

New walleye series takes shape on Lake Oahe

By Andrew Johnson ajohnson@aberndeennews.com | Posted: Friday, April 22, 2016
1:00 am



New walleye series takes shape on Lake Oahe

Teams of anglers line up their boats as they prepare to take off from Swan Creek on Lake Oahe for the 2014 South Dakota Walleye Classic. The event, which is hosted by Akaska, is one of five existing tournaments that will comprise the qualifying portion of the newly formed Northern Oahe Walleye Series. American News File Photo by Andrew Johnson

Local anglers looking for amateur competition have never had to look too far, as Lake Oahe plays host to a number of quality walleye tournaments.

However, the pot has been sweetened this year with the formation of the Northern Oahe Walleye Series. The series will combine five existing tournaments and conclude with a new championship tournament with more than \$25,000 in cash and prizes at stake.

The series is the brainchild of the Mobridge Area Chamber of Commerce's Tourism Committee, the same group that orchestrates the town's massive ice fishing contest each January.

"We know how to run a tournament, and this is something we've talked about for a long time," said Dawn Konold, a long-standing member of the committee.

Konold said many anglers annually fish in more than one of the established tournaments anyway, so the move to combine them into a formal series was a natural fit.

"We were looking for something big we could do for the area, and with so many tournaments in our area, we thought how cool would it be to get them all together," she said. "The committee was all on board and said let's do it."

Foundation in place

Once the decision was made to move forward, the committee approached several of the larger Lake Oahe-based tournaments to see if there was any interest in joining the series.

"When we went to each one of the five tournaments, everybody wholeheartedly said yes," Konold said. "So, it's a culmination of all the tournaments in our area, making it a big deal."

The five tournaments that will comprise the series include Wolves on the Water, Denny Palmer Memorial, Pollock Men's Club Tournament, Whitlock Bay Walleye Tournament and South Dakota Walleye Classic. They will act as qualifiers for the championship event.

A degree of familiarity will be in place, Konold said, as each tournament will keep its traditional format and be run by the same people or organizations as in years past. However, a new point system will be used to keep track of angler teams who want to participate in the series.

"We did our research and developed a point system that we'll keep track of on the series' website, northernoaheseries.com," she said. "The local tournaments will still have their same prizes and cash awards, and we'll keep track of the points anglers accumulate for the series separately."

According to the series website, anglers can fish one or all of the tournaments without participating in the series itself. They will receive points based upon where they finish in each tournament. If they fish in at least three qualifying tournaments, point totals will be applied toward a team-of-the-year title. If they fish four or five tournaments, they can use point totals from their top three finishes toward the team-of-the-year standings.

The series will conclude with the championship event on Aug. 19-20 in Mobridge. Final team-of-the-year points will be awarded to each participating team and will weigh heavily in determining team-of-the-year honors.

Any team finishing in the top 20 of a qualifier will automatically qualify to fish the championship. There is a 100-team boat limit for the championship, but any team that fished at least one qualifier will be eligible to fish in the championship if openings are available.

To help get things started, Konold said the tourism committee applied for a matching grant from the state, and sponsors have already committed prizes and cash. So far, sponsors include SoDak Sports, Aberdeen Sport Recreation, Raymarine, Warrior Boats, Reff Runner, JB Lures, Scheels and Moritz Sports and Marine.

Early interest

The first tournament, Wolves on the Water, has in recent years been the first weekend in June. This year, it was moved to May, said Zach Flakus, Northern State University's associate director of athletics, who is also the tournament director. The event is a fundraiser for Northern athletics.

"Wolves on the Water has been a very good tourney for a long time, but we had to change the dates this year because of when Memorial Day fell and only having four weekends in June," he said. "We have 140 slots open and, so far, 127 of them are already filled."

In other words, if anglers want in, they better hurry.

Konold said the Denny Palmer Memorial in Mobridge on June 11 is also filling up.

"We already have 80 teams signed up," she said. "Normally, at this time of year, we have around 30. Before, people would wait and see what the weather was going to do. Because all these tournaments have caps on them as far as how many teams can enter, if you don't get in on time or even early, you're going to be out of luck."

Follow @OutdoorForumMag on Twitter.

New competition

Names and dates of the five tournaments that will comprise the qualifying portion of the Northern Oahe Walleye Series:

- May 14: Wolves on the Water, at Walth Bay, nsuwolves.com/support
- June 11: Denny Palmer Memorial, in Mobridge, mobridgeoutdoors.com

- June 18-19: Pollock Men's Club Tournament, in Pollock, pollockmensclub.com
- July 9-10: Whitlock Bay Tournament, West Whitlock, americanlegion-gettysburg.com
- July 22-23: South Dakota Walleye Classic, Akaska, sdwalleyeclassic.com

For more information, go to northernnoaheseries.com.