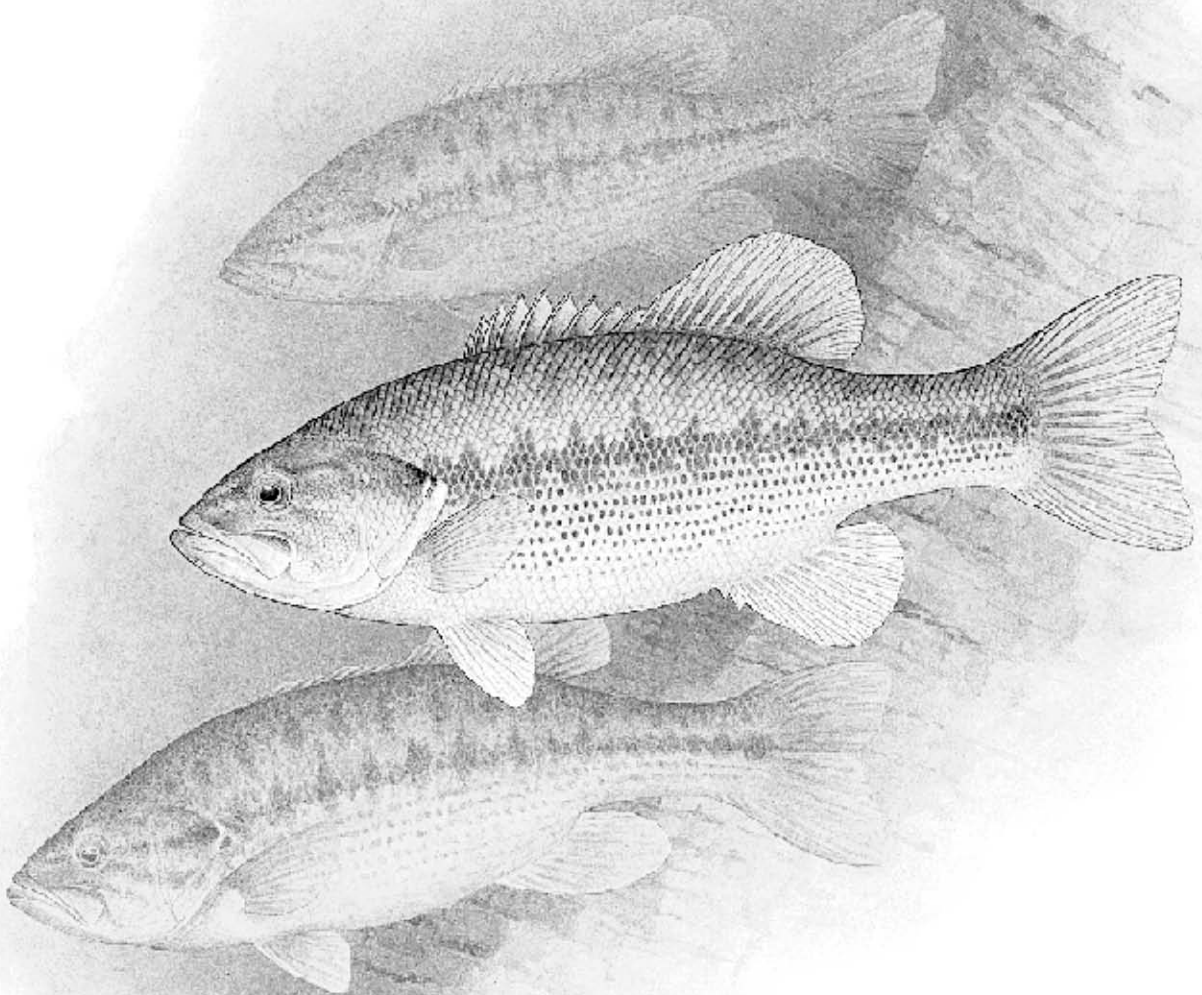




Bass Tournament Results 2012



**Kentucky Department of Fish
And Wildlife Resources**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, there was a total of 233 black bass tournaments that participated in the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' (KDFWR) Tournament Reporting Program. Although this was a respectable sum, it was unfortunately a substantial decline from both 2011 and 2010, which had participation totals of 350 and 376 tournaments, respectively. When comparing it to 2011, the 117 fewer tournaments in 2012 was one of the largest single-year drops ever experienced during this program. In contrast, the 622 tournaments that were scheduled online in 2012 was fairly consistent with the past several years, including the 671 events in 2011, which still stands as the program's highest. When considering the number of tournaments that were scheduled, the actual participation rate in 2012 was just 37.5%, which was once again a notable decrease from the last several years when reporting rates ranged from 52% in 2011 to as high as 61% in 2009. In total, the 2012 tournament data was obtained from 27 waterbodies located throughout Kentucky, which included 15 different large reservoirs (> 1000 acres), 8 smaller lakes (< 1000 acres) and the Ohio, Kentucky, Cumberland and Tennessee river systems.

With the number of events being scheduled having remained fairly consistent over the past several years, there are likely other reasons as to why fewer tournaments reported their results to the program in 2012. As noted in past years, cancellations can have a large impact on the calculated reporting rate. However, because of overall normal weather conditions for the majority of the year, it is not the only factor as to why there were more than 100 fewer bass tournaments that contributed their catch data in 2012. Since the most straightforward way to obtain reliable results is to increase the number of events that are participating, there will be further efforts in 2013 to re-introduce the program to as many organizations/directors as possible, especially those who may have not been present during the earlier years of the project.

Although there were no changes to the program in 2012, updates that were implemented in 2010 will still have an influence on results that are presented in this report. These 2010 updates were developed with the goal of not only increasing accuracy, but to also reduce the number of categories that tournament directors had to keep track of during their event. Between 1999 and 2009, the catch data was entered the same way, regardless of whether the tournament was fished by individuals or in a team format. Over the past several years, team tournaments have become increasingly more popular with the most common format involving 2 anglers in the same boat and fishing for a single limit of bass. Previously, this would lead to some error during the data analysis because the assumption was often made that each angler was fishing for his/her own limit. In order to produce the most accurate results possible, tournament organizers were asked to input catch data differently in relation to whether an individual or team format was used.

The bulk of the 2012 black bass tournaments reported both the creel and size limits that they used. Although the majority of those reporting catch data had followed limits that were already being enforced at that water body, some tournaments actually chose to enforce their own, more-restrictive, regulations. On average, 84.1% of the bass tournaments participating in the program used creel limits of 5-fish, 6-fish or a multiple of either (i.e. Team events that allowed 10-fish by having each member weigh in their own limit). When a more stringent bag limits was used, it included creels of 1 (3.7%), 2 (1.3%), 3 (9.9%) and even 4 (0.9%) fish. As would be expected, the 12-in and 15-in minimum length limits were by far the most common size limits used during the 2012 tournaments. The percentage of angling-units that reported catching a limit of fish that was allowed to be weighed in for their tournament was 35.7%, which is a substantial increase over the past couple years, including both 2010 (18.7%) and 2011 (24.7%). In fact, the 35.7% that reported catching a limit in 2012 set a new high for the program after it surpassed 2011, which set the previous high of 24.7%. This measurement is one that was greatly affected by the changes to the program that occurred in 2010. Regardless of how many angling-units caught a limit, the updated ways in which the team and individual tournaments are being distinguished from each other have meant more reliable results in the past few years and often better reflect the number of limits that were actually caught.

The average length for a black bass tournament in 2012 was right at 8.0 hours (hr), which is a small drop from the past couple years when events in 2011 and 2010 lasted an average of 8.4 hr and 8.2 hr, respectively. In 2012, the events actually ranged in duration from 4.0 to 24.0 hr with the shortest generally being evening tournaments that were held regularly by local bass clubs. As in past years, the longer 24 hr events occurred over an entire weekend and were usually hosted by the larger tournament organizations. Also, as in the previous years of the program, the vast majority of the 2012 tournaments took place in both the spring (48.9%) and summer (33.5%) while fall (15.5%) and winter (2.1%) events were less common. Tournaments that took place during the daylight hours comprised 84.5% of all events reported in 2012 while the remaining 15.5% took place at night. Because temperatures in Kentucky can commonly reach 90°F during the summer months, the majority (86.1%) of the night tournaments were held during this time period.

After making the assumption that each team consisted of just 2 members, the analysis of all the catch data has revealed that 13,636 anglers participated in Kentucky black bass tournaments during 2012 and they were able to weigh in a total of 22,815 fish. After breaking down the analysis even further, the 2012 data showed that a standard 8-hour tournament was comprised of 59 individual anglers, or 29.5 teams, and it required an average of 14.52 pounds to take 1st place. It was somewhat surprising to discover that despite the notable decline in the number of fishing events participating in the program during 2012, there was actually an increase in both the size of the average tournament and the weight it took to come out on top. For example, in 2011, a typical tournament was fished by 51 anglers and any one of them could have pulled out a win by weighing in an average of only 13.62 pounds. In fact, the 14 ½ lb average is even more remarkable when considering that the normal winning weights for standard 8-hour tournaments during the previous several years fell within the 13 lb range (13.11 – 13.62 pounds). After all tournaments were standardized to a 5 fish creel and duration of 8 hr, it was a March 4th event at Lake Beshear that had the highest winning weight for 2012 at 29.38 pounds. The heaviest bass weighed in during the same 2012 tournaments was reportedly caught on March 24th from Lake Barkley and this “Big Fish of the Year” tipped the scales at 8.83 pounds. Not surprisingly, the 9 biggest bass weighed in during all tournaments (7.40 – 8.83 lbs) were caught from either Lake Barkley or Kentucky Lake. A 7.31 lb bass caught from Rough River Lake in April capped off the top ten “big fish” of 2012.

After considering the results from different waterbodies that hosted events in 2012, it turns out that Lake Barkley, Kentucky Lake and Lake Beshear could easily be considered as the top 3 bass tournament lakes for the year. Both Lake Barkley and Kentucky Lake were in the top 5 for several of the main statistics, and similar to previous years, Lake Beshear was in the top 2 for all 3 categories that related to the size of the black bass that were brought into the weigh-ins by participating anglers. All three of these lakes came in at the top for the “Average 1st Place Weight (per 8 hour day)” after it was determined that anglers needed average catches of 20.58 lbs, 19.54 lbs and 16.85 lbs to win tournaments at Lake Beshear, Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley, respectively. There were still other lakes that ranked high for some very specific categories. Cedar Creek Lake once again had the highest “Average Weight per Bass” with 4.87 lbs, but as a fishery that is being managed by trophy regulations (≥ 20.0 inch minimum length and 1 fish creel limits), it’s primarily a venue for “big fish” tournaments that would result in only the largest fish being weighed in. Both Herrington Lake and the Ohio River were at the top of categories that were related to the number of “keeper” bass that were being caught by tournament anglers. The “Number of Bass Caught per Hour” and the “Percent of Successful Anglers/Teams” were high for both of these water bodies. However, since the fish being caught were at or even below average size, neither Herrington Lake or the Ohio River were found anywhere near the top of other categories in the rankings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kentucky's Bass Tournament Reporting Program has been quite successful ever since the KDFWR first started collecting catch data in 1999. As would be expected, there have been some major updates to the methods used in this program, but the basic principle remains the same. Tournament directors report their results throughout the year, fisheries biologists end up analyzing the data and then the findings are published in an annual report that goes back out to the tournament anglers. They can then hopefully use this report to determine how their favorite fishing hole stacks up against the many other water bodies in Kentucky. This program continues to do well despite the fact that tournament participation has always been *voluntary*. This speaks volumes about how conservation remains a high priority among the many bass clubs and tournament organizations in Kentucky, especially when they are willing to put in the continued effort that is needed to keep this program going year after year.

The KDFWR has always acknowledged just how important the anglers are to this and many other fisheries research projects, but we have yet to individually thank each bass club and tournament organization for their assistance. They continue to be more than willing to put in the extra time/effort needed to record and submit the kind of data that is being requested from them. This kind of acknowledgement is even more overdue when it is considered that not only do most of these tournaments participate more than once, but some of them have been contributing to the program since the very 1st year. Hence, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife resources would like to officially thank the following groups for submitting the catch data from their 2012 tournaments. It should go without saying that this program would not be able to succeed without your continued participation!

2012 Program Participants

- 3 Keeper Club
- American Bass Anglers
- Barren River Fishing League
- Bowling Green Firefighters Assoc.
- Brandeis Machinery and Supply Co.
- Central Kentucky Bassmasters
- Commonwealth Bass Club
- Derbytown Lunkers II Bass Club
- EB Masonry
- Estill County Chamber of Commerce
- FaithOutdoors
- Fishing Coalminers (Warrior)
- FLW Outdoors
- FOCAS
- Green River Bass Club
- Hilltopper Bass Club
- Jet-A-Marina
- KY Bass Club
- Limestone Bassmasters
- Louisa Bass Club
- Lyon County Bass Club
- Mid-Kentucky Bass Anglers
- Midstate Bass Anglers
- Mustang Bass Fishing Team
- Ohio River Senior Bass
- Owen County Bassmasters
- Paul's Discount
- R&W Tracker/Nitro Team Trail
- Renegade Series – Green River Lake Division
- River Road Bass Club
- Senior Bass Anglers
- Sportsmen for Christ
- The Steel City Bassmasters
- Tuckasee Bass Anglers
- USA Bassin – Barkley Lake Division
- USA Bassin – Cadiz – Trigg Co Division
- USA Bassin – Cedar Creek Lake Division
- USA Bassin – Herrington Lake Division
- USA Bassin – Laurel Lake Division
- USA Bassin – N. Central KY Next Generation Div.
- USA Bassin – Ohio River Big Bone Division
- USA Bassin – Other Misc Divisions
- USA Bassin – National Team Tournament Trail
- WKU Recreation & Sport Majors Club
- Zoneton Fire Dept.

INTRODUCTION

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources first implemented the Black Bass Tournament Reporting Program back in 1999 with the primary goal of capturing the results of the many fishing events that take place annually at lakes and rivers throughout the commonwealth. The objective of this program remains the same after all these years as it focuses primarily on obtaining data related to fishing pressure along with the catch/success rates of the bass tournament anglers. These results will also be added to a long-term database that could possibly be used to monitor black bass fisheries either on a lake-by-lake basis or for Kentucky as a whole. After combining the results of this program with the annual sampling conducted by KDFWR's fisheries biologists, resource managers will have an increased ability to understand and forecast changes to black bass populations in water bodies throughout the state. An additional, and probably most noticeable, benefit of the program comes after the annual report is compiled and bass anglers are able to make use of the information that is provided. The report not only works well as reference when planning for upcoming fishing events, but it also effectively illustrates that fluctuations to bass populations can occur quite regularly, even at some of Kentucky's most popular fisheries.

The bass tournament program simply began with biologists obtaining the contact information for well-known bass clubs across Kentucky. Just prior to the first year of data collection, these clubs were mailed packets that not only contained a detailed explanation of the program, but very specific items related to the collection of tournament data, such as blank report cards and postage-paid envelopes. These bass clubs were asked to fill in a report card for each tournament held during the year, and then mail them back to biologists in the KDFWR's fisheries division. These biologists then analyzed the data from the various tournaments and composed a report that summarized all the data from that year. Every club and/or tournament that participated in the program would get a copy of the report mailed to them by the next spring. In order to continue promoting the program during the first several years following 1999, project biologists also gave presentations at various bass club meetings throughout the state. This would not only allow the biologists to provide a detailed explanation on the methods and results of the program, but it also gave the anglers an opportunity ask questions and to provide feedback on how to make the process as efficient as possible.

When the intensive promotion of the program was cut back after the first couple years, the overall participation rates leveled out and remained fairly stable for awhile. This was until 2005 when the KDFWR succeeded at developing and launching a new online scheduling system for fishing tournaments that was made available via the department's website. Despite the fact that the system has remained completely voluntary to this day, it quickly became popular as tournament organizers were able to quickly check the schedule of a specific lake/river and use it to avoid any potential conflicts with events that might have already been planned for that date. At the time, this tool, which is located at <http://fw.ky.gov/app1/tournamentschedule.aspx>, greatly assisted the tournament program by not only providing a way to constantly promote it, but to also reduce the steps that organizers had to follow in order to submit their results. Ultimately, this put an end to the days when tournaments had no other option but to mail in their report cards.

To complete the 2012 Kentucky Black Bass Tournament Report, the KDFWR asked that all tournament cards be mailed in or submitted via the online system by 1 February 2013. After obtaining the tournament results, program biologists would be able finish analyzing the large amount of data and have the report available before the 2013 fishing season got into full swing. The 2012 report would first be sent out to all directors/organizations that participated in the program during the previous year and they would be able to share those results with anyone who fishes in their tournaments. Although this report could definitely help anyone in the planning of their upcoming tournaments, the purpose of this 1st mailing to all those that contributed in 2012 is to emphasize just how important their catch data is to the continued success of the program. As in previous years, once plenty of time has passed to allow each participant to receive/review their copy, a PDF version of the 2012 Kentucky Black Bass Tournament Report will be made available via the department's website (<http://fw.ky.gov/navigation.aspx?cid=143&navpath=C742>), where it can be downloaded by anyone else who is interested in reviewing the latest results.

After all the 2012 bass tournament results were analyzed as a whole and consequently sorted by waterbody, the program biologist then proceeded to summarize the data from each lake/river according to the season. This is determined by considering the tournament dates that were submitted along with the catch data from each event. Seasons have been defined by the same 3 month period since the program started and they include spring (March – May), summer (June – August), fall (September – November) and winter (December – February). It is important to note that each annual report for this program only summarizes data from the same calendar year (Jan 1st – Dec 31st). This means that the winter season as described in this report actually contains data from the 1st two months (January and February) and then the last month (December) of 2012. During a normal year, this split does not have much of an influence on the overall results. However, it should definitely be taken into consideration if back-to-back winters exhibit completely different conditions. For instance, if a short, mild winter is followed by one with below average temperatures, there can be a notable decline in the success rates of bass anglers when moving from February to December.

Another issue that needed to be considered, and ultimately corrected for, was that bass tournaments in Kentucky were not only hosted at different waterbodies and during different seasons, but they often varied in duration, both in number of hours and days. Before any comparisons could be made within this report, the project biologists had to take the 1st place weights as they were submitted throughout the year and standardize them to what would be defined as an average 1-day, 8-hour tournament. For instance, the “average 1st place weight” for a 10-hour tournament is derived by first dividing the winning weight (i.e. 20 pounds) by the total length of the tournament (i.e. 20 pounds/10 hours = 2) to establish the pounds per hour. This number would then be multiplied by the “standard” 8-hour length (i.e. 2 pounds/hour * 8.0 hours = 16 pounds) to determine the “average 1st place weight”, which can then be compared to any other tournament in the program.

The angler catch rates in this report are presented as the number of legal, or “keeper”, size bass that were caught per hour of tournament fishing. For instance, if the average catch rate for tournaments being held at a specific lake was calculated to be 0.20 bass/hour for the entire year, then the amount of time normally required to catch a single keeper-sized bass would be estimated at 5 hours (1 fish divided by 0.20). It is very important to keep in mind that when the results refer to the size of the fish (i.e. legal or “keeper” size bass), it will always be influenced by the different regulations that are being used at each tournament, even if they happen to hold their events at the same lake or river. As would be expected, the majority of the bass tournaments being hosted in Kentucky during 2012 chose to follow the minimum length limits that were already implemented at each waterbody. However, the anglers fishing in these tournaments do reserve the right to adopt other regulations, but these must, at the very least, adhere to the minimum size and creel limits that are already posted for each waterbody. For example, the most common length limit used by events that are held at Kentucky Lake is 15 inches, which happens to be the same size limit that is enforced by KDFWR for all anglers, regardless of whether or not they are participating in a tournament. These same bass tournaments also have the option to enforce a stricter minimum size limit (i.e. 18-inches), but if they are having a weigh-in, they are clearly not allowed to adopt the smaller 12-inch length limit. Ultimately, a stricter regulation would have an influence on some of the statistics that are calculated for that particular tournament (i.e. a lower catch rate for keeper-sized bass, but a higher average weight).

Since the program began in 1999, and for the 10 years that followed, tournament results were submitted and analyzed on a yearly basis with only a few, if any, updates. However, this changed just prior to 2010 when the program underwent several modifications in an attempt to increase the accuracy of the results. First, there was an adjustment to the way that larger bass were tracked and reported for each tournament. In previous years, biologists requested data which included both the number of fish that weighed ≥ 4 pounds and the number of those weighing ≥ 6 pounds. Now, tournament directors would be expected to keep track of only those fish that weighed ≥ 5 pounds. This would still allow biologists to offer an estimate on the number of hours needed to catch a large bass (≥ 5.0 lbs), but it would also reduce the workload on tournament directors by not requiring them to keep tabs on fish in two different size classes. In addition, this change hopefully minimized the amount of estimating that was likely taking place at the tournament level,

while reducing the handling time and stress placed on large bass that would often had to be weighed multiple times.

The most substantial change adopted in 2010 dealt with how the catch data was being reported and analyzed according to the format being used, especially now that there is an increasing number of tournaments adhering to a team format. These changes were not necessarily required for those team tournaments where each member was allowed to keep his/her own limit of bass. In fact, these anglers were essentially the same as those participating in individual angler tournaments, with the one exception that they were using the same boat. These changes were actually needed to account for tournaments where both anglers on a team were fishing for a single limit of bass. In previous years of this program, certain statistics in the report (i.e. angler catch rates) would naturally error on the low side as it was difficult to correctly identify which tournaments followed this type of format. With the modified way of reporting catch data, those tournaments where the team only weighs in a single limit can now be correctly analyzed as if the two anglers were actually working as one unit.

When it comes to calculating the amount of time it took for anglers to catch a large bass (i.e. ≥ 5.0 lbs), the original approach was to report it the same way as the overall angler catch rates, which would be to determine the number of large bass that were caught per hour of fishing. However, it was eventually realized that the resulting number would usually come out to be extremely low and difficult to use in a “real-world” situation (i.e. the catch rate of ≥ 5.0 pounds bass = 0.004 bass/hour). When it was calculated this way, it would come out to mean that for every hour fished, there were 0.004 bass ≥ 5.0 pounds caught by tournament anglers. This has since been changed to a more angler-friendly measurement that estimates the number of hours that is needed to catch a ≥ 5.0 pounds bass. For example, in a past report, it took approximately 20 hours of fishing at Lake Beshear to catch a ≥ 5.0 pounds bass, while it took over 800 hours at Taylorsville Lake. At first glance, these numbers may actually seem high, but considering an 8-hour tournament with 50 anglers has a total fishing time of 400 hours (50 anglers x 8 hours = 400), those anglers could expect to see around 20 ≥ 5.0 pound bass (400 hours \div 20 hours per ≥ 5.0 lb bass = 20) caught from Lake Beshear. Unfortunately, that would also mean that there would only be a 50% chance (400 hours \div 800 hours per ≥ 5.0 lb bass = 0.50) that a single ≥ 5.0 pound bass would be brought to the weigh-in at the Taylorsville Lake tournament. This statistic is simply a prediction of how many ≥ 5.0 lb bass could be caught at any given tournament. It should never be considered a guarantee; some tournaments might weigh in more ≥ 5.0 pounds bass while others could weigh in far less.

This report and the various results that are included can certainly be used by any tournament director, angler or resource manager. Although there is no denying that it can provide a good record for bass tournament results over the years, the report is also intended to be a reference for anyone who is planning on using the resource. All users have the ability to suggest improvements that they would like to see incorporated into future reports. If you have any suggestions, would like further information on how to get your tournament involved, or simply have some comments on the program, feel free to get in touch with Chris Hickey, the KDFWR black bass research biologist, via any of the following contact information:

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Your contribution to the Black Bass Tournament Program is greatly appreciated. But as always, we extend a warm welcome to any clubs not already participating. Your continued efforts are the only way that this program can succeed like it does, which allows everyone to gain a better understanding of the bass populations that inhabit the many lakes and rivers within Kentucky. We truly hope that the information provided in this report will be of benefit to you and your organization.

The Department would also like to remind all tournament directors to continue using the KDFWR website to schedule their fishing events in the future. This system was created to help reduce user conflict that may develop as a result of multiple tournaments being scheduled at the same place and time. During the registration process for each tournament, the directors will be able to verify if any event has already registered on the day, ramp, and waterbody that they are also interested in. **If there is a situation where an event is already scheduled, we ask that you consider rescheduling your tournament and/or attempt to contact the other director to come up with a compromise.** Prior to the establishment of this online scheduling system, the Department received regular calls/emails concerning conflicts that would result from multiple events occurring at the same boat landing. This system is the KDFWR's attempt at alleviating these conflicts without having to implement mandatory regulations on fishing tournaments in Kentucky. As interest in the sport of fishing and recreational boating increases, we ask for everybody's participation to help reduce potential conflict. On behalf of the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources, I would like to wish everybody a great fishing season in 2013, and we hope to see everyone out on the water!

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In 2012, there were a total of 233 bass tournaments that took part in this program by submitting their catch data either through the online system or by mailing in a completed report card. After comparing this to the 350 events that contributed in 2011, it was discovered that 2012 saw a decline of 117 tournaments, which unfortunately is the largest 1-year drop that the program has ever gone through. It is even more notable when considering that just 2 years earlier, in 2010, participation in the program was actually at its highest level (n = 376 tournaments). When taking into account that there were 622 events scheduled online, only 37.5% of all black bass tournaments in 2012 submitted their results to the program. This was once again a substantial decrease from the past several years when participation rates routinely averaged more than 50%, which included a low of 51.7% in 2007 up to the program high of 61.0% in 2009. Since the number of scheduled events in 2012 was actually down by less than 50 tournaments from 2011 (n = 671), it cannot be used to fully explain the program's substantial drop in catch data. In order to respond to these declining numbers and hopefully reverse the latest trend, researchers will make more of an effort to inform everyone who uses the online scheduling system that their tournament data is critical to the continued success of this program and the proper management of some of Kentucky's most important sport fisheries..

The 233 black bass fishing events that submitted their data to the program in 2012 took place at 27 different water bodies located throughout the state. These specifically included tournament results from 15 large reservoirs (Table 1) and 8 smaller lakes with surface areas of ≤ 1000 acres (Table 2), which differed from the 14 reservoirs and 11 small lakes that were reported in 2011. Over the past several years, the amount of tournaments being held at the bigger reservoirs have been relatively consistent, which is certainly the case when considering that tournament results were submitted from 15 large reservoirs (≥ 1000 acres) in 2010 as well. However, there does appear to be a real trend developing over the past few years with the number of events at smaller lakes (≤ 1000 acres) dropping from as many as 14 in 2010 to as few as 8 in 2012. This trend could have developed for any number of reasons that include the need for more room to accommodate the increasing size of the average bass fishing tournament and/or the fact that horsepower limits on many small lakes prohibit the use of large outboard motors that are commonly used with today's modern bass boats. However, there is another possible motive for this change that is driven by the growing, and often incorrect, perception that the bigger reservoirs have higher quality bass fisheries. And finally, there were tournament results reported from 4 different river systems in 2012 (Table 3), which is similar to that found over the past 3 years. Also similar to previous years was that even though there were several river systems represented in the program, 90% or more of this data came from tournaments hosted on the Ohio River, especially from the Meldahl and Markland pools that are located along the border of north central Kentucky.

Updates to the program that occurred just prior to the 2010 fishing season have finally made it possible for biologists to analyze the data while still keeping in mind the different tournament formats used by organizers. The individual angler format, which is characterized by having all anglers on separate boats and fishing for their own limit, is likely the most recognizable setup, especially among non-tournament anglers. But as in the past several years, there was only a small proportion that actually used the individual angler format (n = 37) and after being employed by only 15.9% of the 2012 bass tournaments, it is far from being the most common format for fishing events in Kentucky. In contrast, the most popular was actually the team format where 2 anglers often fished out of the same boat and worked together to catch a single limit of bass that they hoped to would weigh enough to take first place. This setup was utilized by 185 bass fishing events in Kentucky during 2012, which results in 79.4% of all tournaments that participated. Ultimately, these results on the formats used by bass fishing events were similar to those found via the 2011 data, which included individual anglers fishing in 19.1% of the tournaments and teams participating in the remaining 80.9%. There was also a much less common team format used in 2012 where the anglers fished together but each one was allowed to bring in his/her own limit. The winners of this type of tournament were typically determined by which team had the highest combined weight. During the entire year, there were only 11 fishing events that utilized this type of team format, which came to 4.7% of the program participants in 2012.

As in most previous years of the program, the majority of black bass tournaments in 2012 used a daily creel, or “bag”, limit of 5 or 6 fish. Using the data submitted by program participants, it was determined that 78.1% of all 2012 tournaments utilized the 5-fish limit while another 6.0% made use of a 6-fish daily limit, which is actually the maximum allowed under statewide regulations. In either case, this was a decrease over what was observed in 2011 when 81.2% and 8.7% of black bass tournaments went with daily creel limits of 5 and 6 fish, respectively. This indicates that 2012 bass fishing events made a slight shift towards using smaller creel limits, which included tournaments that employed 1 (3.9%), 2 (1.3%), 3 (9.9%), or even 4 (0.9%) fish daily limits. The typical tournament that utilizes a lower creel limit is either a shortened event that takes place during a week-day evening or one that falls under the category of being a “Big Fish” tournament, which is most often hosted at lakes that are specifically managed for their black bass populations. For instance, Cedar Creek Lake is primarily known for having a high-quality largemouth bass fishery, but since there are trophy regulations in place that only allow anglers to keep a single ≥ 20 -in largemouth bass, the lake is not exactly conducive to the rules of most standard fishing tournaments. However, there are several organizations and clubs that regularly adopt the “Big Fish” format just to be able to fit Cedar Creek Lake into its annual tournament schedule.

According to catch data that was submitted in 2012, an average of 35.7% of the angling-units (individual anglers or teams) successfully caught and weighed in a full daily limit of black bass during the course of their tournament, which was a substantial improvement over the last several years including 2009 (14.2%) and 2010 (18.7%). This statistic becomes even more notable when considering that it was greater than a 10% increase over what used to be the program’s highest mark, which was the 24.7% of anglers/teams that caught a limit in 2011. However, it needs to be taken into account that this is one statistic that was largely influenced by the updates implemented in 2010. When the tournament format was not properly represented prior to these changes, the errors that occurred during the data analysis incorrectly resulted in lower proportions of anglers that caught a limit. A team that was working together for one daily limit of 5 bass during a pre-2010 tournament would have been incorrectly calculated as 2 separate anglers going after their own limit. For example, in 2009, the 14.2% that was determined to have caught a full daily limit was calculated by simply dividing the number of limits by the total number of anglers that participated in fishing events during the year, regardless if they were competing in a tournament as part of a team or as an individual. In order to calculate it in a similar way for 2012, the total number of anglers had to be determined first by multiplying the number of teams by 2 and then by adding that to the number of competitors in individual tournaments. After using this method with the 2012 data, it yielded a much different result with 21.1% of anglers weighing in a limit of bass, which is not surprisingly still a notable increase over 2009. After applying the updates from 2010, there have now been several consecutive years with the proper reporting of tournament formats, which allows the 2 anglers on a team to be correctly identified as single unit. One of the results is not only a higher, but also more accurate, percentage of anglers/teams that were able to weigh in a full daily limit of bass during a tournament.

Size limits used by 2012 bass fishing events most often followed the regulations that were already being enforced at each waterbody, which appears to be a common procedure that has been in place since the program started collecting data over 13 years ago. Most 2012 tournaments (96.8%) used either a 12-in or 15-in minimum length limit, which are the bass regulations already being used at the vast majority of waterbodies in the state. Most, if not all, tournament directors and anglers are aware that when the rules are being decided for each event, they must not allow competitors to bring in bass that measure less than the lake’s minimum size limit. Any fishing tournament reserves the right to implement a more restrictive length limit (i.e. An 18-inch size limit where the lake’s minimum is only 15 inches), but they cannot choose regulations that encourage their participants to weigh in sub-legal fish (i.e. a 12-in size limit on a 15-in lake).

After reviewing the details from the 233 tournaments that participated in the program during 2012, it was determined that these fishing events ranged in duration from 4.0 to 24.0 hours (h) and had an average overall length of 7.9 h. This was a small drop from previous years when tournaments commonly lasted more than 8 h, which included average lengths of 8.4 h in 2011 and 8.2 h in 2010. This decrease was presumably the result of fewer multi-day events being reported to the program along with a jump in the number of shorter

weekday tournaments that were most likely being organized by local bass clubs. Of all the tournaments that participated in 2012, 95.3% were 1-day fishing events, 4.3% were 2-day events and only 0.4% were held over a 3 day period. In the past, it was assumed that only larger tournament organizations were putting together fishing events that last for 2 days or more. However, it is becoming a regular practice nowadays for smaller bass clubs to organize annual championship tournaments that often continue for more than 1 day.

When it comes to grouping the bass fishing events according to seasons, the 2012 tournaments followed the trends from previous years as it was discovered that 82.4% of them were held in either the spring (48.9%) or summer (33.5%) while the remaining 17.6% occurred during the fall (15.5%) and winter (2.1%). Also, it was estimated that 84.5% of the 2012 tournaments took place during the day time while the remaining 15.5% occurred at night. Because the day-time temperatures during a summer in Kentucky can commonly rise above 90°F, most of the night-time tournaments (86.1%) were held during this season in order to lessen the impacts that the heat can have on both the fish and the anglers. In fact, the KDFWR routinely recommends that organizations/clubs attempt to avoid scheduling tournaments during the hottest months of the year because the extra stress placed on fish caught and released under these conditions can often result in higher mortality rates. However, if it is not feasible to change the date of the event, there are several steps (i.e. shorter lengths for tournaments, intermittent weigh-in periods and night-time tournaments) that organizers can take to reduce this stress and potentially increase the chances that a fish will be able to recover and survive long after being released back into the water. Further information on this topic is routinely provided at the end of this program's annual reports.

After disregarding the format that each fishing event used and then making the assumption that every team consisted of 2 anglers, it was determined that a total of 13,636 anglers participated in bass tournaments that contributed to this program in 2012. This was a decrease of over 3,400 from the 17,093 anglers that fished in 2011 tournaments, but as was discussed earlier, this was expected to accompany the decline in the overall number of tournaments submitting their catch data in 2012. When the total is finally broken down by format, there were actually 8,050 "angling-units" reported from fishing events in 2012, which for reasons already explained was quite a bit less than the 10,630 "angling-units" that fished the 2011 tournaments. This overall number of "angling-units" is arrived at by adding the total number of anglers in individual tournaments (2,464) to the total number of teams that participated in the team tournaments (5,586). Even though both totals are lower than the number of individuals (4,167) and teams (6,463) that fished in the 2011 tournaments, there was a more notable drop in number of anglers that fished in the individual events. This continues to support the notion that the team format is preferred by those who participate in bass tournaments throughout Kentucky.

According to the catch data submitted by tournaments in 2012, the 13,636 anglers, or 8,050 angling-units, brought in a total of 22,815 bass with an overall weight of 55,609.16 pounds (lbs), which results in an average weight of 2.44 lbs per fish. Once again, with fewer events/anglers reporting their results in 2012, the 22,815 bass was quite a bit less than the 26,440 fish that were reported in 2011, which also happens to be the most bass caught during the 14-year history of this project. When catch data from these 2 years was compared directly, it was determined that there was an over 33% drop in tournament participation from 2011, but surprisingly, there was only a 13.7% decline in the number of bass weighed in by anglers in 2012. So despite the fact that there were far fewer events participating, the much smaller decline in total number of fish being caught is the first indication that tournament anglers in 2012 could have actually been more successful than they were during the previous year.

The "average catch" statistic for this program is simply the average number of bass caught per angling-unit (angler or team), but it does not account for fish that were released prior to the weigh-in, which includes both undersized and culled bass. Similar to the percentage of anglers/teams that caught a daily limit, this measure of "average catch" is another calculation that was directly affected by the 2010 changes to how tournament data is reported. Since tournament format was not considered under the pre-2010 methods, the teams would have been included as 2 separate anglers and the "average catch" for 2012 would have been calculated as 1.67 bass/angler. However, when teams were properly accounted for as a single angling-unit under the

updated methods, the more accurate measure of “average catch” for 2012 was 2.83 bass/angling-unit. This represents a substantial increase over both 2011 (2.49 bass/angling-unit) and 2010 (2.11 bass/angling-unit), which works to reinforce the argument that despite a considerable drop in program participation the anglers/teams who fished in the 2012 tournaments were more successful.

The typical bass tournament in 2012 consisted of 59 anglers, which is an average size that easily surpasses those of the past several years, including 2011 (51 anglers) and 2010 (44 anglers). In fact, the standard size for the 2012 fishing events set a new high mark for the program. After being separated according to their format, it was determined that the individual tournaments in 2012 were fished by an average of 67 anglers while the team tournaments typically consisted of 29 teams. Even though the overall number of tournaments were down, the 2012 bass fishing events surpassed 2011 in both the average size of individual (65 anglers) and team (24 teams) tournaments. These results continue to support a trend that has been identified over the past several years, and it has become evident that even if there are fewer bass fishing events being held in Kentucky, the amount of anglers/teams participating in the average tournament continues to increase.

In 2012, it took an average weight of 14.52 pounds for an angler/team to win the “standard” 8.0 hour tournament. This “average 1st place weight” was up considerably from 13.62 pounds in 2011, and it even exceeded the 13.80 pounds it took to win a tournament in 2007, which had previously stood for several years as the program’s highest average winning weight. In addition to reaching a new high, 2012 was the first time that the average 1st place weight for the entire year was able to surpass the 14 lb mark. After all winning weights (n = 233) were standardized to 8 hours, it was discovered that the highest 1st place weight for 2012 was the 29.38 pounds that was reported from a March 4th tournament on Lake Beshear. And finally, the heaviest fish reported to the program in 2012 came from a tournament that was hosted at Lake Barkley on March 24th when the “Big Fish” award was given for a largemouth bass that tipped the scales at 8.83 pounds.

The black bass species predominantly caught during the 2012 tournaments was largemouth bass, which comprised 93.4% of the total catch. Spotted and smallmouth bass accounted for 3.7% and 3.0% of the remaining catch, respectively. The percentage of largemouth bass caught during tournaments continues to increase, following a trend that started in 2008 (85.0%) and leading into 2009 (86.4%), 2010 (87.4%) and 2011 (90.7%). In 2012, the highest proportions of spotted bass came from tournaments held at Lake Cumberland (19.0%) and Herrington Lake (15.6%) (Table 4). As for smallmouth bass, Dale Hollow Lake (25.0%), Laurel River Lake (13.7%) and Lake Cumberland (12.3%) were the only locations where they comprised more than 10% of the tournament catch.

In an attempt to compare the tournament statistics of some of the more popular water bodies in Kentucky, a system was developed near the beginning of the program that originally ranked these lakes and rivers in 6 specific categories, which were related to angler success and the size of the bass that were being caught. In order to prevent the abnormal results of a single tournament from having too much of an influence, it was decided that a water body needed to have hosted 3 or more fishing events during that year before it could be included in any of the rankings. After it was first implemented, the original ranking system proceeded for several years without any changes. However, the various updates in 2010 that altered the way that bass tournament data was being reported had ultimately lead to the elimination of one of the original categories. In 2012, and for the third year in a row, this category was replaced by one that ranked the lakes and rivers according to the total number of bass tournaments that were held there during the year. This category does not directly relate to angler success or the size of the bass being caught, but it can help illustrate how the number of tournaments can impact the different results in this report. It’s also very important to keep in mind that there are other aspects of a fishery (i.e. different creel and minimum length limits) that can have a negative or positive influence over where it ranks in the different categories.

When looking at the number of tournaments that were held at each water body, the rankings showed that larger reservoirs in Kentucky were once again the preferred locations for bass tournaments (Table 5). The top 3 water bodies were the only ones to have hosted 25 or more bass fishing events in 2012, and these included Lake Barkley (36 tournaments), Barren River Lake (28 tournaments) and Kentucky Lake (25

tournaments). These lakes often occupy a perennial spot near the top of this list along with the Ohio River and other larger water bodies, like Nolin River, Taylorsville, Rough River, and Green River lakes, coming in close behind. However, one of the largest reservoirs in Kentucky, Lake Cumberland, often falls in the middle, or even lower half, of the rankings for its number of bass tournaments. Despite its large size, several features of Lake Cumberland are more conducive to cooler water fisheries (i.e. striped bass and walleye) and, according to the data reported to this program, it is not usually a top choice for fishing events that target black bass.

The 2nd category in the rankings involved the angler catch rates of black bass at each water body that hosted 3 or more tournaments during 2012. The catch rate for each location is described as the number of bass that were caught per hour of fishing by all anglers/teams that participated in a tournament. The best way to illustrate how this statistic translates to real-world situations is to consider a fishing event with 100 anglers/teams that was planned for a reservoir with an average catch rate of 0.40 bass/hour. According to this rate, one could expect that for each hour of the tournament, the 100 anglers/teams could catch nearly 40 legal-size bass (100 anglers/teams X 0.4 bass/h = 40 fish), or as much as 320 bass over the course of a full 8-hour event. In 2012, the tournament catch rates for black bass were highest at Herrington Lake (0.44 bass/hour), which is a central Kentucky reservoir that is often near the top of this ranking (Table 5). The other water bodies in the top 5 for black bass catch rates in 2012 included Lake Barkley (0.43 bass/hour), the Ohio River (0.43 bass/hour), Kentucky Lake (0.42 bass/hour) and Green River Lake (0.39 bass/hour). In 2011, the Kentucky River came in on top for black bass catch rates with 0.45 bass/hour, but in 2012 that catch rate had been cut in half (0.22 bass/hour) as it appears that tournament anglers/teams had a harder time catching black bass that were large enough to bring in to the weigh-ins. Over the many years that tournament data has been submitted to this program, it has become routine to find lakes and rivers that are managed under the 12-inch minimum length limit at the top of this list because the lower limit usually allows anglers/teams to weigh in higher numbers of smaller bass. Also, catch rate was another one of those statistics that was influenced by the 2010 updates. Anyone who has followed the program over the years might note that prior to these changes (2009 and earlier) tournament catch rates rarely made it close to 0.40 bass/hour.

The 3rd category in the rankings, which is the “percent of successful anglers/teams”, is best described as the proportion of tournament participants that were able to catch a legal-size bass. This rather simple statistic is calculated by dividing the number of anglers/teams that weighed in at least one bass by the total number of those that participated in the tournament. For instance, if a fishing event with 60 teams reported that 45 of them had weighed in at least one bass, the percent success for this particular tournament would be 75% ($45 \div 60 = 0.75$). Since this statistic relies on the conditions that define a legal size-bass, the minimum length limit being enforced by each tournament has a big influence on the outcome. As one would expect, a water body that is managed by a lower minimum length limit (i.e. 12 in or a 1 under 15 in slot) has a tendency to rank higher in this category. This was exactly the case in 2012 when the results indicated that 92.4% of all tournament anglers on the Ohio River were able to catch and bring in at least one legal-size bass to the weigh-in (Table 5). This was a slight increase over the highest success rate in 2011, which was the 88.9% of the anglers fishing a tournament at Nolin River Lake. Other water bodies in 2012 that were near the top of the list for the percent of successful anglers/teams in a tournament included Herrington (90.5%), Nolin River (90.0%), Laurel River (89.8%) and Green River (86.5%) lakes. With the exception of Laurel River Lake, tournament anglers fishing at any of the top 5 water bodies in this category were allowed to weigh in at least one black bass that measured less than 15 inches.

The next category in the rankings is “Average weight per bass” and it is yet another statistic that is influenced substantially by the type of fishing regulations that are in place at each water body. However, unlike the previous two statistics, average weight per bass is one where a more restrictive size limit can actually help a lake/river achieve a higher spot in the ranking. This scenario has recently come into full view because the increasing numbers of tournaments held on Cedar Creek Lake have allowed it to be regularly included in the rankings. As a water body that is being specifically managed as a trophy bass fishery, the lake has a highly restrictive minimum size limit on largemouth bass that only allows an angler to submit a

single 20+ inch fish to his/her tournament weigh-in. As something that must be enforced by every bass fishing event at Cedar Creek Lake that is holding a weigh-in, this one condition is enough to greatly increase the average weight per fish. As was expected, Cedar Creek Lake once again topped the rankings for this category in 2012 with an average weight per bass of 4.87 pounds (lbs) (Table 5). The other lakes that finished off the top 5 for this statistic in 2012 was Lake Beshear (2.96 lbs), Kentucky Lake (2.60 lbs), Barren River Lake (2.48 lbs) and Lake Barkley (2.45 lbs). Unlike Cedar Creek Lake, all four of these lakes follow along with the statewide creel limits of 5 or 6 fish daily, and with the exception of Lake Beshear (12-in min), they are also managed with the higher 15-in minimum length limit. In 2011, the top 5 in this category not only consisted of the exact same lakes as 2012, but they also fell within a very similar order. These lakes in 2011 were Cedar Creek Lake (4.64 lbs), Lake Beshear (3.12 lbs), Kentucky Lake (2.59 lbs), Lake Barkley (2.45 lbs) and Barren River Lake (2.36 lbs). Aside from Cedar Creek Lake, which is just over 10 years old, lakes that are most often found in the top half of this ranking have enjoyed long histories of being high quality bass fisheries. It shouldn't come as a surprise to discover that these same lakes are often the most popular water bodies in Kentucky when it comes to hosting black bass tournaments.

Prior to 2010, tournaments were asked to keep track of multiple categories of big fish including those that weighed both ≥ 4 lbs and ≥ 6 lbs. However, after updates during that year, the requirements for reporting big bass were simplified and now tournaments only needed to count fish that weighed in at 5 lbs or more. Obviously, this meant that there was also a change in the rankings after the original 2 categories were ultimately combined into one, which was used to illustrate the average amount of time (angler or team hours) that it took to catch a ≥ 5 lb bass. In 2012, it was Lake Beshear, and its average of 46 hours, that ranked the highest for least amount of time to catch a "big bass" (Table 5). When there are enough tournaments to include it in the rankings, Lake Beshear often tops this category, which included the even lower average of 34 hours in 2011. The water bodies that capped off the top 5 in 2012 for the least amount of time to catch a ≥ 5.0 pounds bass were Green River Lake (56 hours), Cedar Creek Lake (68 hours), Kentucky Lake (99 hours) and Lake Barkley (133 hours). When looking at actual numbers, Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley had 228 and 110 ≥ 5.0 pounds bass, respectively, that were brought to the tournament weigh-ins while the next highest, Barren River Lake, only boasted 38 fish that reached this weight. Of the 27 water bodies turning in catch data during 2012, 17 reported having at least 1 bass caught that weighed in at 5 lbs or more.

The final category in the rankings was the average weight required to take 1st place, which was calculated only after all the black bass tournaments in 2012 were standardized to a 1-day, 8-hour event. Not surprisingly, it was Lake Beshear, and its average of 20.58 lbs to win a "standard" tournament, that stood at the top of this list in 2012 (Table 5). Kentucky Lake (19.54 lbs), Lake Barkley (16.85 lbs), Green River Lake (16.26 lbs), and Barren River Lake (16.00 lbs) all had high enough average winning weights to finish off the top 5. Overall, 11 water bodies produced average 1st place weights in excess of 10 lbs during their 2012 bass tournaments, which was only a slight drop from the 12 water bodies with this average in 2011. However, it turned out to be an even more substantial decline from those years prior to 2011, which included both 2010, with 13 lakes that had an average winning weight of 10 lbs or more, and 2009, with its even higher total of 15 lakes. The lower number of tournaments the participated in the program during 2012 could have been a major force behind this drop. Ultimately, there are still a few water bodies, like Kentucky Lake, Lake Barkley and Lake Beshear, that have produced average 1st place weights well in excess of 10 lbs for every year that catch data has been submitted to the program.

When the program was initially designed, KDFWR had always intended on taking tournament data that was collected from the various lakes/rivers across Kentucky and applying it to produce a table with different variables that could all be used in some way to identify changes in the black bass population. For the first 10 years of the program, 5 variables were included in these tables and examined annually for any potential trends. Eventually there were program updates implemented in 2010 that altered the way that tournament data was reported and effectively reduced the usable number of variables in each table to 4 (Table 6). It is important to note that these changes looked at tournament format differently than it had been in previous years, so it undoubtedly would have had an artificial influence on a lot of the data that was used to fill in these tables. In fact, the only variable that was not affected by this was the average weight per bass. It can

be very difficult to distinguish if it was actual changes to the fishery that caused the variation or if it was just a response to the 2010 updates. Hence, program biologists had to be much more particular when examining these tables. In fact, it may require a couple more years of tournament data under the new format before any trends can be reliably identified.

More recently in 2012, there was yet another variable included in the tables of tournament data that simply listed the number of events that submitted their catch data each year (Table 6). Luckily, these numbers were readily available for all water bodies via the program's long-term database and would not require any further time to collect enough reliable data. The most important reason for including the number of tournaments held each year is that when used effectively they can help gauge the accuracy of the other variables. For instance, if there were only a couple of events over an entire year that reported catch data for a lake, it would only take a single tournament with above/below average results to influence all the other variables in the table. When recognizing that only a few tournaments were used to come up with these values, biologists and/or anyone else examining the data would know immediately that there was chance that these results were inaccurate. However, if the same lake had 15 events participate in the program, then it is unlikely that the catch data of any one tournament would have a lot of influence over the final values in the table. Naturally, there would be much more confidence in any trends identified at a water body that routinely has catch data submitted from 10 or more tournaments every year.

As was mentioned previously, "average weight per bass" is the one variable where values obtained before 2010 could be examined alongside the most recent tournament results. However, it has been found that when plenty of fishing events are reported for a particular water body, the average weight per bass is one variable that tends to not fluctuate much from one year to the next (Table 6). There are subtle changes that may be observed on a regular basis, but those can often be attributed to a range of different influences, including an increase/decrease in the amount of events reported from that water body to the movement of a strong/weak year class through the size range of bass most often targeted by tournament anglers. In some instances, changes in average weight per bass that were brought on by influences like these could even be strong enough that they are noticeable to anglers that regularly fish that water body. However, more often than not, these changes only last for a few years before reverting back to a specific level that the lake or river is accustomed to. This does not mean that there are never going to be circumstances where the average weight per bass could indeed make a long-term increase or decrease over a period of several years. If this were to happen, that body of water would be closely examined to determine the reason behind such a drastic shift in the growth and/or condition of the fish. Possible reasons for this could include a swing in the most abundant forage species, the introduction of a new competitor to the black bass, and/or a substantial change in water quality, all of which could either help or hurt the growth/condition of fish in the size range that is most often targeted by tournament anglers.

There are a couple of lakes in Kentucky where changes in the average weight per bass cannot be simply explained by increases/decreases in the number of tournaments reporting their catch data. One such situation is that at Barren River Lake where average weights from bass fishing events has been increasing slightly for the past several years and culminating with 2.48 lbs in 2012, which is the highest average weight that has been seen at the lake since 2.56 lbs in 2006 (Table 6). Unfortunately, the increases in average weight at Barren River Lake may just be subtle enough to make it very difficult to pinpoint any real reasons for the change. However, there is an even better, and potentially more explainable, example of this trend that comes from Green River Lake where, prior to 2009, average weights of 2 lbs or more for bass caught at a tournament was simply not that common. This included years like 2007 and 2008 where despite having 20 or more tournaments report their catch data during both years, they still had average weights of only 1.65 and 1.48 lbs, respectively (Table 6). Nonetheless, during the last 4 years, the lake has seen sustained increases in its average weights that have included 2.20 lbs (2009), 2.22 lbs (2010), 2.16 lbs (2011) and 2.32 lbs (2012). It would appear that there was really no reason to expect weights of bass from tournaments at Green River Lake to drop below the 2-lb average any time soon. Since the higher average weights don't seem to be linked to any specific year-class, it is possible that there has been a measurable change in the dynamics of Green River Lake (i.e. forage, productivity, etc) that has helped improve the condition of the black bass

without reducing its numbers. This improvement warrants a deeper look at both the current and historic sampling data to find out if there is a reasonable explanation already available. If not, biologists may need to further examine the bass population at Green River Lake to both ensure that this trend continues and to determine if there is anything that can be applied at other lakes in an effort to improve their black bass fisheries as well.

Regardless of whether a “big bass” is defined like it was prior to 2010 (≥ 4.0 lbs and ≥ 6.0 lbs) or like it is presently (≥ 5.0 lbs), there will always be some water bodies that consistently yield more “big bass” than others. The average amount of time it takes to catch a “big bass” is difficult to trend, and much like “average weight per bass”, there are many factors that can influence it that do not tend to change much over time. In fact, these two variables can be influenced by very similar factors as both of them deal with weight of the fish caught by tournament anglers. However, it would take a more long-term change to alter the amount of time required to catch a “big bass”, and even if the “average weight per bass” is increasing for a specific lake, it doesn’t guarantee that the number of “big bass” caught in those tournaments will rise too. In those lakes and rivers that are more likely to produce the “big bass”, the conditions are ideal and usually contain some combination of just the right density of bass, plenty of vulnerable forage fish of all different sizes and enough productivity to sustain all of it over a long time period. If a water body was to acquire just one of these characteristics, it would not necessarily be enough to produce higher numbers of big fish. For example, if a lake was to develop the ideal forage fish community in terms of density and length frequency, the anglers could very well experience a notable jump in the catch rates of high-quality bass, or in other words, their average weight per fish could increase. However, this does not always mean that the bass will continue to grow until they reach “big fish” status. For instance, if there are too many bass in the population, they could end up consuming so much that the forage fish community would be driven back to its normal levels. Furthermore, if productivity of the lake does not stay elevated over the entire period, the forage fish would not have enough food available, which could also cause their numbers to revert back to normal. There have been examples of this during the course of the tournament program. For example, Lake Cumberland appeared to becoming a regular producer of “big bass” from 2007 through 2009 when it routinely took less than 100 angler hours to catch a big fish (Table 6). However, the bass population appeared to drop back down to normal during the years that followed when it took, on average, well over 500 angler-hours to catch a big bass, including most recently in 2012 when it actually increased even more to over 1000 angler-hours. Ultimately, “big bass” are most likely to be caught out of the same water bodies year after year, and it would require some unlikely long-term changes to the fishery before tournament anglers actually start to see permanent increases in their catch rates of big fish.

If the results from 2012 continue into the 2013 fishing season, anglers should once again see the more popular tournament locales like Kentucky Lake, Lake Barkley, Barren River Lake and Green River Lake produce some 1st place weights that could easily average 15 lbs or better. Also, Lake Beshear will likely continue to bewilder plenty of anglers by being a small impoundment that produces average 1st place weights and numbers of big fish that someone would only expect from the largest, most productive reservoirs in Kentucky. Even though winning weights at some tournaments on the Ohio River aren’t likely to break any records, the anglers there will continue to reap the benefits of KDFWR’s ongoing stocking efforts with catch rates that could once again rank as some of the highest in the state. Finally, there is the potential to catch big bass in lakes and reservoirs throughout Kentucky, which was illustrated in 2012 when out of only 233 tournaments that reported catch data to the program, there were more than 475 bass caught that weighed in at 5 lbs or more.

As always, KDFWR greatly appreciates all of those who continue to participate in Kentucky’s Bass Tournament Reporting Program, which has become the model for similar programs in other states. It is this continued involvement that has been absolutely crucial to making this a success year after year. Hopefully, now that this program has finished its 14th year, tournament anglers have come to realize just how valuable their catch data can be to the continued management of Kentucky’s priceless black bass fisheries. Good luck to you and your continued fishing success in 2013!

Table 1. Summary of 2012 bass tournament data from Kentucky lakes (> 1000 acres) by season and overall.

Water Body	Total # of Events	# of Ind. Events	# of Team Events	Total # of Angling-units	# Bass Caught	# Bass per Hour	Percent Success	Average Weight per Bass (lbs)	# of Bass >5.0 lbs	Big Bass (lbs)	Average 1st Place Weight (Standard 8h Day)
Barren River Lake											
Spring	14	2	12	397	1165	0.40	75.5	2.49	25	6.23	17.04
Summer	8	1	7	387	973	0.32	69.4	2.63	8	5.74	15.65
Fall	5	1	4	300	687	0.27	83.6	2.23	4	5.65	13.01
Winter	1	0	1	38	109	0.36	89.5	2.41	1	5.79	19.06
Total	28	4	24	1122	2934	0.35	75.7	2.48	38	6.23	16.00
Dale Hollow Lake											
Spring & Total	2	0	2	20	120	0.49	95.0	2.28	0	4.81	19.58
Dewey Lake											
Fall & Total	1	0	1	48	14	0.04	29.2	2.25	0	4.41	4.41
Grayson Lake											
Spring & Total	1	1	0	34	18	0.06	38.2	2.31	0	4.99	8.49
Green River Lake											
Spring	5	0	5	82	271	0.38	87.6	2.61	14	6.90	18.22
Summer	1	0	1	7	25	0.51	85.7	1.85	0	4.12	15.28
Fall	1	0	1	11	25	0.28	81.8	1.31	0	1.83	7.47
Total	7	0	7	100	321	0.39	86.5	2.32	14	6.90	16.26
Herrington Lake											
Spring	2	0	2	22	73	0.41	86.4	1.67	0	3.89	13.24
Summer	3	0	3	25	94	0.47	93.3	1.66	0	4.60	12.17
Total	5	0	5	47	167	0.44	90.5	1.66	0	4.60	12.60
Kentucky Lake											
Spring	12	5	7	1356	4491	0.42	83.9	2.59	135	7.89	20.56
Summer	6	4	2	479	2776	0.35	81.6	2.39	45	7.90	14.79
Fall	4	2	2	292	1276	0.28	82.4	2.50	32	7.41	18.37
Winter	3	0	3	26	196	0.72	91.7	3.22	16	7.12	26.55
Total	25	11	14	2153	8739	0.42	84.1	2.60	228	7.90	19.54

Table 1 (cont). Summary of 2012 bass tournament data from Kentucky lakes (> 1000 acres) by season and overall.

Water Body	Total # of Events	# of Ind. Events	# of Team Events	Total # of Angling-units	# Bass Caught	# Bass per Hour	Percent Success	Average Weight per Bass (lbs)	# of Bass >5.0 lbs	Big Bass (lbs)	Average 1st Place Weight (Standard 8h Day)
Lake Barkley											
Spring	21	6	15	665	2263	0.53	89.4	2.62	81	8.83	19.40
Summer	9	1	8	255	788	0.40	79.3	2.48	19	6.28	16.27
Fall	6	5	1	338	1261	0.15	56.8	1.93	10	6.50	8.78
Total	36	12	24	1258	4312	0.43	78.8	2.47	110	8.83	16.85
Lake Cumberland											
Spring	5	1	4	283	677	0.40	77.0	2.06	1	5.40	14.64
Summer	1	0	1	5	22	0.55	100.0	2.14	0	4.12	17.14
Fall	1	0	1	49	71	0.18	51.0	1.81	0	4.16	11.44
Total	7	1	6	337	770	0.39	76.5	2.03	1	5.40	14.54
Laurel River Lake											
Spring & Total	4	1	3	213	415	0.27	89.8	2.15	2	5.90	10.86
Nolin River Lake											
Spring	9	0	9	199	716	0.46	93.4	1.87	12	6.39	12.60
Summer	6	0	6	132	373	0.33	90.7	1.82	4	6.37	11.78
Fall	4	0	4	103	201	0.22	88.1	1.60	1	5.82	8.12
Winter	2	0	2	45	87	0.26	76.0	2.09	0	4.91	12.22
Total	21	0	21	479	1377	0.36	90.0	1.82	17	6.39	11.48
Rough River Lake											
Spring	5	0	5	168	560	0.44	91.8	2.27	11	7.31	17.99
Summer	3	0	3	40	129	0.45	96.0	2.03	3	5.73	13.61
Fall	5	0	5	338	547	0.21	68.6	1.90	4	5.88	14.04
Total	13	0	13	546	1236	0.35	83.9	2.07	18	7.31	15.46
Taylorsville Lake											
Spring	4	0	4	122	94	0.16	44.4	2.72	0	4.57	14.35
Summer	16	0	16	592	429	0.18	48.1	2.17	0	4.79	14.51
Fall	2	0	2	77	52	0.11	37.0	2.17	0	4.32	10.81
Total	22	0	22	791	575	0.17	46.4	2.27	0	4.79	14.14
Wood Creek Lake											
Fall & Total	1	0	1	10	5	0.07	40.0	2.18	0	2.88	3.50
Yatesville Lake											
Spring & Total	2	1	1	123	98	0.10	44.8	2.60	1	6.57	10.63

Table 2. Summary of 2012 bass tournament data from Kentucky lakes (< 1000 acres) by season and overall.

Water Body	Total # of Events	# of Ind. Events	# of Team Events	Total # of Angling-units	# Bass Caught	# Bass per Hour	Percent Success	Average Weight per Bass (lbs)	# of Bass >5.0 lbs	Big Bass (lbs)	Average 1st Place Weight (Standard 8h Day)
Bullock Pen Lake											
Spring & Total	1	0	1	9	14	0.22	88.9	2.04	1	5.63	7.73
Cedar Creek lake											
Spring	7	1	6	91	19	0.03	16.1	5.01	7	6.60	8.65
Summer	7	0	7	73	115	0.16	26.3	4.22	9	6.51	9.90
Fall	1	0	1	8	1	0.02	12.5	7.29	1	7.29	7.29
Total	15	1	14	172	135	0.09	20.6	4.87	17	7.29	9.06
Elmer Davis Lake											
Spring & Total	2	0	2	19	64	0.48	84.2	0.70	0	4.41	6.94
Guist Creek Lake											
Spring & Total	1	0	1	17	22	0.18	52.9	2.03	1	6.06	10.86
Kincaid Lake											
Spring	2	0	2	23	22	0.11	50.8	2.03	1	5.14	6.61
Summer	1	0	1	8	14	0.22	75.0	1.36	0	2.92	4.67
Total	3	0	3	31	36	0.15	58.8	1.81	1	5.14	5.96
Lake Beshear											
Spring	8	2	6	146	432	0.37	81.2	2.94	25	7.04	21.49
Summer	1	0	1	7	10	0.16	42.9	3.12	1	6.74	13.24
Total	9	2	7	153	442	0.35	76.9	2.96	26	7.04	20.58
Lake Malone											
Fall & Total	1	0	1	23	25	0.14	65.2	2.40	1	5.56	12.56
Willisburg Lake											
Spring & Total	1	0	1	11	17	0.26	63.6	1.88	1	5.03	11.15

Table 3. Summary of 2012 bass tournament data from Kentucky rivers (by pool, if available) by season and overall.

Water Body	Total # of Events	# of Ind. Events	# of Team Events	Total # of Angling-units	# Bass Caught	# Bass per Hour	Percent Success	Average Weight per Bass (lbs)	# of Bass >5.0 lbs	Big Bass (lbs)	Average 1st Place Weight (Standard 8h Day)
Kentucky River											
Summer	1	0	1	21	26	0.15	47.6	1.29	0	2.80	8.29
Fall	2	0	2	31	51	0.26	71.0	1.51	0	4.08	9.27
Total	3	0	3	52	77	0.22	63.2	1.43	0	4.08	8.94
Lake Barkley Tailwater											
Summer & Total	1	1	0	8	40	0.63	100.0	2.07	0	3.98	13.58
Ohio River											
Markland Pool											
Spring	3	0	3	43	152	0.42	91.4	1.51	0	4.70	11.26
Summer	6	0	6	85	272	0.41	89.0	1.35	0	3.75	9.17
Total	9	0	9	128	424	0.42	89.8	1.40	0	4.70	9.87
Meldahl Pool											
Spring	2	0	2	28	105	0.49	92.2	1.54	0	4.17	12.17
Summer	4	0	4	52	163	0.43	98.7	1.49	0	4.34	9.07
Fall	3	0	3	24	80	0.42	92.1	1.31	0	2.51	7.04
Total	9	0	9	104	348	0.44	95.1	1.44	0	4.34	9.08
All Pools Combined											
Spring	5	0	5	71	257	0.45	91.7	1.52	0	4.70	11.62
Summer	10	0	10	137	435	0.42	92.9	1.41	0	4.34	9.13
Fall	3	0	3	24	80	0.42	92.1	1.31	0	2.51	7.04
Total	18	0	18	232	772	0.43	92.4	1.42	0	4.70	9.47
Stoner Creek											
Summer & Total	1	0	1	10	43	0.72	90.0	1.41	0	4.88	21.93
Tennessee River											
Summer & Total	2	2	0	32	90	0.36	84.9	1.94	1	5.49	14.00

Table 4. Species composition (%) at each tournament site reported in 2012. Size limits used by tournaments varied and can affect the composition of the reported catch.

Water body	Largemouth Bass	Smallmouth Bass	Spotted Bass
Barren River Lake	90.6	1.0	8.4
Bullock Pen Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Cedar Creek Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Dale Hollow Lake	65.0	25.0	10.0
Dewey Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Elmer Davis Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Grayson Lake	94.4	0.0	5.6
Green River Lake	87.3	5.5	7.3
Guist Creek Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Herrington Lake	84.4	0.0	15.6
Kentucky Lake	97.4	2.1	0.5
Kentucky River	98.7	1.3	0.0
Kincaid Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Lake Barkley	91.9	5.3	2.8
Lake Barkley Tailwater	100.0	0.0	0.0
Lake Beshear	100.0	0.0	0.0
Lake Cumberland	68.7	12.3	19.0
Lake Malone	100.0	0.0	0.0
Laurel River Lake	75.2	13.7	11.1
Nolin River Lake	95.9	0.0	4.1
Ohio River - Markland	95.5	1.3	3.2
Ohio River - Meldahl	84.0	5.4	10.6
Ohio River - All Pools	90.4	3.1	6.5
Rough River Lake	97.1	0.0	2.9
Stoner Creek	100.0	0.0	0.0
Taylorsville Lake	99.8	0.0	0.2
Tennessee River	93.3	6.7	0.0
Willisburg Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Wood Creek Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0
Yatesville Lake	100.0	0.0	0.0

Table 5. Rankings for Kentucky's tournament waters based on the catch data reported from 2012 bass tournaments. Data from a minimum of three tournaments was required for a water body to be included in these rankings.

Total Number of Tournaments Reported		Number of Bass Caught per Hour		Percent of Successful Anglers/Teams		Average Weight (lbs) per Bass		Hours to Catch a \geq 5.0 lbs Bass ^A		Average 1st Place Weight (lbs) per 8 hour Day	
Lake Barkley	36	Herrington Lake	0.44	Ohio River	92.4	Cedar Creek Lake	4.87	Lake Beshear	46	Lake Beshear	20.58
Barren River Lake	28	Lake Barkley	0.43	Herrington Lake	90.5	Lake Beshear	2.96	Green River Lake	56	Kentucky Lake	19.54
Kentucky Lake	25	Ohio River	0.43	Nolin River Lake	90.0	Kentucky Lake	2.60	Cedar Creek Lake	68	Lake Barkley	16.85
Taylorsville Lake	22	Kentucky Lake	0.42	Laurel River Lake	89.8	Barren River Lake	2.48	Kentucky Lake	99	Green River Lake	16.26
Nolin River Lake	21	Green River Lake	0.39	Green River Lake	86.5	Lake Barkley	2.47	Lake Barkley	133	Barren River Lake	16.00
Ohio River	18	Lake Cumberland	0.39	Kentucky Lake	84.1	Green River Lake	2.32	Nolin River Lake	223	Rough River Lake	15.46
Cedar Creek Lake	15	Nolin River Lake	0.36	Rough River Lake	83.9	Taylorsville Lake	2.27	Kincaid Lake	248	Lake Cumberland	14.51
Rough River Lake	13	Barren River Lake	0.35	Lake Barkley	78.8	Laurel River Lake	2.15	Rough River Lake	252	Taylorsville Lake	14.14
Lake Beshear	9	Lake Beshear	0.35	Lake Beshear	76.9	Rough River Lake	2.07	Barren River Lake	258	Herrington Lake	12.60
Green River Lake	7	Rough River Lake	0.35	Lake Cumberland	76.5	Lake Cumberland	2.03	Laurel River Lake	865	Nolin River Lake	11.48
Lake Cumberland	7	Laurel River Lake	0.27	Barren River Lake	75.7	Nolin River Lake	1.82	Lake Cumberland	2705	Laurel River Lake	10.86
Herrington Lake	5	Kentucky River	0.22	Kentucky River	63.2	Kincaid Lake	1.81	Herrington Lake	n/a	Ohio River	9.47
Laurel River Lake	4	Taylorsville Lake	0.17	Kincaid Lake	58.8	Herrington Lake	1.66	Kentucky River	n/a	Cedar Creek Lake	9.06
Kentucky River	3	Kincaid Lake	0.15	Taylorsville Lake	46.4	Kentucky River	1.43	Ohio River	n/a	Kentucky River	8.94
Kincaid Lake	3	Cedar Creek Lake	0.09	Cedar Creek Lake	20.6	Ohio River	1.42	Taylorsville Lake	n/a	Kincaid Lake	5.96

n/a = no fish of this size were caught during the year. Therefore catch rates could not be calculated.

^A This metric relates to the amount of fishing effort that it takes to catch a bass \geq 5.0 lbs. Total fishing effort is determined by multiplying the number of anglers/teams by the length, in hours, of the tournament. (Example: At Lake A, it takes about 100 hours to catch a bass \geq 5.0 lbs, which means that a 50 angler tournament fishing for 8 hours, could weigh in 4 bass \geq 5.0 lbs during the tournament (400 divided by 100 = 4 bass).

Table 6. Measures of angler success derived from the past 10 years (2003 – 2012) of tournament results, which can be used to identify trends at the more popular waterbodies in Kentucky. There were updates to the program in 2010 that included changes to the way that data was collected/analyzed and had an artificial influence on most of these variables. Subsequently, only "No. of tournaments" and "Average weight per bass" could use data from both before and after 2010 without being directly impacted by these updates.

Variable	Barren River Lake										Cave Run Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	27	22	21	26	40	32	27	27	24	28	4	14	9	6	3	2	3	2	1	0
No. bass caught per hour	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	0.20	0.20	0.17	0.30	0.39	0.35	0.04	0.13	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.12	0.22	0.29	--
Percent successful	61.3	70.4	63.1	55.6	63.1	60.2	67.0	83.4	86.1	75.7	27.1	55.8	59.4	71.6	65.5	59.4	40.2	76.7	83.3	--
Average weight per bass	2.20	1.89	2.09	2.56	2.32	2.29	2.27	2.31	2.36	2.48	2.37	1.28	1.18	0.71	0.68	0.80	2.36	0.86	1.18	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	167	200	143	184	53	137	89				500	333	333	440	>1000	>1000	298			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								226	460	257								--	--	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	>1000	>1000	>1000	>1000	>1000	>1000	>1000				--	>1000	--	--	--	--	--			
Variable	Cedar Creek Lake										Dale Hollow Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	4	14	15	6	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	1	2
No. bass caught per hour	--	--	--	--	--	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.10	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.18	0.10	0.07	0.17	0.14	0.36	0.16	0.49
Percent successful	--	--	--	--	--	5.50	15.5	18.4	30.7	20.6	37.8	26.1	54.7	57.1	30.0	60.7	42.9	80.7	100.0	95.0
Average weight per bass	--	--	--	--	--	4.93	4.91	4.79	4.64	4.87	1.80	2.11	1.57	2.34	2.30	2.05	2.03	1.69	2.73	2.28
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	--	--	--	--	--	124	46				>1000	125	143	401	290	161	274			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								65	84	68								289	240	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	300				--	--	--	--	>1000	>1000	--	--	--	--
Variable	Dewey Lake										Grayson Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	3	3	5	2	13	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	1
No. bass caught per hour	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.10	0.05	0.04	0.04	--	--	0.04	--	--	0.11	0.02	--	--	0.03	0.06	0.07	0.06
Percent successful	35.9	25.0	39.9	59.5	n/a	26.5	34.4	--	--	29.2	--	--	42.3	12.5	--	--	24.0	39.4	34.3	38.2
Average weight per bass	1.76	2.90	1.86	2.86	2.59	1.49	2.43	--	--	2.25	--	--	0.75	2.71	--	--	2.61	3.33	2.22	2.31
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	500	77	167	38	--	>1000	500				--	--	--	128	--	--	400			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								--	--	--								53	--	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	--	500	382	--	--	--				--	--	--	--	--	--	--			

'--' = There was either no fish of this size caught during the year or no tournaments were reported so these variables could not be calculated.

Table 6 (cont). Measures of angler success derived from the past 10 years (2003 – 2012) of tournament results, which can be used to identify trends at the more popular waterbodies in Kentucky. There were updates to the program in 2010 that included changes to the way that data was collected/analyzed and had an artificial influence on most of these variables. Subsequently, only "No. of tournaments" and "Average weight per bass" could use data from both before and after 2010 without being directly impacted by these updates.

Variable	Green River Lake										Guist Creek Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	10	6	15	16	26	20	17	23	17	7	6	4	7	10	8	10	13	7	1	1
No. bass caught per hour	0.06	0.10	0.11	0.14	0.19	0.22	0.22	0.34	0.29	0.39	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.15	0.11	0.11	0.20	0.26	0.18
Percent successful	36.1	49.7	49.0	44.8	56.5	63.3	57.7	72.3	62.9	86.5	38.2	45.1	51.5	50.1	46.6	49.6	44.3	71.1	100.0	52.9
Average weight per bass	1.74	2.10	1.51	1.74	1.65	1.48	2.20	2.22	2.16	2.32	1.58	1.69	1.82	2.33	1.90	1.88	1.98	2.01	1.43	2.03
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	1000	111	500	184	179	108	76				>1000	1000	250	229	119	154	212			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								101	181	56								355	--	119
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	500	>1000	>1000	>1000	344	459				--	1000	--	688	894	--	>1000			
Variable	Herrington Lake										Kentucky Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	5	3	13	7	3	7	1	3	6	5	28	23	18	33	38	46	66	59	62	25
No. bass caught per hour	0.13	0.12	0.15	0.21	0.11	0.22	0.22	0.37	0.38	0.44	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.17	0.17	0.20	0.20	0.26	0.29	0.42
Percent successful	54.4	76.5	58.5	75.8	50.2	63.3	77.8	95.4	76.0	90.5	65.7	56.0	56.5	63.5	57.1	71.4	63.4	72.8	75.0	84.1
Average weight per bass	1.44	1.57	1.63	1.30	1.80	1.48	1.11	1.56	1.63	1.66	2.37	2.72	2.52	2.48	2.60	2.58	2.75	2.78	2.59	2.60
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	500	--	500	--	339	380	--				200	100	143	127	81	86	48			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								373	479	--								148	154	99
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	--	--	--	--	>1000	--				>1000	1000	1000	795	818	>1000	533			
Variable	Kentucky River										Kincaid Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	4	0	3	2	2	5	3	3	3	3	5	7	5	8	5	14	17	11	9	3
No. bass caught per hour	0.09	--	0.07	0.14	0.12	0.21	0.25	0.12	0.45	0.22	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.12	0.26	0.26	0.15
Percent successful	41.2	--	35.3	73.1	43.2	60.2	76.6	43.8	78.5	63.2	42.7	41.7	44.7	39.2	42.6	32.7	28.5	59.6	60.0	58.8
Average weight per bass	1.52	--	1.82	1.38	1.17	1.36	1.41	1.43	1.05	1.43	1.66	1.66	1.89	1.53	1.96	1.55	1.72	1.90	1.75	1.81
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	1000	--	333	259	--	--	438				250	333	167	231	124	226	157			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								--	--	--								198	154	248
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--				>1000	--	333	--	248	>1000	--			

'--' = There was either no fish of this size caught during the year or no tournaments were reported so these variables could not be calculated.

Table 6 (cont). Measures of angler success derived from the past 10 years (2003 – 2012) of tournament results, which can be used to identify trends at the more popular waterbodies in Kentucky. There were updates to the program in 2010 that included changes to the way that data was collected/analyzed and had an artificial influence on most of these variables. Subsequently, only "No. of tournaments" and "Average weight per bass" could use data from both before and after 2010 without being directly impacted by these updates.

Variable	Lake Barkley										Lake Beshear									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	22	44	41	43	40	35	48	70	74	36	3	4	3	6	0	1	9	8	6	9
No. bass caught per hour	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.23	0.29	0.43	0.10	0.14	0.16	0.10	--	0.08	0.24	0.40	0.36	0.35
Percent successful	51.1	55.0	53.2	55.6	65.2	70.5	67.3	70.5	73.0	78.8	34.1	75.6	60.9	56.2	--	45.5	79.7	85.3	81.0	76.9
Average weight per bass	2.54	2.27	2.55	2.56	2.62	2.67	2.64	2.69	2.45	2.47	2.50	2.69	2.92	2.59	--	2.42	3.40	2.97	3.12	2.96
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	143	125	100	84	53	61	64	--	--	--	67	35	50	43	--	--	16			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	127	130	133								41	34	46
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	>1000	>1000	>1000	610	518	573	483	--	--	--	--	500	--	>1000	--	--	73			
Variable	Lake Cumberland										Lake Malone									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	13	11	10	10	9	15	14	10	11	7	7	8	3	0	0	0	5	4	1	1
No. bass caught per hour	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.13	0.20	0.12	0.17	0.26	0.16	0.39	0.06	0.12	0.07	--	--	--	0.08	0.18	0.08	0.14
Percent successful	31.7	45.9	45.0	46.4	79.8	51.7	62.4	71.7	56.8	76.5	39.6	41.9	38.4	--	--	--	35.8	51.3	23.8	65.2
Average weight per bass	1.93	2.02	2.21	2.09	2.62	2.33	2.38	2.09	2.36	2.03	2.58	2.02	3.31	--	--	--	2.84	2.92	3.12	2.40
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	500	167	125	440	39	91	39				59	83	43	--	--	--	137			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								870	545	>1000								102	84	184
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	>1000	>1000	>1000	709	972	>1000				333	333	333	--	--	--	275			
Variable	Laurel River Lake										Nolin River Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	3	2	0	1	0	4	4	1	1	4	8	8	7	16	29	25	21	22	15	21
No. bass caught per hour	0.05	0.05	--	n/a	--	0.18	0.09	0.06	0.20	0.27	0.11	0.10	0.16	0.16	0.15	0.13	0.15	0.30	0.36	0.36
Percent successful	20.7	17.3	--	61.1	--	62.2	38.3	25.8	65.6	89.8	44.2	66.2	63.9	64.7	61.3	64.8	76.6	81.5	88.9	90.0
Average weight per bass	1.82	1.90	--	n/a	--	3.14	3.02	2.80	2.55	2.15	1.83	2.03	1.96	1.89	1.73	1.79	1.71	2.05	1.87	1.82
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	>1000	350	--	72	--	106	79				1000	500	167	176	127	140	150			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								>1000	256	865								109	230	223
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	367				--	--	--	>1000	>1000	>1000	320			

'--' = There was either no fish of this size caught during the year or no tournaments were reported so these variables could not be calculated.

Table 6 (cont). Measures of angler success derived from the past 10 years (2003 – 2012) of tournament results, which can be used to identify trends at the more popular waterbodies in Kentucky. There were updates to the program in 2010 that included changes to the way that data was collected/analyzed and had an artificial influence on most of these variables. Subsequently, only "No. of tournaments" and "Average weight per bass" could use data from both before and after 2010 without being directly impacted by these updates.

Variable	Rough River Lake										Taylorsville Lake									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	12	14	14	14	25	17	23	24	19	13	6	7	22	15	6	5	23	23	20	22
No. bass caught per hour	0.12	0.13	0.15	0.12	0.15	0.11	0.13	0.27	0.32	0.35	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.15	0.20	0.17
Percent successful	56.8	62.4	56.6	57.5	57.2	50.3	67.3	81.6	85.1	83.9	26.1	30.6	46.4	40.3	34.3	29.9	32.7	37.3	49.2	46.4
Average weight per bass	1.95	1.96	1.79	2.03	2.02	1.91	1.82	1.64	1.94	2.07	2.30	2.23	2.32	2.16	2.36	2.38	2.32	2.17	2.21	2.27
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	333	167	143	176	126	159	204				1000	500	333	932	195	299	844			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								571	325	252								>1000	>1000	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	>1000	1000	1000	>1000	969	>1000	>1000				--	--	--	>1000	--	--	>1000			
Variable	Yatesville Lake										Ohio River – Cannelton Pool									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	14	11	14	6	4	3	4	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0
No. bass caught per hour	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.10	0.09	0.15	0.11	0.10	0.17	--	--	0.10	0.11	0.07	--	0.15	--	--
Percent successful	45.2	30.3	40.6	35.7	39.1	49.9	45.9	61.2	60.9	44.8	42.9	--	--	50.0	43.1	46.4	--	40.9	--	--
Average weight per bass	2.67	2.43	2.22	2.24	2.07	2.38	2.09	2.36	2.87	2.60	1.30	--	--	1.37	1.48	0.28	--	1.92	--	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	111	143	143	352	>1000	516	336				333	--	--	--	539	--	--			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								--	275	984								--	--	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	>1000	>1000	1000	--	--	--	672				--	--	--	--	--	--	--			
Variable	Ohio River – Markland Pool										Ohio River – McAlpine Pool									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	27	9	11	4	4	33	17	31	21	9	5	3	1	1	4	1	1	1	0	0
No. bass caught per hour	0.18	0.13	0.11	0.13	0.10	0.27	0.26	0.39	0.45	0.42	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.10	0.11	0.25	0.21	0.13	--	--
Percent successful	46.1	40.0	51.2	70.9	42.7	62.0	61.7	70.7	73.5	89.8	55.0	48.6	25.0	47.7	37.8	62.0	61.1	76.5	--	--
Average weight per bass	1.42	1.36	1.50	1.25	1.29	1.55	1.45	1.35	1.36	1.40	1.33	1.58	1.58	1.62	1.54	1.16	1.67	1.26	--	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	500	1000	1000	--	249	510	242				1000	1000	n/a	352	446	n/a	n/a			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								>1000	554	--								--	--	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	>1000				--	--	--	--	>1000	--	--			

'--' = There was either no fish of this size caught during the year or no tournaments were reported so these variables could not be calculated.

Table 6 (cont). Measures of angler success derived from the past 10 years (2003 – 2012) of tournament results, which can be used to identify trends at the more popular waterbodies in Kentucky. There were updates to the program in 2010 that included changes to the way that data was collected/analyzed and had an artificial influence on most of these variables. Subsequently, only "No. of tournaments" and "Average weight per bass" could use data from both before and after 2010 without being directly impacted by these updates.

Variable	Ohio River – Meldahl Pool										Ohio River – All Pools									
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of tournaments	5	6	12	4	5	6	13	14	13	9	41	19	24	10	15	45	35	49	34	18
No. bass caught per hour	0.14	0.09	0.13	0.16	0.17	0.24	0.23	0.28	0.32	0.44	0.17	0.11	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.25	0.24	0.34	0.40	0.43
Percent successful	49.0	40.8	42.5	43.6	42.1	63.3	67.3	73.9	74.1	95.1	48.4	40.7	45.8	55.6	41.2	62.6	64.1	70.3	74.1	92.4
Average weight per bass	1.33	1.36	1.37	1.41	1.40	1.42	1.38	1.36	1.38	1.44	1.37	1.39	1.44	1.36	1.42	1.48	1.44	1.36	1.37	1.42
Hours to catch bass ≥ 4 lbs	1000	--	--	--	289	--	>1000				500	1000	1000	>1000	317	968	583			
Hours to catch bass ≥ 5 lbs								--	--	--								>1000	>1000	--
Hours to catch bass ≥ 6 lbs	--	--	--	--	>1000	--	--				--	--	--	--	>1000	--	>1000			

'--' = There was either no fish of this size caught during the year or no tournaments were reported so these variables could not be calculated.

SUMMER TOURNAMENT BASS HANDLING GUIDELINES

Tournaments often illustrate the conservation mentality of today's bass anglers by requiring their participants to follow practices (i.e. catch & release) that will allow the fish to "survive to be caught another day". To help ensure that the bass remain healthy, specific procedures have been developed to reduce stress that fish might experience during a typical tournament. These procedures are even more important during the summer months when high water temperatures and low oxygen levels can already be very demanding on fish. The KDFWR fisheries division recommends that all summer tournaments adopt these guidelines taken from "Keeping Bass Alive", which is a book published by the B.A.S.S. conservation program. For more information and full text of the guidebook, visit the B.A.S.S. website located at:

<http://www.bassmaster.com/tips/keeping-bass-alive>

- Stress caused by handling and long-term confinement in a livewell is a major factor that can increase the mortality of bass that are caught during tournaments. High water temperature and low oxygen levels increase this stress.
- Stress can be reduced by maintaining adequate oxygen levels via the continual operation of the aerator in a *closed* livewell. **Do not constantly pump in hot lake water.**
- Keeping the livewell temperature *5-10 °F cooler than the lake water* can greatly reduce stress; Always remember that cooler water holds more oxygen.
 - Two frozen ½ gallon water jugs (or 8 lb ice block) can cool a 30-gal livewell by 10 °F for ~ 3 hours.
 - Livewell temperatures should be checked every hour while ice can be added/removed as needed.
 - To avoid temperature shock, the livewell should not be cooled by more than 10 degrees.
 - Livewell temperature should never be allowed to rise above 85 °F.
 - Extra jugs or blocks can always be carried in a cooler or insulated boat compartment.
- Non-iodized salt (available at farm supply stores) can also help reduce stress when it is added to the livewell at a rate of *1/3 cup to every 5 gallons of water*. The salt can be pre-measured for any size of livewell and stored in small plastic bags.
- Once there is more than 10 pounds of bass in the livewell, ½ of the water should be exchanged midway through the tournament day. Always re-adjust the temperature and add a ½ dose of salt when the fresh water is added.

These simple procedures can considerably decrease the amount of stress that bass experience after being caught during tournaments. Reducing this stress can increase their chances of survival once they are released, which is a good way of making sure the next year's winning sack will stay alive.

OTHER HELPFUL TOURNAMENT GUIDELINES

- All tournaments should be scheduled through KDFWR's Tournament Scheduling web site at least 30-60 days in advance.
- Avoid dates and locations where other tournaments are already scheduled; remember that larger reservoirs usually have more than one ramp available each day.
- Contact the marina or agency in charge of the ramp where your tournament is scheduled. Confusion and conflict can be avoided when adequate planning and communication is used.
- Always check if the ramp used by your tournament has a launch fee.
- Due to the increased use of lakes and rivers, you should avoid scheduling tournaments around major holidays.
- Respect the rights of other anglers who are using the same ramp as your tournament.
- Minimize the disturbance to campsites and docked boats that could be used for overnight stays.
- Make a plan for the most effective use of available parking spaces to allow non-tournament anglers access to the ramp. Check with Marina operators as they may have alternate parking arrangements for tournament participants.
- Make sure all tournament participants have clear instructions on when and where to launch, as well as where to park their vehicles after the boats are in the water. This is another step that will help avoid any issues at the ramps and/or marinas.
- Shotgun starts have proven to be very unsafe and should be avoided.
- Large tournaments should stagger launch and weigh-in times to prevent "gridlock" at the ramp. Organizers should use support personnel to direct traffic during launching, parking, weigh-in and boat retrieval.
- Each tournament angler should be knowledgeable of all local fishing and boating regulations. They must also possess a valid fishing license, proper boat registration, personal floatation devices and other required equipment.
- If possible, avoid scheduling daytime tournaments during the hotter summer months, which will help reduce extra stress on the fish and minimize mortality.
- Tournament anglers and organizers should set the example and handle their fish responsibly, which includes the procedures that were outlined above in the "Summer Tournament Bass Handling Guidelines".