REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL FISHING CONTESTS

These requirements are authorized per Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Regulation Chapter 46, Fishing Regulations.

A fishing contest is defined as any event involving taking fish on any water of the state other than licensed fishing preserves, where:

1. Cash or prizes are awarded or an entry or participation fee is charged; **AND,**
2. Fifty or more adults (18 years of age or older) or 25 or more boats participate on a given date.

Contest Permit Applications: No person shall conduct a fishing contest without first obtaining a fishing contest permit, unless exempted below. Anyone desiring to hold a fishing contest shall submit an application for a fishing contest permit on a form provided by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department). Applications may be submitted one year (365 days) prior to the start of the fishing contest, but shall be submitted at least thirty days prior to the start of the fishing contest. Contest Applications may be submitted via mail or email. Mail: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Fish Division, 5400 Bishop Blvd., Cheyenne, WY 82006-0001. Email: Wgf-fishadmin@wyo.gov

Contests Exempted from the Permit Requirement:

- Events that limit the method of take to archery equipment (e.g., bow fishing) do not require a fishing contest permit.
- Events that last longer than 30 days, regardless of the number of waters involved, are considered dispersed fishing contests. These contests do not require a fishing contest permit. See additional information on the final page of this document.

Reasons for Denying Fishing Contest Permits: The Department may deny an application if information is falsified on the application or if the application is incomplete or incorrectly filled out. Fishing contest permits shall not be issued if the Department determines the fishing contest does not comply with Wyoming Statutes, Commission regulations, the contest may be harmful to the fishery resource, the contest presents a possible conflict with a previously authorized contest, or the public use facilities such as boat ramps, parking areas, campgrounds, and related facilities are inadequate to support the contest.

Information is available regarding contests that have been authorized by calling 307-777-4559.

Fishing Contest Permit Requirements: The fishing contest permittee shall adhere to all requirements and stipulations provided on the fishing contest permit.

Failure to comply with the requirements of the fishing contest permit is a violation of Wyoming Game and Fish Commission regulations and may result in denial of future fishing contest permits.

The fishing contest sponsor is responsible to ensure that all contestants are aware of the need to comply with all Department Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Regulations (Commission Regulation Chapter 62). Specifically, all contest watercraft coming from out of the state of Wyoming from March 1 through November 30, or that were last used on a suspect, positive or infested water, are required to undergo a mandatory inspection by an authorized AIS inspector prior to launching. In addition, sponsors should inform contestants that all boats must be Cleaned, Drained and Dry prior to launching. Any contest boat may be subject to an AIS inspection at the discretion of the WGFD. More information on AIS and the Clean, Drain, Dry protocol can be found at: https://wgfd.wyo.gov/fishing-boating/aquatic-invasive-species-prevention

The fishing contest sponsor is responsible to ensure that all contestants are aware of fishing license requirements and the current Department fishing, watercraft and aquatic invasive species regulations.

Contest rules must require that all participants adhere to Department regulations, including daily creel and possession limits and must disqualify any angler who is cited for a violation of Department regulations while participating in the contest (Commission Regulation Chapters 46, 22 and 62). "While participating" is defined as 6:00 PM on the day preceding the first day of the contest until the end of the contest.

Requirements for other permits: Additional fishing contest authorizations may be required for waters where other landowners or entities (e.g., federal agencies, county parks, power companies, or Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources) control access. It is the obligation of the fishing contest applicant to determine these requirements and to obtain all necessary authorizations. Possession of a Department fishing contest permit does not indicate permission or authorization from other land managers or entities.

Stocking, tagging or marking of fish: No contest shall involve the tagging, marking or stocking of any fish without prior written approval from the Department. Contact the local regional fisheries management supervisor or call 307-777-4559 for more information.

Post-Fishing Contest Report Required: Within 30 days after completion of the fishing contest, the permittee shall submit a legible, complete and accurate written report to the Department on a form provided by the Department. Failure to submit this report may result in denial of future fishing contest permits. For some contests, reporting of fish lengths and/or weights may be required. If an approved contest did not take place, a report stating why the contest was cancelled must be submitted within 30 days following the contest date.

TYPES OF CONTESTS AND RESTRICTIONS

The following table summarizes the five types of fishing contests that may be authorized for various species, including Harvest Contests, Spear Gun Contests, and three types of live release contests: 1) Immediate Release Contests, 2) Progressive Live Release Contests, and 3) Central Live Release Contests. Requirements for each type of fishing contest are provided after the table. Other types of fishing contests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

SPECIES ELIGIBLE FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF FISHING CONTESTS

	Coldwater fish species (trout, grayling, and whitefish)	**Other fish species** (e.g., walleye, bass, carp)	**Species that must be killed immediately** if captured per Department fishing regulations
Harvest Contest			
Open water	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ice	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spear Gun Contest			
Open water	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ice	No	No	No
Immediate Release Contest (e.g., catch, photograph, release)			
Open water	Yes	Yes	No
Ice	Considered on a case-by-case basis	Considered on a case-by-case basis	No
Progressive Live Release Contest			
Open water	No	Yes	No
Ice	No	No	No
Central Live Release Contest			
Open water	No	Walleye = No Other species considered on a case-by-case basis	No
Ice	No	No	No

REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH TYPE OF FISHING CONTESTS

Harvest Contests

A contest where fish are caught and the decision to keep the fish is made immediately. Fish that are kept are reduced to the angler's possession and applied to the angler's creel and possession limit. Once reduced to the angler's possession, fish **shall not** be returned to the water. No angler may keep fish in excess of the daily creel and possession limit. Fish are typically processed (e.g., measured or weighed) by contest staff at one or more locations.

- Eligible species:
  - Coldwater fish species (i.e., trout, grayling, and whitefish).
  - Other game fish species (e.g., walleye, bass, crappie).
  - Nongame fish species (e.g., carp)
  - Species that must be killed immediately if captured per Department fishing regulations,

Chapter 46 (e.g. walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, burbot in Flaming Gorge Reservoir). Contest rules must require participants to keep these fish or to dispose of them in a manner that will not become an annoyance to others once the carcass becomes putrid, decayed or offensive (see Wyoming Statute § 35-10-101).

- Open water or ice fishing. No date restrictions.
- Use of bait allowed in accordance with Department fishing regulations.
- Use of live wells is allowed.
    - The decision to release a fish or keep it for contest entry must be made immediately upon capture.
    - Sorting and releasing fish in the angler's boat live well (culling) prior to the contest weigh-in is not permitted. Once a fish is put in an angler's boat live well, it shall not be released. Contest rules must clearly state this requirement.
- Weighing fish allowed.

Spear Gun Contests

A contest where fish are taken underwater by a spear gunner. All fish taken in a spear gun contest shall be killed immediately. Game fish must be kept, reduced to possession, and applied to the spear gunner's creel and possession limit. No spear gunner may keep fish in excess of the daily creel and possession limit. Dead fish are typically processed (e.g., measured or weighed) by contest staff at one or more locations.

- Eligible species:
    - Coldwater fish species (i.e., trout, grayling, and whitefish).
    - Other game fish species (e.g., walleye, bass, crappie).
    - Nongame fish species (e.g., carp).
    - Species that must be killed immediately if captured per Department fishing regulations, Chapter 46 (e.g. walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, burbot in Flaming Gorge Reservoir).
- Open water only; no date restrictions.
- Only allowed on lakes. Prohibited on rivers and streams.
- Weighing fish allowed.
- Spear gun contest rules must include:
    - Contest rules must require participants to keep nongame fish or to dispose of them in a manner that will not become an annoyance to others once the carcass becomes putrid, decayed or offensive (see Wyoming Statute § 35-10-101).
    - No game fish may be taken unless the fisherman is completely submerged.
    - Spear gun contest rules must include all other regulations in Section 10 (Underwater Spear Gun Fishing) of Commission Regulation Chapter 46, Fishing Regulations.

Immediate Release Contests

Fish must be measured, photographed, and returned to the water immediately.

- Eligible species:
    - Coldwater game fish (e.g., trout, grayling, whitefish)
    - Other game fish (e.g., walleye, bass, crappie)
    - Nongame fish (e.g., carp)
- Ineligible species:
    - Any species required by regulation to be killed immediately upon capture (e.g. walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, burbot in Flaming Gorge Reservoir).

- No date restrictions.
- Tackle & Bait Restrictions:
    - Coldwater Species contests: Restricted to artificial flies and lures only.
        - *Exception:* Ice fishing contests where lake trout are the only eligible contest species may be permitted to use bait on a case-by-case basis.
    - Other Species contests: Bait is allowed in accordance with Department regulations, provided no prizes are offered for coldwater species.
- Placing captured fish in live wells or other containers is prohibited.
- Weighing fish allowed.
    - The Department may require the use of weigh nets, bags or slings.

Progressive Live Release Contests

These contests allow anglers to catch and retain fish in a live well until measured and/or weighed, but contest requirements are intended to minimize stress to fish while holding in live wells and handling. Multiple locations are used to measure fish. The locations may be on shore or roving or stationary boats may be used. Contest participants are encouraged to enter fish throughout the day, reducing the time fish are held in live wells.

- Eligible species:
    - Game fish species (e.g., walleye, bass, crappie) other than coldwater fish. Prohibited for walleye and sauger from July 1 through September 15.
    - Nongame fish (e.g., carp) except those that must be killed immediately.
- Ineligible species:
    - Coldwater fish species (i.e., trout, grayling and whitefish).
    - Game species classified as nongame fish in a region or a specific water (e.g. walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, burbot in Flaming Gorge Reservoir). These species must be killed immediately if captured.
- Open water only. See date restrictions above for walleye/sauger contests.
- Use of bait allowed in accordance with Department fishing regulations.
- Use of live wells allowed.
    - The decision to release a fish or keep it for contest entry must be made immediately upon capture.
    - Sorting and releasing fish in the angler's boat live well (culling) prior to the contest release is not permitted. Once a fish is put in an angler's boat live well, it can only be released at a contest release station. Contest rules must clearly state this requirement.
    - No more than five live fish may be kept in a live well or elsewhere on a boat. The time fish spend in a live well shall not exceed two hours.
    - No angler may possess a number of live fish in excess of the daily creel limit for the contest water at any time.
- Weighing fish allowed.
    - The Department may require the use of weigh net, bags or slings.
- A complete description of the release stations and measuring operation must accompany the contest application.
    - The contest application must describe equipment and staffing that will be used to ensure stress to fish will be minimized.
    - Fish processing at release stations will be streamlined to minimize the time between fish removal from live wells and release. Waiting lines and holding fish in baskets or nets are not allowed.

  - Delayed mortality is greatly increased when a fish's gills are exposed to air. If release locations are located on land, fish shall be transported in a container from boat to release station in water deep enough to allow all fish to swim upright.
  - Fish shall be released into water a minimum of four feet deep. This may require additional planning to identify an appropriate release location (e.g., at a dock or anchored boat).
- The Department may require up to four release locations based on the size of the water.
  - Minimum numbers of release locations for major reservoirs when full;

Water Name	Surface Acres at full pool	Release Locations
Alcova Reservoir	2,340	1
Keyhole Reservoir	9,420	2
Glendo Reservoir	12,365	3
Boysen Reservoir	19,560	4
Seminoe Reservoir	20,000	4
Pathfinder Reservoir	22,000	4
The Department may authorize fewer release locations based on the actual size of the contest area (generally at least one release location per 4,500 surface acres).		

  - Contact the Department for the number of release locations required for other waters.
  - Release locations must be located to minimize travel distance for contest anglers. A complete description of the release stations to include boat ramp name or GPS location must be provided on the contest application.
  - The contest applicant must organize the contest to allow participants to have fish processed at release locations during the entire contest- fishing day and encourage contestants to enter fish multiple times during the day.

Central Live Release Contests

These contests employ a single, centralized location where fish are brought to be entered in the contest. The weigh-in is generally held once at the end of the fishing day.

- Eligible species:
  - Game species (e.g., bass) other than walleye, sauger and coldwater fish species will be considered on a case by case basis.
  - Nongame fish (e.g., carp) except those that must be killed immediately.
- Ineligible species:
  - Walleye and sauger.
  - Coldwater fish species (i.e., trout, grayling and whitefish).
  - Game species classified as nongame fish in a region or a specific water (e.g. walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, burbot in Flaming Gorge Reservoir). These species must be killed immediately if captured.
- Open water only.
- Use of bait allowed in accordance with Department fishing regulations.
- Use of live wells allowed.
  - The decision to release a fish or keep it for contest entry must be made immediately upon capture.

  - Sorting and releasing fish in the angler's boat live well (culling) prior to the contest release is not permitted. Once a fish is put in an angler's boat live well, it can only be released at a contest release station. Contest rules must clearly state this requirement.
  - No more than ten live fish may be kept in a live well or elsewhere on a boat.
  - No angler may possess a number of live fish in excess of the daily creel limit for the contest water at any time.
- Weighing fish allowed.
  - The Department may require the use of weigh net, bags or slings.
- A complete description of the release station and weigh-in operation must accompany the contest application.
  - The contest application must describe equipment and staffing that will be used to ensure stress to fish will be minimized.
  - Fish processing at release stations will be streamlined to minimize the time between fish removal from live wells and release. Waiting lines and holding fish in baskets or nets are not allowed.
  - Delayed mortality is greatly increased when a fish's gills are exposed to air. Fish shall be transported in a container from boat to release station in water deep enough to allow all fish to swim upright.
  - Fish shall be released into water a minimum of four feet deep. This may require additional planning to identify an appropriate release location (e.g., at a dock or anchored boat).

Additional Requirements for ALL Contests Involving Live Release (Immediate, Progressive or Central)

- Fish shall not be out of the water more than one minute during the weighing or measuring process.
- Fizzing (releasing air from the swim bladder with a needle) is not allowed under any circumstances.
- Fish unable to right themselves (or fish that otherwise seem weak and may suffer post- release death) shall be retained by the contestant and count towards the daily creel and possession limit of that contestant.
- Inappropriate handling practices (e.g., throwing fish or holding them up by the gills or eyes) may result in the denial for future contest permits. Inappropriate and discourteous actions by contest participants and organizers increases public opposition and may jeopardize future opportunities to hold fishing contests.
- Rules for all contests involving live release must require that game species classified as nongame fish in a region or a specific water (e.g. walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir, burbot in Flaming Gorge Reservoir) be killed immediately in accordance with Commission Regulation Chapter 46, Fishing Regulations.

Dispersed Fishing Contests – Exempt from Contest Application Requirement

Regardless of the number of contest participants, the Department considers a contest a dispersed fishing contest if 1) cash or prizes are awarded or an entry fee or participation fee is charged; and, 2) it lasts longer than 30 days regardless of the number of waters involved.

Pre-registration prior to the beginning of the contest is often not required. It is generally impossible to know how many people participate on a given date in these types of contests.

Dispersed fishing contests do not require a Department fishing contest permit. Contest organizers or

sponsors need not notify the Department nor submit an application for a fishing contest permit.