebook

September 26–27, 2026 | Blackwater Bar and Grill | Yankeetown, Florida

These rules govern individual competition, daily weigh-in, Calcuttas, prizes and protests. Each angler is responsible for following the tournament rules and applicable fishing requirements throughout both days.

1 Registration and eligibility

- Tournament entry is \$95 per angler. This is an individual tournament, not a team or boat tournament.
- The captains meeting is mandatory on Friday, September 25, at 6 PM. Registration and fees are due at the meeting. Missing the meeting excludes an angler from participation.
- Registered anglers may share boats. Kayak and shore anglers are permitted. There are no separate divisions or junior exceptions.
- Sponsor entries are eligible for full cash prizes. An angler may win the grand prize and multiple Calcuttas.
- Each angler must retain their registration card and present it at weigh-in. Failure to have the card results in rejection of that day's weight.

2 Two day scoring

- Each angler may submit one bag per day containing up to 1 legal redfish and 5 legal trout. These are tournament submission limits, not permission to exceed any applicable legal limit.
- The two daily bag weights are added together. The greatest combined weight wins the guaranteed \$5,000 grand prize.
- Incomplete bags are eligible and may win. A complete bag is not required.
- Fish must be caught and submitted on the same day. Fish from Saturday may not be submitted on Sunday.
- An angler who does not fish or submit a qualifying bag on one day receives zero for that day and remains eligible based on the other day's weight.
- Once a fish has been weighed, it cannot be replaced with another fish.

3 Tournament contact

Robert Barker: (352) 219-3072. Tournament officials: Lee, Chris and Mike. Bring rules questions to the captains meeting before fishing begins.

Fishing Times Boundaries and Conduct

4 First light start

- Fishing may begin at first light at the angler's fishing location on each tournament day. First light means the onset of natural morning daylight before sunrise.
- Boats may launch beforehand, but no casting or fishing may occur before first light. Fishing before first light results in tournament disqualification.
- No morning check-in is required before fishing.

5 Launch and fishing boundaries

- Boats must launch from a ramp or dock within Citrus County or Levy County.
- Permitted fishing waters are navigable Nature Coast waters within the boundary from the southern Citrus County line to the northern Dixie County line.
- Fishing outside the approved boundary or violating the launch boundary results in rejection of the entire day's weight.
- Boats may be trailered to weigh-in. Allow time for festival traffic, ramp congestion and dock access; these conditions do not extend the check-in deadline.
- Use courtesy and safe boat handling around the dock. Many boats will be approaching weigh-in.

6 Individual catch requirements

- Each angler must catch their own fish. No assistance is permitted with casting, hooking, reeling or netting.
- Hook-and-pass is prohibited. Fish may not be exchanged or transferred between anglers, including anglers sharing the same boat. There is no junior exception.
- Unregistered passengers may not fish. A violation results in rejection of the entire day's weight.
- Anglers may fish with guides. Captains may provide assistance outside the process of catching a fish, subject to applicable FWC requirements.
- Guides who participate may not enter fish caught by paying customers.
- Outside delivery of fish for weigh-in is prohibited. Anglers must personally present their own fish.

7 Legal fishing practices

- All fish, equipment and fishing methods must comply with applicable FWC requirements, including requirements applying to captains and crew.
- All otherwise legal fishing equipment and methods are permitted during tournament fishing. The one-rod limit and cast-net prohibition on page 4 apply specifically to the dockside tie-breaker.

Check In Measurement and Weighing

8 Daily weigh in deadlines

- Saturday, September 26: weigh-in runs from 3 PM to 5 PM. Check-in closes at 5 PM.
- Sunday, September 27: weigh-in runs from 2 PM to 4 PM. Check-in closes at 4 PM.
- By the daily deadline, each angler must be checked in at the registration desk and in the designated weigh-in line with their registration card and fish ready for submission.
- Late check-in results in rejection of the entire day's weight.
- After entering the line, anglers may not leave the line or alter their bag while waiting. Either violation results in tournament disqualification.

9 Fish condition and measurement

- Officials will measure every fish before weighing the combined bag. All submitted fish must be legal.
- An angler may request one flip of a fish believed to be over or under the legal slot measurement. The second measurement after that flip is final.
- Submitting an illegal fish results in tournament disqualification.
- Dead fish are accepted without a dead-fish penalty. Fish must be fresh; frozen, gutted, mutilated, injected, weighted or otherwise altered fish are prohibited.
- Officials will immediately stamp and return weighed fish to anglers who wish to keep them.

10 Scale and recording procedure

- The scale will be calibrated before every tested weight and the weighing basket tared to 0.000 lb.
- Official weights are recorded to 0.001 lb. No reweighs are permitted.
- For Calcutta scoring, officials weigh the redfish and one angler-selected trout and count the redfish spots before weighing the combined daily bag.
- An angler may select only one trout per day for the Biggest Trout Calcutta. Officials will not weigh multiple trout to help an angler choose.
- Official measurements and recorded weights are final, subject to the permitted measurement flip and officials' authority to correct clerical errors.

Calcuttas Prizes and Tie Breakers

11 Calcutta entry and scoring

- The three Calcuttas are Josh Bailey Memorial Closest to 12 Spots, Biggest Redfish and Biggest Trout.
- Each Calcutta starts with \$500 and has a minimum entry fee of \$100. Anglers may contribute additional money to increase the pot.
- Calcutta entrants must also enter the main tournament. Calcutta signup and payment must be completed at the captains meeting.
- Calcuttas are two-day competitions. An angler's best qualifying individual result across the two days counts; Calcutta fish weights are not added together across days.
- Biggest Redfish and Biggest Trout are determined by the greatest individual qualifying fish weight. Anglers select one trout each day.
- For the Josh Bailey Memorial Calcutta, the weighmaster counts spots on both sides of a legal redfish. Touching spots count as one spot.
- The closest count to 12 spots wins. Counts equally distant from 12, such as 11 and 13, are tied.

12 Dockside tie breaker

- The same dockside fish-off resolves tied prizes, including all Calcuttas. Tied anglers must be present and report within 15 minutes of being called. Failure to report forfeits the tied prize money.
- Each participating angler may use one rod. Anglers may use their choice of bait, rod and equipment, except cast nets, subject to applicable law.
- Any fish species, including baitfish, counts. The first participating angler to bring up and hold a fish in their possession within the 30-minute fish-off wins.
- If no participant has a fish in possession within 30 minutes, the tied prize is split equally among the fish-off participants.
- Supplies will be available from the Blackwater Beer Tent. Stay nearby after weigh-in so you do not miss a tie-breaker announcement.

13 Awards and payment

- The \$5,000 grand prize is guaranteed regardless of participation. Sponsor entrants may win full prizes, and an angler may win multiple awards.
- Grand-prize payment will be by check on September 27 after the final awards ceremony. Calcutta prizes will also be paid September 27.
- All grand-prize and Calcutta winners must complete a W-9 before payment. The paying business will arrange any required tax reporting. Winners are responsible for applicable taxes on their winnings.

Penalties Protests and Official Decisions

14 Tournament disqualification

- Fishing before first light; submitting illegal fish; or submitting altered fish.
- Leaving the weigh-in line or changing the bag while waiting.
- Prohibited assistance in catching fish, exchanging fish or hook-and-pass.
- Abusive conduct or refusal to submit to an official inspection.
- Refusing a protest-related polygraph examination or failing that examination.

15 Rejection of the entire day

- Late weigh-in check-in or failure to present a registration card.
- Unregistered passengers fishing.
- Fishing outside the approved boundary or violating the launch boundary.
- A rejected day receives zero weight. This differs from tournament disqualification, which removes the angler from the tournament.

16 Written protests and polygraphs

- A written protest and \$500 cash protest fee must be submitted to Robert Barker within 30 minutes after all anglers have been weighed and scored on Sunday.
- The protester must provide their own written statement. Blackwater and its affiliates will not supply a protest sheet. Include the protester's name and contact information, the angler involved, the alleged violation, when and where it occurred, and available evidence or witnesses.
- Polygraph examinations occur only through a formal protest, not automatically for winners. The protesting party must put up the money for the examination.
- Refusal or failure of a polygraph results in tournament disqualification. An inconclusive result does not automatically disqualify an angler; officials will review other relevant evidence and circumstances and decide based on tournament fairness and compliance with the rules.
- Robert Barker hears protests. Officials may request inspections, information and supporting evidence necessary to investigate suspected cheating. Decisions are final.

17 Weather refunds and rule changes

- The tournament will fish rain or shine. No refunds or returns will be given.
- Officials retain authority to address dangerous weather and emergencies. Any official may call an immediate safety pause; final weather, emergency and cancellation decisions require unanimous agreement among officials.
- Officials may correct clerical errors. Rule changes will be posted publicly and announced to participants through the official Blackwater Facebook page.