

# MACK DAYS EVENT RULES

2026 Spring Mack Days—sponsored by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Dates: Thursday **March 12<sup>th</sup>**-Saturday **May 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Anglers are responsible for reading and following all Montana and Tribal fishing regulations and the event rules.**

Requirement to certify your boat as mussel-free to participate in Mack Days. All watercraft entering the state of Montana crossing west over the Continental Divide into the Columbia River Basin must have proof of inspection from an authorized inspector before participation in the contest. Vessels and equipment traveling into the Flathead Basin that have been used on waters outside of the Flathead Basin must be inspected at a department inspection station prior to launching within the Flathead Basin. Fish entries will not be accepted from anglers fishing from un-certified boats. If during the event, a boat is taken out of the Flathead Basin, it is required to be re-inspected before re-entering the contest. **Your best defense is always WASH, CLEAN, AND DRY** when moving your boat and trailer to any area INCLUDING all equipment, lines, anchors, live wells, etc.

All anglers must have a state and/or tribal fishing license; based on which part of the lake they choose to fish. Mack Days Fishing Events include all of Flathead Lake. A special tribal license is available to any resident or non-resident for fishing the south half of Flathead Lake only. Anglers must observe U.S. Coast Guard, CSKT Tribal, and Montana FWP regulations.

**SPIRIT OF THE RULE:** *It is the intention of this event to promote good sportsmanship and fair play. Unsportsmanlike conduct and cheating may result in disqualification. Anglers are asked to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, and conduct themselves in a manner that will be a credit to them, the sport of fishing and help sustain a successful Mack Days contest well into the future.*

1. No pooling of fish is allowed, meaning all participants must report only the fish they catch themselves. **All fish are to be entered the same day as caught.** We welcome all forms of angler-assistance during the contest, but make exceptions for those anglers vying for the top prize categories-Top Twenty, Ladies, & Over 70 and Youth prizes. Specifically for the “top anglers”, the contest is an individual competition (adults and youth) rather than a team competition. We cannot police this highly competitive category adequately and must rely on those anglers to respect the **principle of fair competition**. The rewards in this category are intended to be more personal than monetary and therefore depend on the integrity of the competitors. Anglers may receive assistance from other anglers in the boat but need to respect the competitive nature of the contest, by clearly identifying their rods from those of other anglers present in the boat and being the only angler handling those rods. Every angler- adult and youth in a boat, entered in the contest, must have at least one fishing rod in the water and be responsible for the fish caught on that rod. Assistance does not include having a driver for a trolling boat unless anglers are rotating driving and fishing and/or separating their fish or dividing them equally. This means that one person in the boat will not be allowed to continually have a high majority of the catch counted in his/her name. Keeping separate coolers is recommended especially angler identification of tagged fish and fish that are not legal to harvest. **AGAIN-- If there is more than one person reported in a boat fishing and several fish are entered under one name-we have to disqualify those anglers. Everyone needs to be on the same playing field-we want this to be fair and fun for everyone-please be respectful of the rules. We cannot and will not accept entries from anyone who will not follow the rules of competition.**
2. **ICE, ICE, ICE**,-all fish donated to the contest are required to be kept on ice. Ice should be layered in coolers. Please keep fish and coolers clean. Fish should be at 40 degrees internally when donated. We will be checking the temperatures of the fish. Each angler has the option of donating their fish to be processed or keeping fish for their own use. Warm or dirty fish will not be accepted.
3. Interpretation of the rules shall be left exclusively to the event officials/committee; all decisions are final. Only event officials or anglers entered in the event have the right to protest the actions of another angler. Protests by anglers must be filed in writing no later than 24 hours after the close of that fishing day. The event officials will convene/conference to investigate and make a decision. The decision will be a majority vote of the officials and will be final. Contestants waive any right or opportunity to appeal the decision of the officials to a higher authority, including any court of jurisdiction in this or any other state. Any person found violating the rules may be immediately disqualified and the reasons for disqualification announced at the event headquarters. Event officials reserve the right to change or modify these rules at any time.
4. Prizes will be awarded in the following amounts: Youth qualify for the lottery & tagged fish-up to \$600. **Friday-Sunday-26 days** Begins 3/13 and ends 5/8—Saturday-5/09 will be a separate day with its own prizes—see H below..
  - A. **Teens (13-17 years of age): 1<sup>st</sup>-\$200, 2<sup>nd</sup>-\$150, 3<sup>rd</sup>-\$75.** If you are a top twenty angler or top lady angler you do not win a youth category prize-you choose the category. Youth 17 & under are encouraged to have an adult on board when fishing from a boat-ends 5/8
  - B. **Youth 12 & under-\$100, \$75, & \$50.**If you are a top ten angler you do not win a youth prize. Friday-Sunday ends 5/8
  - C. **Golden Angler (70 & over) \$300 & \$200** determined by totals-if you are a top twenty angler you do not qualify or you choose which prize-**Fri-Sun-ends 5/8**
  - D. **Top 20 Angler’s-18/26** best days count-\$950-\$200-**Fri-Sun only**. If an angler does not have the required number of days for an average he can opt to take 0’s to get an average ends 5/8.
  - E. **Ladies Only**-\$300, \$200, \$100-determined by totals-**Fri-Sun only**-top twenty angler’s do not qualify or must choose category ends 5/8
  - F. **Large Lake Trout Category-** **(IMPORTANT: See rules for large lake trout entries #16.)** Prize - 1<sup>st</sup>-**\$500 (Must be over 36”** to qualify in this category.). Fri-Sun only ends 5/8—**IMPORTANT see #16**

- G. Weekend Prizes-(1) \$200 and (2) @\$100 per weekend- **Fri-Sun**- limit per angler-1 /weekend-announced weekly. Drawings will be witnessed by staff.
  - H. **Saturday May 9<sup>th</sup> –all fish in by 3:00-Separate Awards-Cash Drawings-\$400, \$350, \$300--Saturday fish do count for bonus awards.**
  - I. Top Twenty and Lottery Awards will be posted at 3:00 and-checks will be sent out the following week.
  - J. **Smallest Lake Trout--2 (\$250) prizes (must be hooked & identifiable) Fri-Sun-ends 5/8**
  - K. **Cash Awards: drawing for cash prizes-\$2,000-\$600 Limit of 2 cash prizes/angler in the lottery style drawing/category-one entry for every fish under 30” up to 18 (Fri-Sun) days-then you must surpass your average to receive additional tickets-ends 5/9.**
  - L. Monday-Thursday only- turn in your lake trout at Blue Bay - turn in has been extended to ½ hr. after sunset. Drop box will be used for fish if staff is not present-instructions will be posted with the drop box. There will be 6-\$250, 2-\$100, 2-\$100 lottery drawings-33 days
  - M. **Bonuses -Your total at the end of the 59 days determines your bonus. (Mon-Sun)**
5. **Tagged Lake Trout Category-Mon.-Sun. (1)-\$10,000, (2)-\$5,000, & (5)-\$1000 –and over 9,000 \$100-\$500 are available. Do not remove a tag before submitting for entry or it will be disqualified. All adipose fin clipped lake trout will be scanned with an electronic reader by staff at Blue Bay. Background: over 9,000 lake trout have been tagged & adipose fin clipped at different locations in Flathead Lake by CSKT & MFWP fisheries staff. There will be lake trout with tag values from \$100 to \$10,000. Be aware that some anglers fin-clip fish and those fish will not have tags. PIT tags have been implanted beneath the skin in the lake trout. The tags are not visible. **Anglers are responsible for the safe keeping of fish until scanned & identified. It will be helpful if you rubber band or fasten an electrical tie on the tail or gill plate of any fish you have with a fin clip. If you are using the drop box put the fin clipped fish in a separate bag with a label on it with your name and telephone # and then put into your bag of fish.** There are lake trout with clipped adipose over 30”. The 30-36” lake trout are now a slot fish and are to be released. No lottery tickets are given for any lake trout over 30”. It is illegal to keep a lake trout in the slot- 30” to 36”.**

The pit tagged fish must meet these requirements for a prize:

- 1) It must have a PIT tag-**do not** remove any tag before entering & or if it is a recent/fresh tag scar and an old tag number-it may be disqualified.
  - 2) Tag number must match the number of one recorded by fisheries staff-list at Blue Bay
  - 3) The fish must be caught during one of the 59 days of the 2025 Spring Mack Days contest and **entered the same day.**
  - 4) **An angler must be 18 years of age and older and be entered in the event to win a prize over \$600**
  - 5) Live lake trout over 30” with the adipose fin clipped will be scanned for a tag and then **must be released.**
6. **All lake trout under 30” are accepted for entry for lottery prizes. No ticket for any fish over 30 inches - fish over 30” with a clipped fin may be brought in to Blue Bay alive to be scanned for a tag and then must be released.**
7. **We are required to report to the proper authorities any bull trout mistakenly turned in-be sure of the ID of any fish. You are responsible for knowing or learning the difference between bull trout and lake trout.** Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are to be released immediately as westslope cutthroat are species of Special Concern and bull trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.
8. Anglers are limited to 100 lake trout under 30” (Largest lake trout rules #16—**IMPORTANT to read.**)
9. Event officials will put a permanent mark on each fish that anglers choose to keep
10. Prize winners are responsible for all taxes and fees associated with prize winnings.
11. You are asked to follow all U.S. Coast Guard Boating Regulations. We recommend having a cell phone or Marine Band Radio on board. Keep phones in a dry area and batteries charged. PFD’s/life jackets do you no good if they are not on your back when you need them. Make sure someone knows when you expect to be off the water. Be aware of weather conditions at all times. **Practice the three C’s-Caution, Courtesy, and Common Sense.**
12. We reserve the right to photograph entries, reproduce photos for publicity purposes, and retain all photo rights.
13. **Do not crowd in on other anglers in a fishing area.** Other anglers may be casting out with heavy lures. Everyone knows there are no reserved fishing areas on the lake but you need to keep a safe distance - greater than double the average casting distance from other boats, anchors, lines, etc.-**respect another anglers fishing space even when observing.** We ask that Mack Days anglers be good sportsman, helpful, and courteous. Watch another angler’s pattern for casting before moving too close - **do not sit your boat down in their casting area.** If trolling keep a distance from

anglers who are jigging with anchors set and lines out. Anchor lines can reach out there-don't troll over the lines and get caught in them. If you are going to be jigging-watch to see where boats are trolling-don't set down in their trolling path. Keep off their path or the route they are trolling in. Look for markers that a troller may have set out.

**14. Rude and aggressive behavior toward other anglers or staff will be grounds for disqualification.**

15. Fishing tips and guide books are available, we will gladly provide them to contestants that need fishing information.

**16. (Largest Lake Trout Contest Rules)-must be over 36 inches and alive-no ticket for any large fish over 30"**  
**IMPORTANT—PICTURES ONLY ACCEPTED FOR THE LARGE FISH CATEGORY-- with picture date, time stamp, with proof of length (yard stick-measuring tape or board)--\$500 prize split between entries.-send to 406-270-3386.**

Lake trout are a highly abundant predator that has shaped the fish community in Flathead Lake. The goal of the State and Tribes, developed with extensive public involvement, is to reduce the numbers of lake trout to benefit other species in the lake, especially native trout. Specifically, the direction of the management plan is to reduce lake trout population size while maintaining some large lake trout. This direction is the result of a practical compromise. The overall reduction of numbers is intended to reduce predation by lake trout on other species. The acceptance of some large fish in the population is a compromise to maintain quality-fishing opportunities for lake trout. The end result should be a more diverse fishery. This event is conducted to be consistent with the management goals.

You must follow the guidelines listed below:

- a. Fri-Sun only may be entered up until ½ hr. after sunset - pictures submitted same day as caught—date, time stamp, proof of length.
- b. If you are close to Blue Bay and can keep the fish alive-we will meet you at the dock for length and picture-call 406-270-3386.
- c. Must be alive and over 36" -pictures only with date, proof of length, and time stamp-send to 406-270-3386.
- d. This category will end Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>
- e. Anglers are encouraged to have and use a live well, large cooler, or net to hold fish until measured. Handle large fish with care. Do not grab a fish with dry hands. Try to reduce injury from handling. Hold fish under the jaw; not by the gills. Have a way to help the fish to submerge after bringing them up-if they are bloated. **Go online and check out fish descending devices. Make your own or purchase one to help return the larger lake trout back to the water unharmed. Coming up from the deep depths they will get bloated (barotrauma). We recommend having a way to lower the fish back into the water, we do not recommend venting the fish.**

**Check in stations:**

**Mon-Thurs - Blue Bay only - there will be a fish drop box if staff is not present - instructions will be posted.**

**Fri-Sun-Blue Bay (event headquarters): All day until 1/2 hour after sunset**

***The following are subject to change-check the website before the event begins:***

**Fri-Sun-Somers Boat Access: 5-6, Wayfarers 6:30-7**

**Fri-Sun-Big Arm Boat Ramp: 6-6:30, Salish Point-7-7:15**

**Boat safety & ramp recommendations:**

- Please wait your turn-if there is a line at the ramp you need to wait and take your turn just like everyone else.
- **Have your boat ready before getting to the ramp area.** Take off the cover, load items you need, do all of your safety checks **before getting to or backing down the ramp.** After unloading your boat from the trailer move it to the other side of the dock so others can unload-then park your vehicle. **Don't sit on the ramp area** after pulling out of the water.
- Be courteous, and helpful if needed. Be willing to help out when others need advice or assistance.
- Winds on Flathead Lake can make loading impossible at times: don't panic-if you come in and can't get loaded especially if you are alone-**pull into the marina area** to wait out the storm. If you need our help don't hesitate to ask-if you have an emergency out on the water-call 911 first, then call. 406-270-3386
- There is a fee for use of the Blue Bay boat ramp and parking area. Daily fee and/or yearly fee-can be purchased at Mack Days check in. Telephone 406-883-2888 or 406-253-3813-Wildland Recreation for information about boat ramp fees or camping area fees.

**Questions about Mack Days:**

Cindy Bras-Benson- Cell #270-3386, 406-675-2700 ex 7294 or Barry Hansen 406-675-2700 Ex. 7282

Joe Santos-406-274-0613

**By entering/signing/sending/faxing/e-mailing entry: all participants agree to the following release of liability to forever discharge the event, CSK Tribes, Mt. FW& Parks, Event Committee, & Officials of every claim, demand, action, or right of action, of whatever kind or nature, either in law or in equity, arising from or**

**by any bodily injury or personal injuries, known or unknown, death or property damage resulting or to result from any accident which may occur as a result of participation in the event, whether by negligence or otherwise by ourselves, our heirs, executors, or assignees. This release contains the entire agreement between the parties hereto, and the terms of this release are contractual and not a mere recital. I also understand that photographs may be taken of me and used for promotional purposes without royalties.**

## **FISH SPECIES OF FLATHEAD LAKE**

This chart shows the 22 native and nonnative fish (dates of introduction in parentheses) residing in Flathead Lake, the Flathead River and tributaries, and Flathead River Sloughs.

### **Native**

**Bull Trout  
Westslope Cutthroat Trout  
Mountain Whitefish  
Pygmy Whitefish  
Longnose Sucker  
Largescale Sucker  
Northern Pikeminnow  
Peamouth  
Redside Shiner  
Sculpin**

### **Nonnative**

**Lake Trout (1905)  
Lake Whitefish (1895)  
Kokanee (1916)  
Yellow Perch (1910)  
Northern Pike (1960s, illegal introduction)  
Rainbow Trout (1914)  
Brook Trout (1913)  
Largemouth Bass (1898)  
Pumpkinseed Sunfish (1910)  
Black Bullhead (1910)  
Brown Trout (1989, unauthorized)  
Smallmouth Bass (1960's)**