

Bountiful fishing: On the Web, anyone can be a pro angler

By [Thom Gabrukiewicz](#) ([Contact](#))
Sunday, June 17, 2007

Story Highlights

• **The skinny:** To compete in BountyFishing.com's summer fishing tournaments, log on to www.bountyfishing.com, register, pay the registration fees and start fishing. The site requires anglers to upload photos of their catch, and has contests for several species of sportfish.

All those weigh-ins watched in person, all the bass programs TIVO-ed, the boxes and bins filled with lures, with plastic worms -- the fantasy bass fishing league. Admit it, if you just had a boatload of disposable income, you'd hit the angling tournament trail.

Any tournament trail. Bassmaster. FLW Outdoors. Professional Walleye Tour. 100 Percent Bass.

Now, any Walter Mitty can compete -- for cash prizes -- through www.BountyFishing.com.

"It's really anyone's fishing tournament," said Richard Shafter, BountyFishing.com's chief executive officer. "And we plan on making celebrities out of our winners."



FISH LIKE A PRO: At www.BountyFishing.com, anyone can register and fish tournaments for several species of sport fish. The online tournaments begin on July 2.

Registration on the site is free. But to compete, people can buy a daily "outing" tournament for \$7, a weekly tournament for \$19 or a multi-week pass for \$15 (with a two-week minimum and revolving billing).

Tournaments begin July 2. Weekly winners compete for the \$1,000 first-place prize, with \$200 for second and \$100 for third place. At any given time during the summer, there will be tournaments for bass, walleye, panfish (crappie, bluegill, yellow perch), trout, salmon, muskie/northern, striped bass and catfish/carp.

There will be a new tournament every week.

"Fishing is a passion, we don't need to sell them on the idea of fishing," Shafter said Thursday from his base in Montreal. "With BountyFishing, anyone can compete against anyone else in North America."

BountyFishing's validation methods for the tournaments are as distinctive as the Web site concept itself, Shafter said.

"Our forensic protocol is second to none," he said. "We went out and got the foremost image detection expert around. But how do you measure fish by digital image? You count the pixels."

For every fish they catch, anglers need to submit two digital photos, one of the catch lying flat next to a ruler or tape measure and with the BountyCode issued when you sign up for a tournament and one of you, holding your catch horizontally, chest high and as close to your body as possible. The camera must be at least 4 mega pixels, and no cell phone photos or video captures will be allowed.

Once the photos are uploaded to the BountyFishing site, they are run through the forensic software and then validated. Then, it's just a matter of watching the site -- and the standings.

"First thing anyone does when they catch a fish is take a picture of it," he said. "Now, you take two shots, upload them to us, we'll rank you -- and give you a platform to show off your catch. We give anglers validation."