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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 19, 2020

To: Regional Advisory Council Member and Wildlife Board

From: Randy Oplinger, Sport Fisheries Program Coordinator
Craig Walker, Assistant Fisheries Chief, Sport Fisheries Program

SUBJECT: Changes to Fishing Contests and Clinics Rule (R657-58)

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) is proposing changes to the Fishing Contests and Clinics Rule (R657-58) that are intended to both simplify the rule and remove contest restrictions that lack biological rationale and are un-necessarily restrictive.

Under the proposed rule, any fishing contest that includes warmwater species, coldwater species, or tagged fish would be considered a “certified fishing contest”. The UDWR proposes that any certified fish contest that includes any one of the following would require a certificate of registration (COR):

- 85 or more participants
- \$2,000 or more in prize values
- A live weigh-in
- It is a tagged fish contest

No COR would be required for contests that meet none of the above criteria.

Most of the differences in requirements between tournaments targeting warmwater and coldwater species under the current fishing contest rule would be removed under the proposed rule. The UDWR recommends that current prohibition of high-grading during tournaments targeting coldwater species is retained under the proposed rule. This is recommended because other UDWR rules prohibit the release of coldwater fish species after they are possessed by an angler. Also, the mortality of coldwater fish that are held in a livewell or on a stringer is high and can potentially be impactful to a fishery.

The current fishing contests and clinics rule does not mention requirements for paper and online tournaments. These tournaments are becoming more popular and the UDWR feels that they should be mentioned under rule. The UDWR proposes that no COR is required for contests where submitted fish are immediately released. This proposal addresses paper and online tournaments because these tournaments are normally catch and release contests.



The changes that the UDWR are proposing simplify the fishing contest COR process by providing a straightforward set of criteria that contest organizers can use to determine whether a COR is required. The proposed changes also remove most of the differences between contests for warmwater and coldwater species that exist under the current rule. There is little biological rationale for these differences and they place un-necessary constraints on fishing contests for coldwater species. Finally the proposed rule addresses paper and online tournaments.

The UDWR will open an online fishing contest application portal during the beginning of 2021. The online application portal will allow tournament organizers to apply for a COR online. The proposed rule change alongside the online application portal will provide tournament organizers a faster, more streamlined fishing contest COR application process.