

2007 Delaware Sportfishing Tournament Summary



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Introduction

The Delaware Sportfishing Tournament is an annual program sponsored by the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife to promote recreational fishing opportunities in the state and recognize anglers for outstanding catches. The tournament's origins date back to the late 1930's when the Board of Game and Fish Commissioners arranged a fishing contest for fish taken in Delaware waters (Higgins and Webb 2007). The goal then was to increase interest in fresh and saltwater hook and line fishing in the state. Cash rewards were paid to anglers catching the largest fish in three saltwater and three freshwater categories. Although cash rewards are not offered anymore, the sportfishing tournament is still a very popular program receiving as many as 3,585 entries in a single year (1986). The tournament has grown to include 16 categories in the freshwater division and 27 categories in the saltwater division. The Tournament also includes a Live Release Award for conservation minded anglers that choose to return their catch, unharmed, immediately after landing. Each species must meet a minimum weight or length (live release only) designated by the tournament director in order to receive recognition. Several other species are typically recognized annually under the general category "Unusual Species". There are 52 participating weigh stations in the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament located throughout the state.

Materials & Methods

Entries are processed into the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament following guidelines provided in the tournament rules (Appendix 1). Entries are received by mail from anglers wishing to participate, who have had their catch certified by an official

weigh station (Appendix 2). Weights and measurements must meet the minimum criteria, determined by the tournament director (Appendix 3). Entry forms are reviewed and entered into an electronic form (Microsoft Access) which automatically saves the information into a Delaware Sportfishing Tournament archive. A citation is then printed along with a mailing label generated from participant information. At the close of the tournament year (January 31st), a winners' report (Appendix 4) is generated. Anglers catching the heaviest fish in each category are awarded a plaque with their name, species caught, and weight at an annual awards ceremony held the first week of June the following year.

Results & Discussion

There were three new state records caught in 2007. On September 22nd, Will Stahlgren of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania caught a 106 lb. 4 oz. wahoo surpassing the old record by more than 8 lbs. On October 17th, Theresa Hilley of Cambra, Pennsylvania caught a 13lb. 15oz. sheephead, outweighing the existing record by more than one pound. Finally, two days later, on October 19th, Clint Willman caught and weighed a 5 lb. 15 oz. gray triggerfish for the third and final state record catch of the year (Appendix 4).

Overall, 2007 tournament participation was down from previous years (Figure 1), as only 441 entries were submitted for recognition. This may be attributed to a 6 month suspension of the Tournament in 2006 due to funding issues. Although the Tournament was reinstated by the first of the year, confusion stemming from the closure may have caused reduced participation. It will be interesting to see what effects, if any, the newly

implemented general fishing license will have on participation in the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament in future years.

Three species (striped bass, summer flounder, and tautog) comprised approximately 64% of 322 weigh-in entries submitted in the saltwater division. Forty-four percent (44%) of submissions in the saltwater division were made by non-resident anglers. Non-resident anglers accounted for 6% of the freshwater submissions. Live release awards accounted for 29% of the freshwater submissions, versus 10% of the saltwater submissions (Appendix 5).

Improvements were made to tournament data entry, processing, and management in 2007. All Sportfishing Tournament archives were transferred from paper copies to an electronic database. During the process, all tournament files were verified and synchronized to make the process of viewing and summarizing the data more efficient. Annual reports in subsequent years will automatically be generated from data added throughout the tournament year. Additionally, it is much easier to sort through the archived records when examining detailed aspects of the Sportfishing Tournament. For example, it is now easier to find the number of citation smallmouth bass caught out of a specific body of water, during a specific year. Once that number is determined, it can be compared with other bodies of water or other years. This will make it easier for fisheries managers/ scientists to incorporate tournament data into reports and assessments, when applicable.

With the addition of the Tournament archive, it is apparent that some categories may need to be amended or eliminated. For instance, it is illegal to possess red drum greater than 27 inches, and therefore impossible to possess a trophy sized fish for

recognition. However, the tournament still has red drum listed as a species eligible for recognition. In this case, the tournament rules may mislead anglers regarding the possession of the species. Catch and release awards may still be granted for this species. Other species that may warrant reconsideration due to lack of participation are tiger musky, walleye, and cod. Since being added to the tournament in 1997, there have only been 15 tiger musky entries and 2 walleye entries submitted, with the most recent submission dating back to 2002. The tournament has only received two submissions for cod since its inception making the category another candidate for elimination. Special recognition in the form of the “Unusual Species” category will apply to these species if they are eliminated.

Another change that is currently being examined is the manner in which submissions are made to the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament. With the advent of the general fishing license, the Division of Fish and Wildlife has reexamined the manner in which vendors distribute licenses. The possibility of providing these agents with computers for these tasks has been suggested. In addition to recording license sales, computers furnished by the Division could also be programmed to handle electronic submission of tournament entry forms. This would eliminate the need for paper forms saving the Division the cost of these forms and making the process of submission more efficient.

Data collected from the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament may be useful in examining both short-term and long-term trends for different fish species. Tournament data reflects the lack of large weakfish in Delaware waters since the mid – 1980’s (Figure 2) as well as population trends documented by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries

Commission (ASMFC 2007). From tournament data, it seems that larger seabass were available to recreational anglers in 2001 and 2002 (Figure 3). Summer flounder entries indicate an increased catch of larger fish (> 7 lbs.) (Figure 4). Summer flounder have accounted for a large proportion of total entries in the tournament in the last ten years (Figure 5). The rise in tournament entries for summer flounder corresponds to a rise in recreational landings for Delaware over the same time period. These increases are suggestive of stock recovery resulting from stringent management measures put in place in the mid-1990's (ASMFC 2006).

Conclusion

The Delaware Sportfishing Tournament has been a popular program of the Division of Fish and Wildlife for the last forty years. It serves the Division of Fish and Wildlife well as a means of promoting recreational fishing opportunities and recognizing anglers for outstanding catches. Data collected from tournament entries can be a valuable tool to fisheries managers and scientists when viewed qualitatively. Inferences on the performance of Delaware's recreational fishery can be made using these data. Although a drastic decrease in participation was noted in 2007, it is anticipated that participation will increase to levels more consistent with the long term average in 2008 as word spreads that the tournament suspension was lifted. State records for sheepshead, wahoo, and gray triggerfish were broken in 2007 despite low tournament participation. Changes that were made to the data entry process of the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament should make compilation and analysis easier for everyone involved in 2008 and beyond.

Literature Cited

- ASMFC (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission) 2007. 2007 Review of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fishery Management Plan for Weakfish – 2006 Fishing Year. ASMFC, Washington, D.C. 22pp.
- ASMFC (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission) 2006. 2006 Review of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Fishery Management Plan for Summer Flounder. ASMFC, Washington, D.C. 13 pp.
- Higgins, T. L. and D.L. Webb. 2007. Preserving Delaware's Natural History – The First Century. Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife.
Available: <http://www.fw.delaware.gov/sitecollectiondocuments/fw%20gallery/fw%20history.pdf>

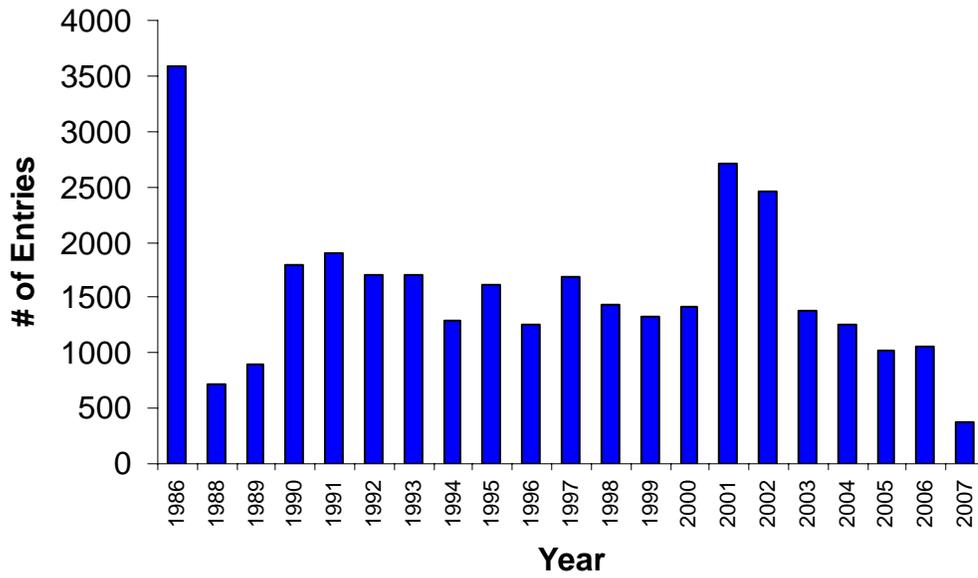


Figure 1: Annual number of entries submitted to the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament

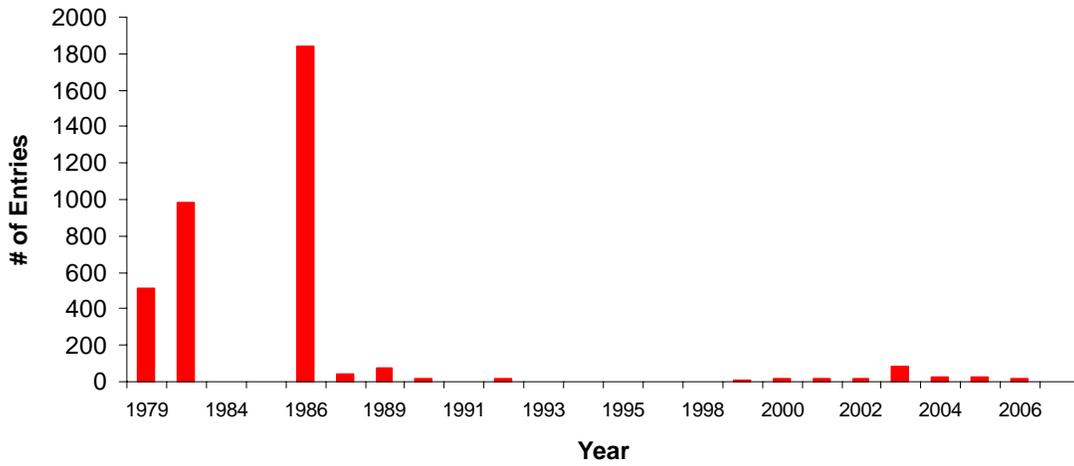


Figure 2: Annual weakfish entries submitted to the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament (minimum weight is 9 lbs.)

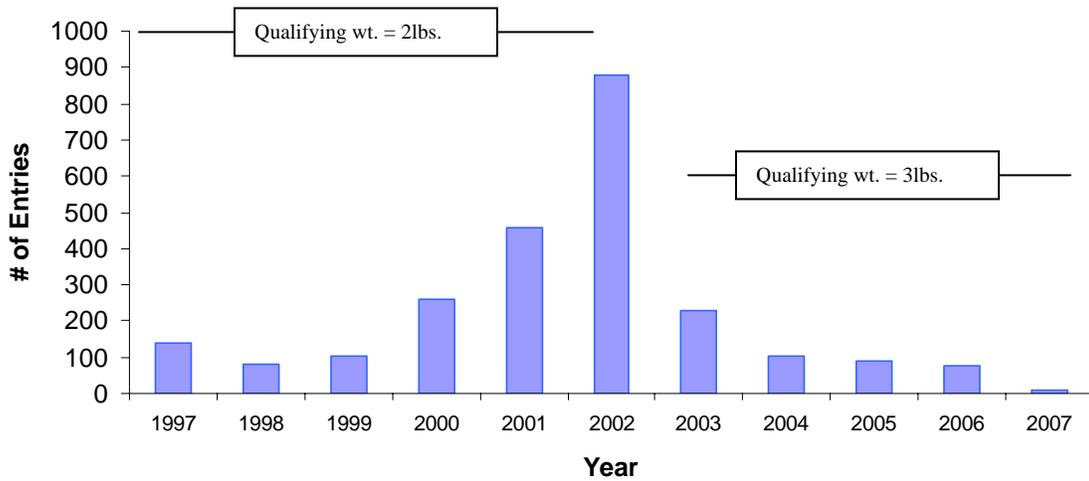


Figure 3: Annual black sea bass entries submitted to the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament (minimum weight is 3lbs.)

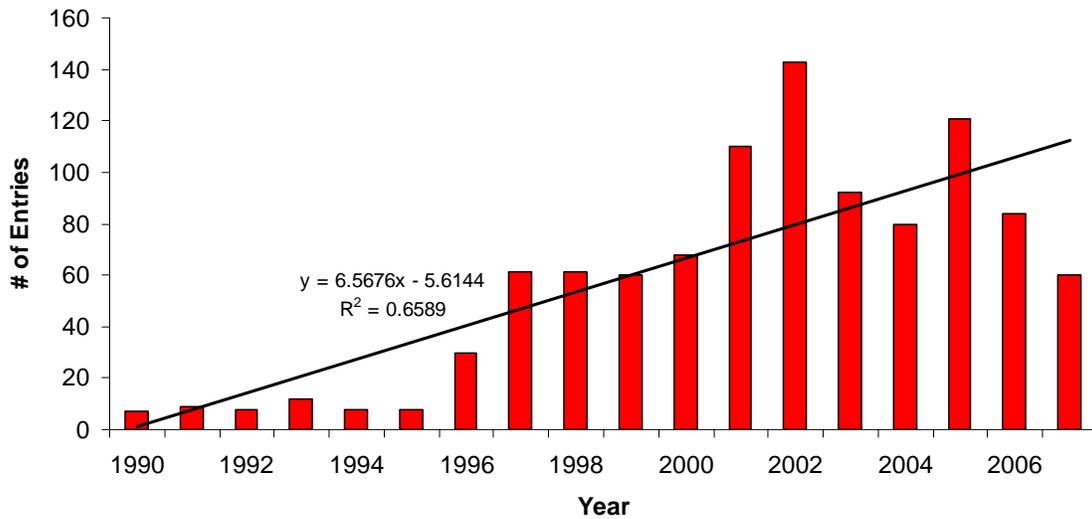


Figure 4: Annual summer flounder entries submitted to the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament (minimum weight is 7 lbs.)

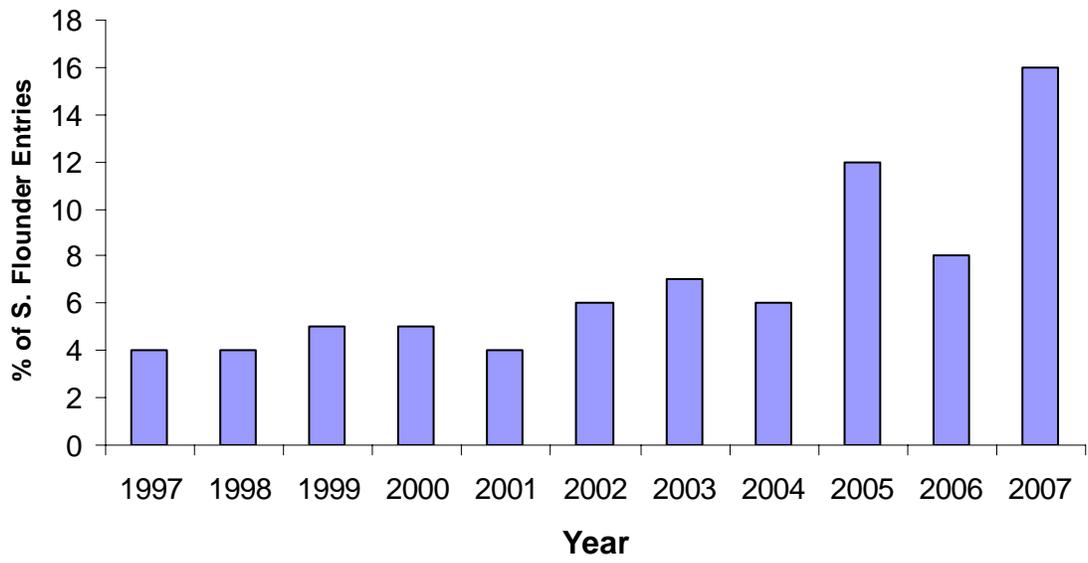


Figure 5: Summer flounder entries as a percentage of total entries in the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament

APPENDIX 1: Rules for the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament

1. The tournament is open to the public and there is no entry fee. Charter boat captains are eligible. Weigh masters are eligible provided their fish is weighed in at a weighing station other than their own.
2. All fish except those caught beyond the three mile limit in the Atlantic Ocean entered in the Tournament must be caught within the boundaries of the State of Delaware. Any fish caught outside the three mile territorial sea must be landed in a vessel leaving from a Delaware port and returning to a Delaware port.
3. All fish entered in the tournament must be caught in a sporting manner with hook and line. No other person may touch the rod or line until the fish is brought within the grasp of the mate.
4. All fish entered in the tournament must be weighed at an official Delaware Sportfishing Tournament Weigh Station.
5. All fish entered in the tournament must meet the minimum weight requirements as set up for this year's tournament.
6. All scales used to weigh in fish must be certified early by the Delaware Division of Weights and Measures (Dept. of Agriculture 739-4811).
7. No smallmouth bass will be recognized from Kent or Sussex County unless Division of Fish and Wildlife qualified persons examine and approve the catch.
8. A fish will not be recognized as a State record unless qualified personnel from the Division of Fish and Wildlife approve the catch. In case no Division personnel are available at the time of the weigh-in, the angler must save the entire fish for examination and approval at the earliest convenient time for the Division.
9. In case of a tie for the largest fish of the year or a new State record, both fish will be recognized.
10. To replace a record for a fish weighing less than 25 pounds, the replacement must weigh at least 2 ounces more than the existing record. To replace a record for a fish weighing 25 pounds or more, the replacement must weigh at least one half of 1 percent more than the existing record. Example: at 100 pounds, the additional weight required would be 8 ounces. Any catch that exceeds the existing record by less than the amount required to defeat the record will be considered a tie.
11. The tournament director reserves the right to disqualify any entry.

12. Any entry forms will be filled out completely and in a legible manner by the weighmaster. The signed forms should be mailed in **by the angler**.
13. The Tournament runs from January 1 through December 31. No entry forms for the previous Tournament year will be accepted after 4:30 p.m. January 31st.
14. Only one citation per species of fish will be issued to any individual during the tournament year. In the event an individual catches a larger fish than the one for which he/she originally was issued a citation, a new citation will be issued for the larger fish if the individual returns the older citation.
15. Only one saltwater patch and one freshwater patch will be issued to any one individual during the Tournament year.
16. Special citations will be issued upon approval of the tournament director in the case of unusual catches or extenuating circumstances. If the weigh station feels the catch is rare or unusual, an entry form should be submitted for approvals. All decisions on unusual species by the Director will be final.
17. Citations will be awarded for released white or blue marlin. Fill out the standard entry form except for length, weight, and girth and include a signature and telephone number of a witness to the catch other than the angler and captain. Any marlin kept for taxidermy also will be eligible for Tournament entry provided a taxidermist receipt is enclosed with the entry form. Marlin retained for any purpose other than mounting will not be eligible for entry in the Tournament.
18. The Tournament Director reserves the right to disqualify any weigh station if the Tournament rules are not observed.
19. Hybrid striped bass will only be recognized for entry when caught in non-tidal water.
20. The State of Delaware assumes no responsibility in the certification of a catch for consideration by the International Game Fish Association or any record keeping body other than the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament. If an angler wishes to qualify his/her catch for consideration in another tournament, it is the responsibility of the angler to insure that his catch and weigh-in meets the appropriate criteria. The Delaware Sportfishing Tournament makes no distinction based on line classes, sex of the angler, or fly versus conventional fishing gear.

APPENDIX 2: Participating weigh stations in the Delaware Sportfishing Tournament

Station	City	Phone (302)
A&K BAIT & TACKLE	LAUREL	875-3589
A&R BAIT & TACKLE	LEWES	645-6111
ADAMS WHARF	MILFORD	422-8940
B&R BAIT & TACKLE SHOP	BETHANY	539-6243
BAYROAD DISCOUNT BAIT & TACKLE	LEWES	945-1995
BAYSIDE MARINA	MILLSBORO	945-3440
BILLS SPORT SHOP	LEWES	645-7654
CAPT BONES BAIT, TACKLE & SEAFOOD	ODESSA	378-4200
CAPT MAC'S LIGHTHOUSE BAIT & TACKLE	BETHANY	436-2445
CEDAR CREEK BAIT & TACKLE	MILFORD	422-4227
CEDAR CREEK GENERL STORE	LINCOLN	383-9227
CEDAR CREEK MARINA	MILFORD	422-2040
DELAWARE BASS STALKERS	NEWARK	737-6571
DONOVAN'S DOCK TACKLE SHOP	FREDERICA	335-3500
EASTERN MARINE	NEWARK	737-6603
FENWICK TACKLE	FENWICK	539-7766
FISHERMAN'S WHARF	LEWES	645-8862
HARRY'S BAIT & TACKLE	BETHANY	539-6244
HENLOPEN BAIT & TACKLE	LEWES	645-8106
HERB'S BAIT & TACKLE, INC	REHOBOTH	227-0631
HI-WAY BAIT & TACKLE	MILFORD	335-5087
HOOK, LINE & SINKER	REHOBOTH	644-2291
HOOK'EM 7 COOK'EM	MILFORD	422-9302
HOSS'S BAIT 7 TACKLE	LEWES	645-6956
INDIAN RIVER MARINA	REHOBOTH	227-3071
JIM'S TACKLE SHOP	WILMINGTON	998-6294
JOANNE'S BAIT & TACKLE	DAGSBORO	834-9633
JOSEPH JANVIER	MIDDLETOWN	836-9545
LEWES HARBOUR MARINA	LEWES	645-6227
M&H WELDING	MILTON	684-4570
MASSEY'S LANDING	MILLSBORO	945-2544
MURRAY'S BAIT & TACKLE	OCEAN VIEW	539-7455
OCEAN PRO SHOP	TOWNSEND	378-8666
OLD INLET BAIT & TACKLE INC	REHOBOTH	227-7974
PEPPER CREEK OUTFITTERS	DAGSBORO	732-3210
POTNET SEASIDE BAIT & TACKLE	MILLSBORO	945-7798
REHOBOTH BAY MARINA	DEWEY BEACH	226-2012
RICHARDSON SPORTSMANS CLUB	WILMINGTON	652-4384
RICK'S BAIT & TACKLE	LONGNECK	945-9245
RUDY'S OUTBOARD SERVICE	WILMINGTON	999-8735
SAM'S FISHING TACKLE	GREENWOOD	424-0197
SHOOTERS SUPPLY	NEW CASTLE	328-6242
SLICERS SPORTING GOODS	WILMINGTON	994-9537

SMITH'S BAIT SHOP	DOVER	744-9140
SONNY'S BAIT & TACKLE	FREDERICA	335-2990
STEAMBOAT LANDING	LEWES	645-6500
TAYLOR TACKLE SHOP	SEAFORD	629-9017
THE TACKLE BOX	NEW CASTLE	322-4307
TRAP POND STATE PARK	LAUREL	875-5153
VINES CREEK MARINA	DAGSBORO	732-6043
WILLIAMSVILLE COUNTRY STORE	HOUSTON	422-4455
WILSON'S SUNSHINE MARINA	MILTON	684-3425

APPENDIX 3: Delaware Sportfishing Tournament minimum qualifying weights

Freshwater Division

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>LBS.</u>
Largemouth bass (<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>)	5
Smallmouth bass (<i>Micropterus dolomieu</i>)**	2
Striped bass (<i>Morone saxatilis</i>)	20
Striped bass hybrid (<i>Morone saxatilis X Morone chrysops</i>)*	5
Bluegill (<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>)	1
Carp (<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>)	15
Catfish (<i>Ictalurus spp.</i>)	6
Crappie (<i>Pomoxis spp.</i>)	1
Tiger Musky (<i>Esox masquinongy X Esox lucius</i>)	10
White perch (<i>Morone americana</i>)	1
Yellow perch (<i>Perca flavescens</i>)	1
Chain pickerel (<i>Esox niger</i>)	4
American shad (<i>Alosa sapidissima</i>)	5
Trout (Salmonidae family)	2
Walleye (<i>Stizostedion vitreum</i>)	5
Redear sunfish (<i>Lepomis microlophus</i>)	1

*Must be taken from Lums Pond **Must be at least 17 inches

Saltwater Division

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>LBS.</u>
False albacore (<i>Euthynnus alletteratus</i>)	12
True albacore (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>)	30
Black sea bass (<i>Centropristis striata</i>)	3
Striped bass (<i>Morone saxatilis</i>)	20
Bluefish (<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>)	14
Cod (<i>Gadus morhua</i>)	20
Atlantic croaker (<i>Micropogonias undulates</i>)	3
Dolphin (<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>)	15
Black drum (<i>Pogonias cromis</i>)	50
Summer Flounder (<i>Paralichthys dentatus</i>)	7
Northern Kingfish (<i>Menticirrhus saxatilis</i>)	1
Atlantic mackerel (<i>Scomber scombrus</i>)	2

King mackerel (<i>Scomberomorus cavalla</i>)	10
Spanish mackerel (<i>Scomberomorus maculates</i>)	5
Blue marlin (<i>Makaira nigricans</i>)	Any*
White marlin (<i>Tetrapturus albidus</i>)	Any*
Scup (<i>Stenotomus chrysops</i>)	2
Shark (excl. Mako)	100
Mako (<i>Isurus</i> spp.)	100
Sheepshead (<i>Archosargus probatocephalus</i>)	8
Swordfish (<i>Xiphias gladius</i>)	Any
Tautog (<i>Tautoga onitis</i>)	7
Gray triggerfish (<i>Balistes capriscus</i>)	5
Tuna (<i>Thunnus</i> spp.)	75
Wahoo (<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>)	20
Weakfish (<i>Cynoscion regalis</i>)	9

* Citations for marlin are awarded only for releases or for those landed for taxidermy

APPENDIX 4: Delaware Sportfishing Tournament winners list 2007

DELAWARE SPORTFISHING TOURNAMENT
WINNERS FOR 2007
FRESHWATER DIVISION

LARGEMOUTH BASS - 9 Lbs. 3 Ozs. - 4/7/07 - Nanticoke River
Tim Barnett, Bridgeville, DE 19933

SMALLMOUTH BASS - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

STRIPED BASS - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

SB X WB HYBRID - 5 Lbs. 1 Oz. - 7/29/07 - Lums Pond
Robert Powell, New Castle, DE 19720

BLUEGILL - 1 Lb. 12 Ozs. - 3/21/07 - Marshy Hope
Clifford Bowman, Greenwood, DE 19950

CARP - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

CRAPPIE - 2 Lbs. 6 Ozs. - 5/20/07 - Felton
Tyler Majchrzak, Federalsburg, MD 21632

CATFISH - 10 Lbs. 18 Ozs. - 11/15/07 - Reedy Point
Howard Husfelt, Middletown, DE 19709

TIGER MUSKY - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

WHITE PERCH - 1 Lb. 5 Ozs. - 3/3/07 - Broadkill Slough
Greg Adams, New Castle, DE 19720

YELLOW PERCH - 1 Lb. 4 Ozs. - 2/24/07 - Cedar Creek
Danny Monk, Wilmington, DE 19808

*****TIE 2007*****

* 1 Lb. 4 Ozs. - 1/5/07 - Andrews Lake
Ed Raymond, Wilmington, DE 19808

*****TIE 2007*****

CHAIN PICKEREL - 5 Lbs. 5 Ozs. - 1/14/07 - Andrews Lake
Ed Raymond, Wilmington, DE 19808

AMERICAN SHAD - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

TROUT - 2 Lbs. 13 Ozs. - 4/7/07 - Wilson Run
Ben Salisbury, Milford, DE 19963

WALLEYE - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

REDEAR SUNFISH - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

SALTWATER DIVISION

FALSE ALBACORE - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

TRUE ALBACORE - 68 Lbs. - 10/6/07 - Atlantic Ocean
Andrew Gonzon, Newark, DE 19702

BLACK SEABASS - 5 Lbs. 11 Ozs. - 2/17/07 - Ocean Wreck
Paul Pergeorelis, 100 Prangs Ln, New Castle, DE 19720

STRIPED BASS - 43 Lbs. 14.4 Ozs. - 11/12/07 - Delaware Bay
Greg Jackson, Dover, DE 19904

BLUEFISH - 17 Lbs. 2 Ozs. - 11/13/07 - Cape Henlopen
Floyd Morton III, Georgetown, DE 19947

COD - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

ATLANTIC CROAKER - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

DOLPHIN - 37 Lbs. 12 Ozs. - 9/26/07 - Ocean City
William Cooper, Jr., Ocean View, DE 19970

BLACK DRUM - 71 Lbs. - 5/8/07 - East Brandywine
Barry Stark, Frederick, PA 19435

RED DRUM - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

FLOUNDER - 12 Lbs. 3 Ozs. - 7/17/06 - B Buoy
Frank McCleary, Millsboro, DE 19966

KINGFISH - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

ATLANTIC MACKEREL - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

KING MACKEREL - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

SPANISH MACKEREL - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

BLUE MARLIN - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

WHITE MARLIN - 62 Lbs. 8/19/07 Doormans Canyon
Matt Cook, Dagsboro, DE 19939

SCUP (porgy) - 2 Lbs. 2 Ozs. - 10/13/07 - Site #6
Roger Long, Pottstown, PA 19464

SHARK (excl Mako) (thresher) - 324 Lbs.- 6/20/07 - B Buoy
Craig Rhoads, Elkton, MD 21921

MAKO SHARK - NO ENTRIES FOR 2007

SHEEPSHEAD - 13 Lbs. 15.2 Ozs. - 10/17/07 - Haystack
Theresa Hilley, Cambra, PA 18611
*****NEW STATE RECORD*****

SWORDFISH - 76 Lbs. - 10/6/07 - Baltimore Canyon
Jason Rineer, Delta, PA 17314

TAUTOG - 19 Lbs. 4 Ozs. - 1/6/07 - Site #7
Timothy Holmes, Felton, PA 17322

GRAY TRIGGERFISH - 5 Lbs. 15 Ozs. - 10/19/07 - Ocean Wreck
Clint Willman, Lancaster, PA 17603
*****NEW STATE RECORD*****

TUNA - 165 Lbs. 3 Ozs. - 7/27/07 - Hambone
Ray Wetter, Newport, NC 28570

WAHOO - 106 Lbs. 4 Ozs. - 9/22/07 - Atlantic Ocean
Will Stahlgren, Phoenixville, PA 19460
*****NEW STATE RECORD*****

WEAKFISH (sea trout) - 11 Lbs. 2 Ozs. - 7/7/07 - Indian River
Inlet
Ed Heite, Wilmington, DE 19804

APPENDIX 5: Delaware Sportfishing Tournament Report 2007

Total Numbers of Entries Submitted: 441

Freshwater Division

Resident Entries: 79
 Non-Resident Entries: 5
 Total: 84

Saltwater Division

Resident Entries: 177
 Non-Resident Entries: 180
 Total: 357

LIVE RELEASE	24	LIVE RELEASE	35
BLUEGILL	1	BLACK DRUM	2
CATFISH	8	BLUEFISH	1
CHAIN PICKEREL	1	DOLPHIN	7
CRAPPIE	13	FLOUNDER	64
LARGEMOUTH BASS	17	GRAY TRIGGER FISH	2
STRIPED BASS HYBRID	1	RED DRUM	1
TROUT	9	SCUP	1
WHITE PERCH	5	SEABASS	6
YELLOW PERCH	5	SHARK	1
		SHEEPSHEAD	9
		STRIPED BASS	70
		SWORDFISH	3
		TAUTOG	72
		TRUE ALBACORE	6
		TUNA	39
		UNUSUAL (SPADEFISH)	1
		UNUSUAL (TILEFISH)	16
		WAHOO	17
		WEAKFISH	3
		WHITE MARLIN	1