

## Fort Bend County Sports

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OUTDOORS

# Anglers get choice with BountyFishing

Organization provides options for tourney fishing

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All anglers have caught a big fish that they thought would win tournaments, but they don't fish tournaments.

Entrance fees are sometimes out of reach; major tournaments such as BASS and FLW can cost as much as \$1,000. Other restrictions for not fishing tournaments include tournaments held only at selected spots across the U.S., sometimes requiring extensive travel.

Also, many of the tournaments require a boat to fish out of, or know somebody with a boat that will let you be their co-angler.

## Well received

A new tournament organization, called BountyFishing, claims the distinction of the world's largest fishing tournament. It has anglers all over the nation winning prize money each week. The major fish categories include walleye, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, panfish, musky/pike, salmon, trout, and catfish/carp. These categories are broken down into sub-divisions within each one. There are a total of 18 different categories.

Registration fees are \$7 for one day, or \$19 where you can fish any day or every day for a week, starting on Monday morning through Sunday evening. Tournament site can be anywhere you please, as long it's not the fresh fish case in your neighborhood grocery store. If your fish is the winner, you win \$1,000.

"When I came across the 2001 U.S. Fish & Wildlife National Survey, it really caught me off guard," said Richard Shafter, president and CEO of BountyFishing, who is an angler himself. The organization headquarters is Montreal, Canada.

"I had no idea that fishing was as big as it is," said Shafter. "I read that more people fish than people who play golf and tennis combined.

"I took a look at all the different tournaments. How can we create a tournament for everyone, from anywhere, where they can fish on any body of water, for many different species? I really wanted to build it so it wouldn't be intrusive on their day, because fishing is therapy; it's enjoyable. I didn't want to change that experience. If anything I wanted to heighten it."

To fish in a BountyFishing event, an angler goes online at [www.bountyfishing.com](http://www.bountyfishing.com), pays the entry fee, receives a BountyCode, and starts fishing.

Measure the fish from nose to tip of tail. Top fish is based on length, not weight. Have your fishing buddy take a digital photo of you holding the fish, upload the photo and measurements to the BountyFishing website and wait for your check to come in (hopefully).

BountyFishing's forensics protocol analyzes the catch and determines if the image and length are not altered.

"It's been so well received," said Shafter. "We have about 2,600 members; we launched the site the beginning of June."

In addition to the tournaments, anglers can become members of BountyFishing. Members can interact on public forums, create their own personalized community pages where they can discuss all aspects of

fishing, plan outings, and share photos.

Shafter said, "In any given tournament we have hundreds of competitors. If you look at our site you will see six weeks of tournaments where we have awarded first, second and third, a \$1,000 for first place in each category, each week."

Complete details can be found at [www.bountyfishing.com](http://www.bountyfishing.com).

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