

Outdoors Notebook: A new online tournament for anglers

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Can't afford to participate in one of the big-boat, high-dollar fishing tournaments that take place seemingly every weekend across the country?

Leave it to the World Wide Web to come up with an answer.

BountyFishing.com is a new Web site that offers the excitement of a competition without all the extracurricular activities that go with most fishing tournaments.

But just like those other tournaments, there are some cash prizes to be won.

BountyFishing is aligned with several national fishing organizations, such as the International Game Fish Association and Bass Pro Shops.

BountyFishing relies on digital photograph forensics used by law enforcement agencies to authenticate photographs sent in by contestants who register for either daily or weekly competitions for 18 different species.

Registration is \$7 for a day or \$19 for a week.

Participants upload onto the site two photos of their fish, both with the catch against a tape measure. Lengths determine winners.

According to founder Richard Shafter of Montreal, the first portion of the competition, covering the summer, will award more than \$125,000 for first through third places in each species.

"I've always fished and really enjoy it," said Shafter, a real estate developer. "But I didn't know about the demographics, that fishing was so big.

"There are hundreds of thousands of tournaments every year, but not everybody can compete. Now, with the forensic picture validation that's available, we can keep it legitimate."

Shafter said he came up with the idea seven months ago and launched the site five months later. He said 1,980 anglers are registered on his site, which also features a chat room and a place to upload photographs.

"It's a place for fishermen to show off their catches and talk about them while competing," Shafter said.