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BREAKING NEWS!

As you have read in our recent ***Bulletin*** and in other news publications, the OLA has been seeking oversight from the DEC regarding the dramatic increase in Bass Tournaments on our lake. (You will see the full text of our Position Statement below). We have sent letters to the DEC outlining our position. And most recently we met with the Chief of the Bureau of Fisheries to discuss the issue.

Just today the DEC announced that they are proposing regulations that include a required tournament permit as well as a reporting system for these events.

Highlights of the DEC proposal include:

- **Requiring free permits for black bass fishing tournaments held on or after Jan. 1, 2025;**
- **Defining a fishing tournament and a fishing tournament director;**
- **Setting time frames for permit applications, report submissions, and DEC review; and**
- **Providing DEC with the ability to place conditions on tournaments.**

Take a look at the press release below.

DEC RELEASES PROPOSED REGULATION TO IMPLEMENT BLACK BASS FISHING TOURNAMENT PERMIT AND REPORTING SYSTEM

Public Comments Accepted through June 10

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

announced today the release of a regulatory proposal to implement a fishing tournament permit and reporting system for black bass (largemouth bass and smallmouth bass). The no-cost black bass tournament permitting and reporting system would help identify the distribution and occurrence of black bass tournaments across the state.

Black bass are New York's most sought-after freshwater sportfish. The number of black bass fishing tournaments has increased significantly over time, but the overall scope and scale of tournament activity in New York is currently unknown, limiting the ability of DEC fisheries biologists to fully understand and manage these important fisheries for the benefit of both tournament and recreational anglers.

The information derived from the free permit system would help DEC respond to issues such as user conflicts, overuse of the resource, and concerns about fish populations. Tournament catch data would also be used by fisheries biologist to further DEC's understanding of black bass fisheries for improved management. In addition, the proposed regulation would allow for the listing of approved tournaments on DEC's website. Having this information publicly available would assist tournament organizers with scheduling and inform recreational anglers about when and where tournaments are held.

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The full text and a summary of the proposed regulation are available [on DEC's website](#) and additional information is available on the [Black Bass Fishing Tournament Permit webpage](#).

DEC is interested in anglers' viewpoints and encourages public feedback on this proposal. Comments will be accepted through June 10, 2024, and can be submitted via e-mail to regulations.fish@dec.ny.gov (subject: "Fishing Tournament Permits Proposal Comments") or via mail to the Inland Fisheries Section, NYSDEC, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4753.

<https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/freshwater-fishing/fisheries-management-research/black-bass-management-in-new-york/bass-fishing-tournament-permit>

[Come to the OLA Annual Membership Meeting on April 24th to hear more about this breaking news. Steve Hurst from the DEC will speak about this proposal, as well as other topics of interest.](#)

[We hope to see you there!](#)

OLA's Position Statement on Bass Tournaments

Adopted by unanimous vote of approval by the entire Board of Directors of the Oneida Lake Association at its regular meeting on 11 December 2023.

The smallmouth bass population in Oneida Lake has become an issue of concern. Estimates by the Cornell University Fisheries Research Station at Shackelton Point on Oneida Lake show decreasing populations of Age 0 smallmouth since 2007 as well as decreasing adult smallmouth bass populations since circa 2015. During the last ten years, creel census data on targeted smallmouth bass harvest by anglers has changed from about 0.8 fish per hour in 2014 to about 0.5 fish per hour in 2022. According to the Research Station, these declines coincide with the establishment of round gobies in the Lake and more study is needed to determine actual causes of the decline.

The OLA believes that actions need to be taken to protect this declining population of smallmouth bass and requests the NYSDEC consider placing our recommendations into current regulations on Oneida Lake.

1. There should be no pre-season bass fishing, catch-and-release or otherwise. Fishing for bass should be legal on June 15th and not before. Since this recommendation is similar to regulations in many waters of NYSDEC Region 6, we think Oneida Lake should be considered part of Region 6 as it relates to bass regulations. Round gobies prey on eggs and young bass when the adult fish guarding the nest is removed by angling, even if temporarily. Faced with declining populations of age 0 smallmouths, fishing when bass are on their nests should be prohibited.

2. There should be no bass tournaments of any type before June 15 on Oneida Lake. In addition, tournaments occurring after June 15 should receive dedicated research studies to determine the effects of these tournaments on the adult population of bass. Areas of research should include:

- a. Immediate and post- release mortality of adult fish that are harvested and processed through tournament practices.
- b. Impacts of these tournaments on the success and enjoyment of recreational anglers for bass.
- c. Effect of tournaments on parking availability at launch sites and public access to Oneida Lake in general.

The Mission of the Oneida Lake Association is to protect the fisheries, wildlife, and natural resources of Oneida Lake by promoting science-based conservation and management through

education and outreach, in partnership with our members and local communities.

Pay your dues, and HELP PROTECT ONEIDA LAKE!!!!

\$8 annually

Recruit your neighbors and friends TO JOIN US!



Donate

Memorials and contributions to our program are most welcome.

OLA is a 501(c)4 organization serving and protecting the Oneida Lake environment.



[OLA Website](#)

OLA is a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit organization.

The Oneida Lake Association is a member of the New York State Conservation Council <http://www.nyscc.com/> and the New York State Federation of Lake Associations <http://www.nysfola.org/>.

Please remember to obey all laws, rules, regulations, and codes of ethics as they pertain to boating, fishing, hunting, and the management of Oneida Lake and its tributaries.

[Report environmental violations.](#)

[1-844-DEC-ECOS \(1-844-332-3267\)](tel:1-844-DEC-ECOS)

Edited by John Harmon

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