

2023 Texas 4-H Virtual Reel 'em in Fishing Skill-a-thon

New for 2023 – Theme: Clean Waterways

1. Follow the Texas 4-H Virtual Reel'em in Fishing program on our new Facebook location: **Texas 4-H Natural Resources**. The **2023 4-H Virtual Fishing** Facebook page will be going away as we migrate to the state FB page.
<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=texas%204-h%20natural%20resources>
2. Wear your 4-H shirt or cap in your hero pics for a weekly chance to have your pic showcased on the **Texas 4-H Natural Resources** Facebook page.
3. No pre-survey. Youth must complete the **post survey** to receive any prizes. Optional adult post survey to get your feedback on the program.
4. Use of 2-digit decimal place for measuring fish.
5. All fish must be caught using rod and reel.
6. Update to Grand Champion Slam contest.
7. **New contest: We are adding a “theme” each year based upon a current issue that is applicable to both saltwater and freshwater.**

New!

- All youth and Clover Kid participants can record a short 10 to 20 second video on *Why You Should Not Litter Our Waterways*.
- Video clips should be emailed to Corley-Ann Parker at corleyannparker@tamu.edu, Sea Grant – Texas for judging. One 4-H member and one Clover Kid video will be posted on the State 4-H Natural Resources page.

- **All entries are due by July 1, 2023 for judging.** Winning videos will receive a Sea Grant swag package of fishing goodies!



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Part I: Learn to Earn Skills – Educational Opportunities

Short, informative videos in which youth participants and adults can gain knowledge on fishing tips and techniques, both for freshwater and saltwater species. No fee to participate.

Educational Videos:

I. Tips and Techniques for Freshwater fishing

- Fishing tackles and supplies
- Catch and release techniques
- Through the gill hook removal tips
- How to cast

II. Tips and Techniques for Saltwater fishing

- Life jacket safety
- How to tie an improved clinch knot
- How to cast a spinning reel
- How to reel in big fish

III. Water Safety

- Safety for you and the fish
- Fishing in the sun
- Safety around water

IV. Fishing Careers

- Interview with an Inland fisheries biologist
- Coastal and Marine Extension agent interview

V. Cooking with Fish – recipes and demos

- Fileting your catch
- Fish nutrition
- How to cook fish
- Dinner Tonight fish recipes

VI. Fish Identification

- Bass comparison and identification
- Spotted seatrout
- Saltwater fish identification
- Identifying catfish
- Fishing ID basics

VII. Freshwater and Saltwater Fish in Texas

VIII. Kahoot! Fishing Games to Play



Also, follow us on FB! Educational videos will be posted on the **Texas 4-H Natural Resources** Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=texas%204-h%20natural%20resources>

Responsible Handling of Fish

Not every fish is a "keeper." You may catch a fish that's under legal size or too big to fit in your cooler. You may land a magnificent trophy and decide to return it to the water so that you — or some other lucky angler — will have a chance to catch that fish again. Whatever your reasons for choosing live release, you want to give your fish the best possible chance of survival.

How to Begin

- Set the hook quickly to reduce the likelihood that fish will swallow the bait.
- Play and land fish as quickly as possible. Playing fish to exhaustion can harm the fish.
- When fishing in deep water, bring fish in slowly to help it adjust to changing pressure.
- Consider using barbless hooks.
- Keep your release tools close by.

Handling Your Catch

Proper handling protects both you and the fish. Some fishes have sharp fins or teeth that can cut you. See Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) [Angler Education pages](#) for tips on how to handle different species.

- Minimize the time fish is out of the water (no longer than you can hold your breath.)
- Leave fish in the water if you can and use a tool to remove the hook.
- If possible, keep the fish from thrashing without using a net. If a net is required, use a rubber-mesh landing net instead of abrasive nylon.
- Avoid removing the slime/mucus layer, which protects fish from parasites and infections.
 - Try to keep fish off the ground or floor of a boat.
 - Use a wet rag or glove, or wet hands before handling fish.
 - Turn fish on its back and cover its eyes to calm it.
 - Don't put your fingers in the eyes or gills.
- Smaller fish (< 5 pounds) can be vertically held by the lower jaw, either by hand or with grippers. Hold larger fish horizontally and support with two hands.

Removing the Hook

- Use needle-nose pliers, hemostats, or a hook remover to remove the hook and protect your hands.
- Back the hook out the opposite way it went in.
- [Watch this video](#) to learn how to remove a hook embedded deep within the fish.
- For a larger fish in the water, slip a gaff around the leader and slide it to the hook. Lift the gaff upward while pulling downward on the leader.
- Do not jerk or pop a leader to break it. This can injure vital organs in the fish.

Letting it Go

- Place fish in the water, gently supporting the mid-section and tail until it swims away.
- Resuscitate an exhausted fish by moving it or facing it into the current, gently forcing water into the mouth and over the gills.
- Watch the fish when released. If it doesn't swim away, recover it and try again.

See complete information from Texas Parks and Wildlife at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/fishing/catch-release-tips>

Part II: Reel ‘em in Tournament Information

Follow the 5 steps below in numerical order to participate in the tournament portion of the skill-a-thon:

Step 1: 4-H Enrollment

- Be enrolled in 4-H as a youth member (3rd – 12th grades) or Clover Kid (K – 2nd grades) for the 2022-2023 year.
- If you are not in 4-H, join by setting up your family profile on 4HOnline at <https://texas.4honline.com> or contact your local county Extension agent for assistance with enrollment in your county 4-H program.
- Not sure who is your county agent? Click this link to enter your county name and find contact information: <https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/contact/>

Step 2: Event Registration

Summer Event Dates

April 17	Regular registration opens
May 21	Regular registration closes
May 22-26	Check-it Stiks mailed to County Extension office for pick-up
May 22	Late registration opens
June 12	Summer Tournament Begins
June 30	Late registration closes
August 23	Summer Tournament Closes – post survey link opens
September 5	Official Placings Released – post survey link closes
September 18	Prizes Distributed

Summer Event Details

- **April 17, 2023 – 8:00 a.m.** - Registration will open on 4-H Online <https://texas.4honline.com>
- Select **2023 Texas 4-H Virtual Reel ‘em in - Summer** from the event list
 - Register and compete as an individual angler (4-H member or Clover Kid) (no team entries).
 - **4-H youth anglers (grades 3rd – 12th):** You may register for either division or both. The entry fee is per 4-H angler per division.

➤ Freshwater Division: \$50 Regular Registration	\$100 Late Registration
➤ Saltwater Division: \$50 Regular Registration	\$100 Late Registration

Note: We are unable to issue any refunds once your payment has been submitted.

- **Clover Kids (grades K-2nd)** participate for bragging rights and a certificate. Photos of Clover Kids with their “big fish” can be posted to the **Texas 4-H Natural Resources** Facebook group, if desired. Email Clover Kid pics to jlmcswain@ag.tamu.edu for posting.
 - Clover Kids do not earn a place on the FishDonkey leaderboard and DO NOT set-up a profile on the FishDonkey app.
 - There is no fee for their participation, however, they must be registered on 4-H Online.

- **June 30, 2023** – Last date to register to participate in the summer tournament. Only those registered on 4-H Online by the deadline will be eligible to participate.

Registration Gift

- *Registered 4-H members will receive a FREE official Check-it-Stik® (if not previously received in a past 4-H fishing skill-a-thon).
- Registered Clover Kids will receive a 4-H fishing lure.

**4HOnline registration submitted, payment received and cleared, and FishDonkey judging app profile set-up.*

If you are a **Clover Kid**, SKIP TO STEP 4.

Step 3: Download Judging App

- After your payment has been accepted in 4HOnline, go to [FishDonkey](#) to download the app to your mobile device and/or computer.
- There is no fee for participants to use this app.
- Set up your profile in FishDonkey. Select the Division you choose in 4HOnline (Freshwater and/or Saltwater). If you registered for BOTH divisions, make sure you choose to participate in both.
 - 2023 Summer Texas 4-H Virtual Reel 'em in – Freshwater
 - 2023 Summer Texas 4-H Virtual Reel 'em in – Saltwater
- When setting up your profile, in the “Street 2” box, list the county of your 4-H club.
- On the app, use the tutorial to practice how to measure and upload pics.
- **Questions? See FishDonkey App Tip sheets on the last page for additional information.**



Step 4: Fish the Tournament – Judging Criteria under Rules & Guidelines

Summer Event

- On June 12, 2022, at 12:00 p.m. the app will open for you to begin uploading your pictures of your fish to be judged and posted to the official leaderboard.
- The summer tournament closes on August 23, 2023 at 11:59 p.m.

Want to WIN? Then Be Sure to Follow ALL Rules below! Violation of any rule listed will result in disqualification of the fish entered.

How to measure and photograph your fish for judging

- Fish must be photographed with an iphone, android or tablet, **with the app open**, and fish laying on a **Check-It-Stik®** brand measuring board. Only Check-It-Stik brand is accepted – no exceptions!
- Photograph must be clear and measurement on board must be legible.
- You may hold your fish on the board, just be sure to NOT cover the mouth and tail with anything that blocks these views. **Mouth of fish must be closed.** Beginning of snout or lower jaw of fish **must** be touching the front of the measuring board.

- Lay the fish on its side and pinch the tail fins together to get accurate length in photograph. If a spiny fin fish (catfish), lay the fish on its belly and turn the tail to the side and pinch to get accurate length.



- Fish longer than the length of a Check-it-Stik should be measured on the measurement board in conjunction with a tape measure from the start of the board to the end of the fish. *Do not run the tape measure under the fish – the whole tape from beginning to end of tail must be visible. Pictures without a Check-it-Stik used as the starting point for measurement will not be judged.* You must use the **video feature** in FishDonkey to document the measurement of your fish from the nose to tail – move slowly to ensure all is captured in the recording.
- Photos must be taken with the FishDonkey app open as this will time stamp the photo when taken. You may upload your pics from FishDonkey to the leaderboard as you take them or at a later date. Don't have internet to upload at your fishing spot? No problem, remember they are timestamped when you take them in the app so you can upload from the app when you have internet or even from a computer. Just make sure they are all uploaded from FishDonkey before close of the tournament. Note: pictures CANNOT be uploaded from your camera file. They MUST be taken within the FishDonkey app. We CANNOT accept photos emailed.
- Each photo submitted must also include a separate “hero” pic that documents the face of the youth participant with the fish caught (examples: posing, on measuring board, holding).

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

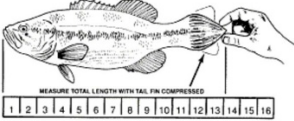
[Parks](#)
[Hunting](#)
[Fishing](#)
[Boating](#)
[Game Warden](#)
[Activities](#)
[Wildlife](#)
[More...](#)

[Outdoor Annual](#) > [Fishing](#) > [Measurement Tips](#)

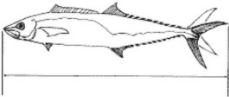
Measurement Tips

How to measure fish:

1. Place the fish on its side with the jaw closed.
2. For soft-tailed fish, squeeze the tail fin together to obtain the maximum overall length.



3. For hard-tailed fish, turn the tail to obtain maximum length.



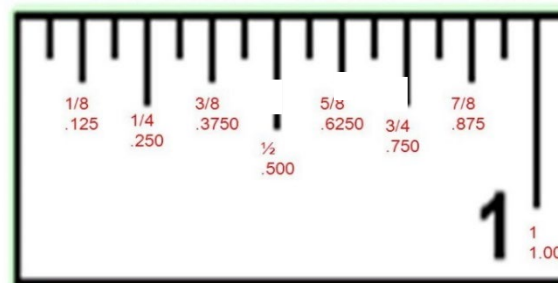
4. Measure a straight line from the tip of the snout to the extreme tip of the tail fin.



Example Hero Pic

How to Read an Inch in Decimals

- Enter the length of your fish in whole number and 2-digit decimal place, i.e. 10.25. Do not round the decimal place.
- The last black line that the end of the pinched tail touches is the measurement to be recorded.
- When fish are judged, the length you enter will be verified and confirmed. If length entered is more than documented, tournament judges will modify.



Reasons for Disqualification

1. Snout or jaw of fish not touching the front of the measuring board or cannot be seen by judge.
2. Mouth open.
3. No hero picture submitted.
4. Unpinched tail fin (catfish laying on belly can have tail turned to the side and pinched).
5. Front of fish or front of measuring board not in photograph.
6. Blurry picture or cannot see measuring numbers in photo.
7. Not using a Check-It-Stik brand measuring board or using a tape measure only.
8. Any Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) violations noted in pictures. Example: If picture of youth is taken in a boat on the water, the child is required to be wearing a personal flotation device (PFD).

Other

9. Fish lengths posted **less** than their actual length will be verified as that entry length.

Step 5: Complete the Post-Survey

Important
Step!

- A link and QR code will be emailed to 4-H participants to complete a short survey to tell us about your skill-a-thon participation experience. An optional survey will be provided adults via email to provide feedback on the program.
 - August 20-September 5 – summer tournament survey will be open for completion.
- Note: Awards and prizes will only be provided 4-H members in which fee has been received and post-survey completed (a reminder will be sent to you).

Supplies Needed for Participation

- Rod and reel
- Bait and/or lure
- Phone or tablet to take your fish pics in FishDonkey. Or you can take the pics with phone/tablet in FishDonkey and upload through your computer with internet
- Check-it-Stik® measuring board (can be purchased at Academy stores or via online shopping venues). Enroll during regular registration and you will receive one for FREE!
- Fish net (optional)



Check-it-Stik

Safety and State Fishing Regulations

- There are bag limits and length requirements for most fish caught in Texas. It is the responsibility of the angler to read and abide by these regulations. Be sure to follow all Texas regulations regarding fishing

licenses, bag limits, length requirements and other rules <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/fishing/>

- If you catch a fish that is shorter than the legal limits to keep, you MAY photograph and use in the tournament. However, as soon as possible after taking the photo, release the fish back into the water so that you are abiding by state fishing regulations.
- Each 4-H family entered is responsible for the safety of youth anglers during the tournaments.

Placings and Contests

- Unofficial individual placings will be posted on the contest leaderboards as fish are caught, posted, and verified by tournament director. You will be able to see your ranking in real time. Official placings will be emailed to participants after the close of the tournament.
- Each Division (Freshwater and Saltwater) has individual contests based upon species and judging criteria. See the attached Rules and Guidelines for specific information.
- A Texas 4-H Virtual Reel 'em in Grand Champion for Freshwater and Saltwater will be announced at the end of the 4-H year which ends on August 23. The winner in each division will be determined on a grand total of inches of longest one fish of each species caught in the Slam contest in both divisions for spring and summer participation.
 - Saltwater Slam Grand Champion: longest trout + longest sheepshead + longest red fish caught in both the spring and summer tournaments.
 - Freshwater Slam Grand Champion: longest bass + longest catfish + longest crappie caught in both the spring and summer tournaments.

Awards and Prizes

- Awards and prizes will be mailed or emailed to the address listed in 4HOnline after completion of the Spring skill-a-thon and then after completion of the Summer skill-a-thon.
- All awards and prizes to be determined by the 4-H Fishing committee. Awards are determined by the number of individuals registered for this tournament.
- Prizes can be gift cards from Bass Pro, Academy, other fishing based stores. Additional prizes such as fishing equipment, lures, bait, shirts, caps, and cash will be awarded from sponsors for specific contests.
- **Awards and prizes will only be provided to 4-H members in which fee has been received and post-survey completed.**
- Clover Kids participate for bragging rights and a certificate.
- Entry via 4-H Online gives permission to use the participant's name and photograph as needed for marketing and promotion purposes.

Questions

- For 4HOnline and registration questions, contact Carolyn Walton at the District 5 office via email at carolyn.walton@ag.tamu.edu or by phone at 903-834-6191.
- For tournament or FishDonkey questions, contact Dr. Jheri-Lynn McSwain, Extension Program Specialist – District 5 via email at jlmcswain@ag.tamu.edu or by phone at 903-847-0598. Please leave a detailed message.

Sponsors

- The Texas 4-H program is very grateful to the sponsors of our virtual fishing program.

- TG Industries
- Texas 4-H Youth Development Foundation
- Life's Pursuit Outdoors
- Bonehead Tackle
- Sea Grant – Texas
- Tran Sport Boats Inc.
- Phillips Tackle
- Coastal Marsh
- Texas Saltwater Fishing Magazine
- Prime Gancho
- Coastal Conservation Association Texas Star
- Flatsworthy
- Reel Wicked
- Fish Zone Tackle
- Nomad Design Bass Lures
- Waterloo Rod Company
- Down South Lures



Freshwater and Saltwater Division contest rules on following pages.

Freshwater Division Rules & Guidelines

Species

- You may enter fish from any of the 3 species listed below for the Freshwater Division. All fish must be caught by rod and reel (no trotlines, noodles, etc.).
 - Bass: Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted, Guadalupe
 - Crappie: black or white
 - Catfish: channel, blue, flathead
- You may enter all of one variety or a combination of varieties for judging.
- See link below to learn how to identify specific fish species in Texas.
<https://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/water/aquaticspecies/inland.phtml>

Location

- Fish anywhere permitted by law (freshwater, ponds, stock tanks, rivers, lakes, etc.).
- Fishing from a pier, edge of pond/lake/river, or boat is allowed for this event as long as the location is permitted by law. If private land, ensure you have landowner permission to fish.

Length Limits by Species

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/fishing/freshwater-fishing/>

Freshwater Judging Contests – More Ways to Win!

- Each of the pictures entered have multiple ways to qualify to win prizes. Each of the four contests have a separate leaderboard on FishDonkey. When you post the picture of your fish, it will automatically be entered into the contest in which it is eligible based upon species.
- The best part of FishDonkey is the app's ability to AUTO CULL your catches. Enter all your pictures and the system only adds your longest catch to the individual contest leaderboard.
- No need to upload your pictures for each individual contest.

Leaderboard Contests

- Longest
- Stringer
- Freshwater Slam
- Wild Card

Internal Contests

- Big Bass
- Video Clip – *Why We Should Not Litter Our Waterways*



Smallmouth Bass



Largemouth Bass



Guadalupe Bass



Spotted Bass



Black Crappie



White Crappie



Channel Catfish



Flathead Catfish



Blue Catfish



1. Longest

Sponsor: TG Industries & Texas 4-H Foundation, Nomad Designs - Bass

Species eligible: Bass and Catfish

Judging criteria: Length on Check-it-Stik
See *How to Measure Your Fish for Judging* on page 6.

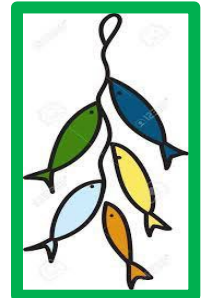


2. Stringer

Sponsor: Bonehead Tackle

Species eligible: Crappie

Judging criteria: Longest 5 crappie (black, white or combination). Enter all your crappie pictures and the app will AUTO CULL your stringer for you, leaving the top 5 cumulative lengths as your entry.



3. Freshwater Slam

Sponsor: Tran Sports Boats & Coastal Marsh

Species eligible: Bass, Catfish, Crappie

Judging criteria: Must enter at least one of **each** species to qualify to win in this contest (1 bass, 1 catfish and 1 crappie). Again, the app does the work for you. Just take the picture of the fish, enter its length and the program will select your longest bass, catfish and crappie to be entered into the Freshwater Slam contest.

4. Wild Card

Sponsor: Prime Gancho, Sea Grant – Texas and Gulf Coast Lady Anglers

Species: Bass, Catfish, Crappie

Judging criteria: Size does not matter for this contest! This is a random monthly drawing from ALL pictures uploaded and verified.



5. Overall Big Bass

Sponsor: Life's Pursuit Outdoors

Species: Bass

Judging criteria: Longest bass caught in EACH the spring and summer tournaments will be named 4-H Big Bass Winner. A replica of their big bass will be presented to each of these winners.

Tiebreaker: In the event of a tie, in any of the above contests, the earliest time entered will be used to determine the winner.

Saltwater Division Rules & Guidelines

Species

- You may enter fish from any of the 3 species listed below for the Saltwater Division. All fish must be caught with a rod and reel.
 - Spotted Seatrout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*)
 - Redfish (Red Drum) (*Sciaenops ocellatus*)
 - Sheepshead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*)
- You may enter all of one variety or a combination of varieties for judging.
- See link below to learn how to identify specific fish species in Texas.
<https://www.takemefishing.org/fish-species/>

Location

- All waters within 9 nautical miles of the Texas Coastline as permitted by Texas law.

Length Limits by Species

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/fishing/saltwater-fishing/>



Sheepshead



Spotted Seatrout



Redfish (Red Drum)

Saltwater Judging Contests – More Ways to Win!

- Each of the pictures entered have multiple ways to qualify to win prizes. Each of the four contests below have a separate leaderboard on FishDonkey. When you post the picture of your fish it will automatically be entered into the contest in which it is eligible based upon species.
- The best part of FishDonkey is the app's ability to AUTO CULL your catches. Enter all your pictures and the system only adds your longest catch to the individual contest leaderboard.
- No need to upload your pictures for each individual contest.

Leaderboard Contests

1. Longest
2. Saltwater Slam
3. Wild Card
4. Spot Pot

Internal Contest

5. Video Clip – *Why We Should Not Litter Our Waterways*



1. Longest

Sponsors: TG Industries, Reel Wicked Apparel/Fish Zone Tackle, Flatsworthy, Waterloo Rod Company

Species eligible: Sheepshead, Spotted Seatrout, Redfish (Note: Redfish must be under 28 inches)

Judging criteria: Length on Check-it-Stik/measuring board

See *How to Measure Your Fish for Judging* on page 3.



2. Saltwater Slam

Sponsors: Flatsworthy, Phillips Tackle & Coastal Marsh

Species eligible: Sheepshead, Spotted Seatrout, Redfish

Judging criteria: Must enter at least one of **each** species to qualify to participate in this contest (1 sheepshead, 1 seatrout and 1 redfish). Again, the app does the work for you. Just take the picture of the fish, enter its length and the program will select your longest sheepshead, seatrout, and redfish, to be entered into the Saltwater Slam contest.



3. Wild Card



Sponsor: Coastal Conservation Association Star, Prime Gancho, Down South Lures, Sea Grant – Texas and Gulf Coast Lady Anglers

Species: Sheepshead, Spotted Seatrout, Redfish

Judging criteria: Size does not matter for Spotted Seatrout or Sheepshead. Remember, all Redfish must be under 28 inches to be posted! This is a random monthly drawing from ALL pictures uploaded and verified.

4. Spot Pot

Sponsor: Waterloo Rod Company & Texas Saltwater Fishing Magazine

Species: Redfish

Judging criteria: Redfish must be under 28 inches and photographed on **Check-it-Stik**. Enter the number of spots on ONE side of the fish.



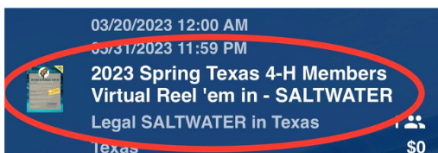
Tiebreaker: In the event of a tie, in any of the above contests, the earliest time entered will be used to determine the winner.

Want to WIN? Then Be Sure to Follow ALL Rules on page 6 & 7! Violation of any rule listed will result in disqualification of the fish entered.

FISHDONKEY TIP SHEET



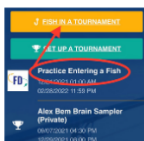
How to Join in the FishDonkey App



1. Download the FishDonkey App
2. Tap Fish in A Tournament
3. JOIN: Spring Texas 4-H



Practice



Join: PRACTICE ENTERING A FISH. Get familiar with the app's camera. This will ensure you've given the app proper camera permissions too.

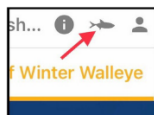
Watch a 1 minute tutorial:
youtu.be/zuxh7FNUkbA

We need your county Name!

Please tap on the profile icon in the top right corner of the app and fill in ADDRESS LINE 2 with your County name. Also add it to your LAST NAME, For example: Bryant - Bexar



Digital Livewell / Photos



The fish icon is your Digital Livewell. It will show fish that are waiting to get on the leaderboard.

When you return to good reception, tap your livewell and leave it open. Tap the screen to keep it awake. Do this until all fish are RECEIVED.



No Internet

Open the app before you head out. Tap on the name of your tournament on your FD home screen. That's it. Don't log out. Enter fish as normal. Your entries are held for safe keeping in your Digital Livewell.



HOW TO ENTER A FISH

1. Tap the button ENTER A FISH / LEADERBOARD
2. That will open up your camera. Take your required pics by tapping on the camera icon.
3. When you are finished taking your pics, tap the checkmark.
4. Enter the species and the length of your fish.
5. Tap SUBMIT.

Don't panic if you cannot see your name or photos on the leaderboard. Often times, they come later. The Digital Livewell (fish icon) will show a record of your fish entries waiting to post.



What do I do at the start?

Open the FishDonkey App, Home screen.
 Tap on the event name.
 Tap on Leaderboard.



Required Documentation

1. Photo of fish on the measure board
2. Photo of you holding the fish

Support Number

Support@FishDonkey.com
 218.249.0847