

## Prize doubles for lake trout anglers in derby

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Aggregate prize upped to \$1,600

SANDPOINT -- The prize money is doubling for anglers who haul in the most Mackinaw during the Lake Pend Oreille Idaho Club's Thanksgiving fishing derby.

The prize money in the aggregate weight category for lake trout now totals \$1,600, with half that amount going to the first-place winner. The prizes for second and third places are \$500 and \$300, respectively.

The derby lasts from Nov. 20-28 on Lake Pend Oreille, where there is no bag limit on lake trout.

The increased prize is one of the first steps being taken to gauge how much influence anglers can have in keeping the lake trout population in check. Many believe lake trout are overabundant and a represent grave threat to the lake's embattled kokanee population.

Idaho Fish and Game officials were in Sandpoint in September to sound out anglers on ideas for bridling Lake Pend Oreille's lake trout. The department used trap nets this summer, but the program was put on hold amid vociferous objections from a segment of the angling community.

With the netting suspended for the time being, Fish and Game began looking at different approaches.

"What we haven't tested is the upper bounds of how effective anglers can be, and so one way to do that is to provide some incentives that push the upper bounds and get people out there fishing, catching and harvesting," said Ned Horner, fisheries manager for Fish and Game's Panhandle region.

John Cosolito won the aggregate weight category for lake trout during the spring derby with 343.15 pounds. Buster Bandy came in second with 267.4 pounds, according to Linda Olson of LPOIC.

Horner plans to use money set aside through a settlement agreement with Avista Utilities to boost the derby prize this fall. The settlement agreement is a product of the federal relicensing of the Cabinet Gorge and Noxon Rapids dams on the Clark Fork River, which flows into Lake Pend Oreille.

Some dispute the notion that lake trout, which feed on kokanee, pose a serious threat in Lake Pend Oreille and argue Fish and Game's mismanagement is to blame for the lake's feeble kokanee population. But others point to lakes such as Flathead, Yellowstone and Priest, which have been taken over by lakereels.

"The other species end up going away in time," said Bill Friedmann, president of LPOIC.

Friedmann said kokanee seem to be making gains in Priest Lake, but the population is far from recovered.

"The locals feel like its making a nice comeback because they see a lot of spawners on the shoreline, but the fact is there's just a few thousand, which is nothing compared to what we really need," Friedmann said.

Other ideas for crimping the lake's Mackinaw population include putting a bounty on them, launching an education effort to increase anglers' chances of reeling in lake trout and perhaps even improving boat launches and docks to make easier to access the lake during winter.

The Fish and Game Commission would have to approve a bounty and the settlement agreement managment committee would have to decide whether the other measures are appropriate for funding given the structure of the agreement, Horner said.

Some have called for more kokanee to be imported, but Horner said there's a good chance the Cabinet Gorge hatchery will be filled to capacity.

"We already have started an early spawning run over at Granite Creek, and this particular year we may fill the Cabinet Gorge hatchery with the run that we're anticipating," said Horner.

- For additional Thanksgiving Derby information, visit LPOIC on the Web ([www.lpoic.org](http://www.lpoic.org)).