

# MACK DAYS EVENT RULES

2026 Fall Mack Days-sponsored by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes  
and sanctioned by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

**Dates: Thursday September 10<sup>th</sup> – November 8<sup>th</sup> -**

**Anglers are responsible for reading and following all Montana/Tribal/Coast Guard fishing and boating 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. 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.

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.

**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.**

**Remember it is illegal to use lake whitefish or any other salmonid fish as cut bait in Flathead Lake. Use northern pike minnow, peamouth, or small perch for cut bait-Montana FWP and Tribal Regulations**

- 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 intent is that the contest be an individual competition 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.**
- 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. Warm or dirty fish will not be accepted.
- 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.**
- Prizes will be awarded in the following amounts: Youth qualify for the lottery-up to \$600, top ten, & other prizes. Friday-Sunday-26 days Begins 9/11 and ends 11/7-Saturday—Sunday will be a separate day with its own prizes—see H below..**
  - 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 11/1
  - Youth 12 & under-1<sup>st</sup>-\$100, 2<sup>nd</sup>- \$75, & 3<sup>rd</sup>-\$50.**If you are a top **twenty** angler you do not win a youth prize. Friday-Sunday Ends 11/7
  - Golden Angler (70 & over) \$300, \$200, \$100 determined by totals-if you are a top twenty angler you do not qualify-Fri-Sun.** Ends 11/7
  - Top 20 Angler’s-18/26** best days count for top 10 anglers---11<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> placed by total-\$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. Top twenty anglers do not qualify for other categories-Ends 11/7.**
  - 18-Days-once an angler reaches 18 days they drop a low number in their daily catch but every fish still counts in their bonus total. Dropping the low number also drops that number of entries for that day-you have to have over the low number to get entries in the lottery drawing for that day.**
  - Ladies Only-\$300, \$200, \$100 determined by ladies totals-Fri-Sun only top twenty angler’s do not qualify Ends 11/7**

- G. **Large Lake Trout Category-** (See rules for large lake trout entries.) Prize - 1<sup>st</sup>-**\$500** (Must be over 36" & 20#'s to qualify in this category.) Fri-Sun only Ends 11/7
- H. **Weekend Prizes-**(1)\$200 and (2)@\$100 per weekend- **Fri-Sun-no limit per angler /category/must have fish entries-announced weekly.** Drawings will be witnessed by staff. Ends 11/7
- I. **Top Twenty Awards will be given at 3:00 and Lottery Award Prizes will be posted**
- J. **Smallest Lake Trout--2 (\$250) prizes** (must be hooked & identifiable) Fri-Sun ends 11/7
- K. **Cash Awards: drawing for cash prizes-\$2,000-\$400** Limit of 2 cash prizes/angler in the lottery style drawing/category-one ticket for every fish under 30" up to 18 (Fri-Sun) days-then you must surpass your average to receive additional tickets ends 11/2
- L. **Monday-Thursday only- turn in your lake trout before 6:00-4-\$100-3-\$200-6-\$250** lottery drawings-33 days
- M. **Bonuses -Your total at the end of the 59 days determines your bonus.** Mon-Sun-every day counts for the bonus.
- N. **Sunday Nov 8th --all fish in by 3:00-Separate Awards-Cash Drawings-\$400, \$350, \$300 Largest lake trout under 30" by weight \$100-1<sup>st</sup> \$75-2<sup>nd</sup> Smallest \$200 Top Angler by 11/8 total-\$300, Sunday fish do count for bonus awards.**

5. **Safety is our most important issue for everyone. Please practice all social distancing guidelines.** Protocol for turning in fish at designated locations: 1) only one person at a time to turn in fish 2) anglers bring their cooler to staff and count their catch out loud into fisheries container 3) staff will confirm the count and record the catch 4) when angler is done-angler steps back and next angler moves in place-there will be no contact between anglers and staff and no tickets exchanged, the drawings will be done electronically at the end of the contest.

6. **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 the fish and tag 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. Be aware that some angler's fin-clip fish and those fish will not have tags. **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.** 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 is illegal to keep a lake trout in the slot-30" to 36" on Flathead Lake.

The winning 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 60 days of the 2024 Fall 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) Large lake trout over 30" with the adipose fin clipped from the south end of Flathead Lake will be scanned for a tag.
7. **All lake trout under 30" are accepted for entry for lottery prizes. No ticket for any fish over 30 inches-if you are on the south half of the lake and the fish is over 30" with a clipped fin it may be brought in to be scanned for a tag.** Fish may be submitted at multiple locations. Please respect the schedules of work crews and **do not submit fish after dark or after 9:00P.M.-whichever comes first-Fri.-Sun. and 6:00 or dark Mon.-Thurs.** Times will be posted during event if needed. **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 cutthroat are species of Special Concern and bull trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

**Check in stations: Mon-Thurs10-to dark-after 6:00 you bag and put fish in the drop off box if no one is there.**

**Fri-Sun-Blue Bay (event headquarters): 10 to 1/2 hour before dark or 9 P.M. whichever comes first**

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

**Fri-Sun-Somers Boat Access: 4:00-4:30, Wayfarers 5-5:30**

**Fri-Sun-Big Arm Boat Ramp: 5:5:30, Salish Point-6-6:15**

- 8. Anglers are limited to 100 lake trout under 30" or 99 under 30 and 1 over 36". (Largest lake trout rules #18)
- 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 406-274-0613.**

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. 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:

1. **Entrants should have a cell phone and hand scales to weigh the fish.** Fri-Sun only may be entered up until ½ hr. before dark or 9:00.
2. Anglers are asked to check the [www.mackdays.com](http://www.mackdays.com) web site before each day of angling or phone us to determine the weight of the leading fish. The heaviest fish at the end of the contest will win this category.
3. When a large fish is caught, call [406-270-3386](tel:406-270-3386) to determine the size of the current heaviest fish. We will arrange a place to meet you at a dock or ramp location. If you cannot contact us and you are near to our location-bring the fish to Blue Bay.
4. Anglers may keep the fish for personal use, but will be encouraged to release the larger fish.
5. This category will end Saturday November 7<sup>th</sup>.
6. Lake trout entered in this category must be 36 inches or longer.

Boat safety & ramp recommendations:

- **Please wait your turn-if there is a line at the ramp. Do not crowd in front of other boats.**
- **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 is and/or yearly fee is. Telephone 406-883-2888 or 406-253-3813-Wildland Recreation for information about boat ramp fees or camping fees.

Questions about Mack Days: Joe Santos-CSKT Fisheries Specialist-406-274-0613 or (675-2700 ex 7290-weekdays only)