

The Lowcountry Open

Official Tournament Rules and Regulations

The Lowcountry Open is a combined OFFSHORE, INSHORE and NEARSHORE fishing tournament being held on May 19, 2018.

Rules and Regulations:

- Registration:** Basic entry fee is \$600 per boat for the Offshore Division, \$200 per boat for Nearshore Division and \$150 per boat for Inshore Division. Boats and kayaks are permitted and encouraged to fish more than one Division, but must pay the entry fee and TWT buy-ins for each division to be eligible for respective prize winnings. Charter boats are permitted to fish with multiple anglers, limited to 6 anglers per charter boat. Any entry fee paid with a dishonored check or credit card automatically voids boat entry. There is no entry fee prize money for the Billfish Challenge, which is a TWT payout only.
* 95% of net (administrative expenses) boat entry fees and TWT will be paid out unless otherwise specified.
- Captain's Meeting and Registration:** The Captain's meeting and in-person registration event is scheduled for Thursday May 17, 2018 from 6:00pm - 9:00pm at Salty Mike's in Charleston, SC. Each boat should have a representative attend the captain's meeting, and each boat receives a Captain's Bucket with tournament promotional gear inside. Tournament rule changes may be made by the tournament officials at any time throughout the captain's meeting. It is the responsibility of all participants to familiarize and abide by all rules and regulations of this tournament.
- Fishing Tournament Dates & Time Slots:** FISH DAY - May 19, 2018. Weather day – May 20, 2018. Saturday May 19, 2018, at 3:00am boats may depart respective designated port's within South Carolina public waters only. Lines, teasers and lures permitted in water no earlier than 6:30 am. Lines out of water at 2:00pm for offshore division, and 4:30pm for both nearshore and inshore divisions on Saturday, May 19, 2018. No exceptions. The same time slots apply if weather day is activated on May 20, 2018. Weigh-stations info (see below) open from 3:00pm – 6:00pm.
tournament officials reserve the right to extend tournament to Monday, May 21, 2018, due to extreme inclement weather conditions determined at captains meeting
- Ports & Boundaries (Fish Radius):** Boats must depart, fish and harvest catch within South Carolina public waters only. Private waters or private saltwater ponds are ineligible. All fish must also be hooked within the following coordinates: upper northward limit is 33.832749, -78.520922, and the lower southward limit is 32.033035, -80.757622. The most eastern fishing boundary is 100 miles from your adjacent westward shoreline.
- Tackle & Angling Requirements:** IGFA angling & tackle rules are encouraged but not enforced. All fish must be caught on a fishing rod and reel with a hook and line by any conventional method (fly rods permitted), and must be done within a boating vessel (kayaks permitted). For anglers targeting non-billfish species in the Offshore Division, J hooks are permitted on natural and artificial lures. **Non-offset circle hooks are mandatory if participating in the Offshore Billfish Division TWT**, for all teams using natural baits in accordance with federal regulations. Trolling, chunking, jigging, casting, kite fishing and live baiting are permitted. No limits on lines, lures, or teasers. No greensticks, darts, or harpoons permitted. Electric reels may only be used for anything hookless (dredges, teasers, kites and planers).
- Federal & State Regulations:** SC regulations for slot Red Drums are as follows: 15 inches total length minimum to 23 inches total length maximum. No offshore or nearshore boat is allowed to weigh more than 3 fish of the same species at the weigh-station. Each boat and team members must obtain all required federal and state licenses before fishing in tournament. A [Federal Highly Migratory Species Permit](#) is required to fish for the tourney-eligible tuna as follows: bluefin, bigeye, albacore, yellowfin or skipjack. Blackfin do not require HMS permits. Eligible tuna for the tournament are as follows: Bluefin, bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, skipjack (see stripes on belly) and blackfin. Bonita and False Albacore (Little Tunny – see spots on belly) are excluded and ineligible. Check current federal regulations by phone at 1-888-USA-TUNA ([1-888-872-8862](tel:1-888-872-8862)) or <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/>. Billfishes requiring HMS permit are as follows: blue or white marlins, sailfish or swordfish. All billfish to be released may not be removed from the water. All recreationally caught Atlantic billfish landed must be reported to NMFS within 24 hours of landing at the dock. Anglers can report by calling [1-800-894-5528](tel:1-800-894-5528) or by visiting <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/>. Recreationally caught billfish may not be sold.
- Catch and Release Affidavits & Committee Boats:** Inshore boats do not report catch and release on air, but affidavits must be returned to your respective weigh-station before closing. All billfish must be confirmed on air with committee boat. Upon catch of billfish, catch affidavits must identify species, time boated and boat name/number to committee boat. Non-billfish species are not to be reported to committee boat. The Lowcountry Open official tournament VHF channel is 65!
- Billfish Catch and Release:** All billfish must be attested to by signature of the angler, captain and two witnesses (if available) on board the boat at the time of the release on the Billfish Affidavit Form provided by the Tournament Committee. This form shall be returned to the offshore weigh-master at your respective offshore station. Release forms must be turned in no later than 6:00 p.m. to qualify. Billfish forms may also be photographed and emailed to info@thelowcountryopen.com. Please put "Billfish Form" in subject line of your email.
- Passing Fish to another Vessel:** Passing a fish to another vessel is permitted only due to mechanical breakdown. Fish must be accompanied by a signed catch report and confirmed with committee boats on VHF channel 65 at time of transfer.
- Fish Weigh-Ins OFFSHORE/NEARSHORE:** Manage your travel time! Boats with qualifying offshore/nearshore species must be weighed at Charleston City Marina between 3pm – 6:00pm, or weighed at the additional weigh-station at Georgetown Landing between 3pm – 6:00pm. Boats must be visible by weigh-masters by 6:00pm. Boats shall contact tournament officials via VHF channel 65 or scales phone number (tbd). Fish may be trucked to weigh station scale. No mutilated fish will be weighed. Fish shall be accompanied by a signed catch report, and the boat agent or angler is required to sign the finalized catch report upon completion of weigh-in. At which point, you have approved the official weight of your catch as final. Fish are subject to examination by tournament officials.
- Catch and Release INSHORE:** The basic inshore tournament species must be caught and released, and attested to by signature from all adult anglers present at the time of release on the Inshore Affidavit Form. Points per CnR are as follows: Redfish (10 points), Speckled Trout (20 points) and Flounder (30 Points). The only species exception to catch and release would be for boats participating in the Bullseye Bonus TWT (details below). No private ponds or private waters permitted to target or catch fish. Fly rods and kayaks are permitted. Anglers are required to hook and reel each tournament species to the boat, and must achieve a wet-release by hand or net without boarding the fish to your vessel – de-hooking

tools permitted. Adult anglers are permitted to set the hook and hand off rods (no-fight) to youth anglers, after which exchange no adult angler may touch the rod, reel or line until the leader has touched the first guide. If no leader tied to mainline, an official catch and release is achieved through wet-release rules above at the boat, or within arms-length or net-length distance from the boat. (See purse payouts and deferment rules below)

12. **Tie Breaker:** In the event of a tie for any tournament species weighed or caught and released, the first weighed fish of its species or earliest Catch and Release Affidavit returned to the weigh-station will be the winner. Weigh-station time limitations strictly enforced (above).
13. **Protests & Polygraph:** Protests require a \$500 nonrefundable protest fee, and must be submitted within one hour after the published closing time of weigh-stations. Tournament officials reserve the right to request a polygraph test of any and all winning teams.
14. **Responsible Seamanship:** Boat captains, crews, anglers and any other members on a vessel enter this tournament at their own risk. Captains, crews, and anglers must make their own judgments whether to fish under the prevailing weather conditions based on the size and seaworthiness of their boat, their Seamanship skills and any other relevant factors known.
15. **Disclaimer:** It is expressly understood that all registered boat captains, anglers, crew and any other person herein are known as participants in The Lowcountry Open, herein known as the tournament, do so at their own risk and judgment. The participants hereby indemnify and agree to hold harmless, the tournament and its respective officers, directors, employees, volunteers, agents, sponsors, partners, members, and/or attorneys (collectively the "tournament parties") from and against any and all claims that arise from, or in connection with, any negligent act or omission of the tournament indemnified parties. All persons connected directly or indirectly with the operation of the tournament, whether individual, limited liability company or corporation, shall have no liability whatsoever for any special, incidental, consequential, punitive, exemplary and/or any other damage including without limitation, any damages arising from libel, slander, loss, damage, negligence, harm, injury or death. The tournament officials reserve the right to refuse entry to any boat team or person. Participants specifically agree and consent to the use of any photography in which they appear, or audio recording, by the tournament for any purpose whatsoever, including but not limited to, resale, advertising and promotional material without compensation or restriction of any kind.
16. **Tournament Payout:** All prize money will be distributed within 15 days of the Tournament's conclusion provided there are no outstanding appeals, disputes or errors. While our intent is to submit winning payments within 2 business days upon the tournament's conclusion, we first want to ensure the utmost accuracy with regard to winners and prize money distributions. Payouts will be made payable to the authorized agent or entity so indicated on the boat entry form and W-9. W-9 must be received by the tournament officials to receive payout.
17. **Credit card transaction fee:** credit card transactions require a 3% transaction fee on the amount charged.

General entry information

Basic Entry Registration: Basic entry fee is required to fish the tournament, and entry fee is on a per-boat basis. Heaviest fish from the Atlantic or its inshore tributaries caught during the tournament wins! Heaviest fish shall include qualifying tuna, wahoo, dolphin, king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, amberjack, redfish, flounder and speckled trout. No other species is permitted. Billfish division is a catch and release category only.

Tournament Purse: The "Tournament Purse" originates from 1) entry fees paid and 2) TWT buy-ins paid. Only one boat must enter, pay basic entry fee and attempt to fish to be considered a *tournament*. If no fish are caught during the tournament, and subsequent tournament dates not activated, the purse will be refunded to registrants.

Distribution of purse: Allocations of purse will be distributed to the registered agent's name, address and signee of the boat registration form.

Winning payout qualifications as directed below:

Offshore/Nearshore Aggregate Weight Winner for Entry Fees and TWT buy-ins: The following rule applies equally to both boat registration payouts and TWT buy-in payouts. In order to win the published payout as "Division Aggregate Winner" in either Offshore or Nearshore Divisions, 1) no boat shall weigh more than 3 fish of the same species at the weigh-station, and 2) no boat shall weigh more than 9 fish (per division) at the weigh-station. You may not weigh 4 or more of the same species at the weigh-station to determine heaviest. 3) The boat with the heaviest aggregate (combined) weight of 9 maximum fish per division will be declared the **Division Winner** of The Lowcountry Open. Any boat winning the Division Aggregate Winner may also win the heaviest Species Winner for their registered division. *Aggregate Weight Winner does not apply to the Billfish CnR TWT.* All winning teams are subject to polygraph testing.

Species Winner Offshore/Nearshore for Entry Fees and TWT Buy-ins: This is a Big Fish tournament format applied equally to both boat registration payouts and TWT buy-in payouts. In order to win the published payout as "Species Winner" (e.g. Dolphin Winner, King Mackerel Winner, etc.) for either Offshore or Nearshore divisional species, you must weigh the single heaviest fish to be the winner. There are only 3 species per division eligible for species winner payout, with a maximum of three winners per offshore or nearshore divisions and 6 maximum. The heaviest winning species may be as follows: (1) winner per Dolphin, (1) per Wahoo and (1) per Tuna; (1) winner per king mackerel, (1) per Spanish mackerel and (1) per Amberjack. This is a winner-take-all prize, and there is no 2nd place payout. Any boat winning the Species Winner may also win the Division Aggregate Winner for their registered division. All winning teams are subject to polygraph testing.

Inshore Aggregate Catch and Release Winner for Entry Fees and TWT Buy-ins: This is a Catch and Release tournament format applied equally to both boat registration payouts and TWT buy-in payouts. In order to win the published payouts as "Division Aggregate Winner" in the Inshore Division, each boat will compete for the aggregate (total) amount of points between caught and released redfish, speckled trout and flounder. Points per CnR are as follows: Redfish (10 points), Speckled Trout (20 points) and Flounder (30 Points). You are not required to catch and release within all three species to qualify. 1) Redfish must meet a minimum of 15" TL (total length) with no maximum TL to qualify. 2) Speckled trout must meet a minimum of 14" TL with no maximum TL to qualify. 3) Flounder must meet a minimum of 14" TL with no maximum TL to qualify. The boat with the most aggregate release points is the **Division Winner**, and eligible for the boat entry and/or TWT payouts as published. Any boat winning the Division Aggregate Winner may also win the Species Winner for the inshore division. All winning teams are subject to polygraph testing.

Inshore Species Winner for Entry Fees and TWT Buy-ins: All catch and release rules of the tournament apply, as do any or all state or federal regulations. The boat with the most catch and release points per species shall win the published Species Winner payouts for boat entry and/or TWT buy-ins. In the event of a tie for points, please see tie-breaker rule #12 above.

Bullseye Bonus TWT for Offshore, Nearshore and Inshore: Each division will have an optional TWT buy-in for a fun cash bonus. Each division will have a targeted tournament species, and the target weight for each respective species will be determined at the Captain's Meeting. The closest over/under to the target weight wins a shared payout with our veteran's charity. All registered tournament boats automatically qualify if 1) Paid your boat entry fees for respective division(s), 2) you pay the respective Bullseye Bonus TWT buy-in for your registered division, 2) you weigh at least one division-targeted, Bullseye Bonus species at the weigh-station. Offshore and nearshore boats 3-max per species still govern. Inshore boats may weigh up to 3 live flounder, live release at weigh-station required.

Deferment of Offshore Species Winner for Entry Fees and TWT: If no tuna is weighed within regulations, its ENTRY/TWT monies defer to the heaviest dolphin and wahoo winners, split equally 50/50. If no wahoo is weighed within regulation, its ENTRY/TWT defers to heaviest dolphin and tuna winners, split equally 50/50. If no dolphin is weighed within regulations, its ENTRY/TWT defers to the heaviest wahoo and tuna winners, split equally 50/50. If the Offshore Division has no species weighed within regulation, the combined net ENTRY/TWT monies will be refunded.

* 95% of the net (administrative expenses) Offshore ENTRY/TWT monies will be paid out unless otherwise specified.

Deferment of Nearshore Species Winner for Entry Fees and TWT: If no kingfish is weighed within regulations, its ENTRY/TWT monies defer to the heaviest Spanish mackerel and amberjack winners, split equally 50/50. If no Spanish mackerel is weighed within regulations, its ENTRY/TWT monies defer to the heaviest kingfish and amberjack winners and paid accordingly. If no amberjack species is weighed within regulation, its TWT monies defer to the heaviest kingfish and Spanish mackerel winners and paid accordingly. If the Nearshore Division has no species weighed within regulations, the combined net ENTRY/TWT monies will be refunded.

* 95% of the net (administrative expenses) Nearshore ENTRY/TWT monies will be paid out unless otherwise specified.

Deferment of Inshore Species Winner for Entry Fees and TWT: If no redfish are caught and released within regulation, its ENTRY/TWT monies defer to the catch and release flounder and speckled trout winners, split equally 50/50. If no flounder is caught and released within regulations, its TWT monies defer to catch and release redfish and speckled trout winners, split equally 50/50. If no speckled trout is caught and released within regulations, its TWT monies defer to the catch and release redfish and flounder winners, split equally 50/50. If the Inshore Division has no species caught and released within regulations, the combined net inshore ENTRY/TWT monies will be refunded.

* 95% of the net (administrative expenses) Inshore ENTRY/TWT monies will be paid out unless otherwise specified.

Deferment of Lady Angler/Veteran Angler Winners for Entry Fees and TWT: If no Lady Angler winner is declared in either respective division, its winning allocation will first defer to the Veteran Angler winner of the same division. If no Veteran Angler winner is declared in either respective division, its winning allocation will first defer to the Lady Angler winner of the same division. If no Lady Angler or Veteran Angler winners are declared in either respective divisions, its winning allocations will defer to the Aggregate Winner for each respective division.

Disqualification: If a winning boat should become disqualified for any regulatory reason within the governing rules, to include polygraph results or tournament committee findings, that boat's entry fees and TWT monies will be disqualified from tournament payout(s). If the winning heaviest fish in its category is the only fish weighed per division species, and becomes disqualified, that category or species will assume a no-catch status. Boat ENTRY/TWT deferment rules immediately apply.