MISSISSIPPI BASS TOURNAMENT PROGRAM
2012 ANNUAL REPORT

FISHERIES BUREAU

MISSISSIPPI WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211
www.mdwfp.com

Your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels supports Sport Fish Restoration and boating access facilities.
The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) began a program in 1998 for bass tournament anglers to help biologists monitor bass populations. These results continue to be a valuable addition to the data that MDWFP biologists use to manage bass populations. In some waters, it may be the only measure we have of what anglers are catching.

Bass clubs and tournament organizers are encouraged to provide tournament results to MDWFP on the form shown below. The form may be mailed, faxed or emailed to the address below. Forms, reports and data input can be accessed via internet at:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MISSISSIPPI BASS TOURNAMENT REPORT CARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake: _________________________ Date: _____ Start: _____ Stop: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tournament Type: Individual ( ) Team ( ) Director: ________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club or Organization: ___________________________ Phone: __________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address: __________________ City: ______ State: ______ Zip: ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Anglers or Teams: ___________ Limits Caught: ___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of bass weighed-in: ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Weight (all bass): _____ Lbs. _____ ozs./tenths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Place Weight: _____ Lbs. _____ ozs./tenths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tournament Lunker: _____ Lbs. _____ ozs./tenths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Bass over 5 Pounds: ____________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By mail: Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks ph: 601-432-2208
C/O Larry Pugh fax: 601-432-2203
1505 Eastover Drive email: larry.pugh@mdwfp.state.ms.us
Jackson, MS 39215
2012 was another good year for Mississippi’s bass tournament anglers, and included 236 tournament reports! Averages for all lakes in 2012 were very similar to those in 2011 and still above the previous eight years of reporting. At least five reports were received from 15 lakes that are included in the “Final Rankings.” Quality indicators continue to improve, with average number and weight of bass weighed-in the highest ever reported. Average lunker weight is still above 5 pounds. Anglers are raving about the quality of the fishing at Lake Ferguson; and Pickwick Lake and Ross Barnett Reservoir are still cranking out more bass over 7 pounds than any other lake in the State. The following summarizes the most important points from the 2012 Tournament Report:

- 236 reports were submitted from 35 different lakes
- **Lake Fergusson** finished as the top lake in overall quality indicator rankings followed by **Pickwick, Bay Springs**, and **Ross Barnett Reservoir**.
- 27 bass over 7 lbs were weighed-in
• A total of 236 tournaments reported 8,006 anglers that weighed-in 18,098 bass (Table 1). Report cards were received for 35 lakes. The number of tournament reports declined in 2012, and was the lowest since 2006 (Figure 1). The most reports again came from Ross Barnett Reservoir and Pickwick Lake.

![](image.png)

**Figure 1.** Number of tournament reports submitted, 2002-2012.

• It took an average of 13.91 pounds to win a tournament in 2012 (Table 1). Of lakes with a least five tournaments reported, Lakes Ferguson and Pickwick had the highest average winning weights.

• Average weight of bass ranged from 0.68 pounds at Elvis Presley Lake to 3.70 pounds at Lake Washington (Table 1). The statewide average weight was 2.02 pounds. Using average length of tournaments to define an angler day, the number of bass caught/angler day was highest at Elvis Presley Lake and pounds caught/angler day was highest at Eagle Lake.

• The seasonal distribution of 2012 tournaments appears in Figure 2. Tournament reports were submitted from all 12 months. Tournaments held from March through June accounted for 53% of the total.
Figure 2. Monthly Distribution of 2012 Tournaments.

- Tournament catch for numbers and pounds per day were similar to 2011 and continue to be some of the highest values recorded since the start of reporting (Figure 3). The hours to catch a bass 5 pounds or larger (258 hours) has declined each year since 2007.

- Lakes with at least five tournament reports were ranked by averaging six "quality indicators" (Table 2). The top 5 lakes in 2012 were Ferguson, Pickwick, Bay Springs, Ross Barnett and Gulfport Lake. Lake Ferguson received the highest ranks for four of the six quality indicators. Pickwick received high marks for winning weight and pounds of bass weighed-in. Bay Springs had high scores for average lunker and hours to catch a bass over 5 pounds. Ross Barnett scored high for average lunker and average weight of bass weighed-in, and Gulfport Lake received high scores for numbers and pounds of bass weighed-in per day. Ferguson replaced Lake Washington as the top lake in 2012. Pickwick continued to hold down the 2nd spot, with Bay Springs moving up from 4th to 3rd. Ross Barnett moved up two spots to 4th, and Gulfport Lake made its first appearance in the top-5 tournament lakes in the state. Natural fluctuations in bass abundance and size structure are normal, plus environmental conditions and angling pressure vary from year to year.
Six of the top-10 heaviest 5-bass limits came from Pickwick Lake in 2012, with two of the limits over 30 pounds (Table 3). The 31.20 lb sack was weighed-in at Pickwick on February 25 in Clay's Bait & Tackle tournament. Ross Barnett Reservoir and Lake Ferguson produced the remaining four sacks. Seven of the 10 big sacks were weighed-in from January through March.

Table 3. The top 10 heaviest limits weighed-in from the 2012 MDWFP Bass Tournament Program Report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lake</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tournament</th>
<th>1st Place Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pickwick Lake</td>
<td>25-Feb-12</td>
<td>Clays Bait and Tackle</td>
<td>31.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pickwick Lake</td>
<td>10-Mar-12</td>
<td>FLW BFL</td>
<td>30.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Ferguson</td>
<td>31-Mar-12</td>
<td>Fishers of Men</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Barnett Reservoir</td>
<td>26-Feb-12</td>
<td>Media Bass</td>
<td>27.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Ferguson</td>
<td>25-Feb-12</td>
<td>Peanut Craft Lures</td>
<td>26.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pickwick Lake</td>
<td>12-May-12</td>
<td>American Bass Anglers</td>
<td>25.66</td>
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<td>Lake Ferguson</td>
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<td>Media Bass</td>
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<td>Pickwick Lake</td>
<td>28-Jan-12</td>
<td>Team Trails of MS</td>
<td>24.48</td>
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</table>

The number of bass weighed-in over 5 pounds increased in 2012. On average, it took 258 angler hours, or 30 angler days, to weigh-in a bass over five pounds during 2012. There were 259 bass five pounds or larger, 1.4% of the total number, weighed-in in 2012.

Of these, 27 bass were at least seven pounds, and three were over 10 pounds (Table 4). Sixty-seven percent of the big bass came from either Pickwick or Ross Barnett. The largest bass caught was at Pickwick Lake and weighed 12.56 pounds.

Forty-one clubs or tournament organizations submitted 236 tournament reports (Table 5). Twenty clubs (54%) submitted five or more reports and seven clubs submitted 10 or more. Six tournament organizations accounted for 38% of the total number of tournaments. The average number of reports received per club or organization was six.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LUNKER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LAKE</th>
<th>TOURNAMENT</th>
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<td>9.76</td>
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<td>Wolf River Bass Club</td>
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</table>
Team tournaments were again slightly more popular than individual tournaments with 58% of the reports submitted from team events. These tournaments averaged 18 teams per tournament. Individual tournaments accounted for 42% of the reports and averaged 32 participants per event.

Limits of bass were weighed-in by 50% of all anglers or teams, and were slightly lower than the percent limits weighed-in in 2011.

Tournament bag limits varied from 4 to 5 bass and were more restrictive than state regulations. Most tournaments had a 12-inch minimum length limit.

Success of this program depends on participation from clubs and tournament organizers with MDWFP. We thank all those who voluntarily submitted report cards. Higher numbers of reports allow better estimates of fishing conditions, not just a good or bad day's fishing by one or two clubs. Results can be used by tournament directors, anglers and biologists to better manage and enjoy our fisheries resources.

Angler involvement has been and remains the key to protecting and managing Mississippi's fisheries resources.
### Table 1. Summary of bass tournament results from the 2012 MDWFP Bass Tournament Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterbody</th>
<th>Report Cards</th>
<th>Entries</th>
<th>Bass Caught</th>
<th>Bass Per Day</th>
<th>Pounds Per Day</th>
<th>Percent Success</th>
<th>Average Weight</th>
<th>No. &gt;5 lbs.</th>
<th>Big Bass</th>
<th>Average 1st Place</th>
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Totals 236 8,006 18,098 259

Average 2.52 4.76 49 2.02 1.10 5.06 13.91
Table 2. Final rankings of tournament lakes in Mississippi based on 2012 reports.

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<th>Average Pounds Caught per 8-hour day</th>
<th>Index of hours to catch a bass &gt; 5 lbs.</th>
<th>Average big bass weight (lbs.)</th>
<th>Average 1st place weight (lbs.)</th>
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"Fishing Quality Indicators" from lakes with 5 or more tournament reports.