



SOUTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR'S CUP BILLFISHING SERIES

Fishing Guidelines – 2016

1. Fish must be caught in accordance with all state and federal laws, and under IGFA Rules with the exception of passing rod to qualify to earn SC Governor's Cup points/awards. **After a fish strikes, the rod may be passed to one angler one time immediately. All anglers, including Youth Anglers (under sixteen years of age on April 1 of current tournament year) and Lady Anglers (female over sixteen years of age on April 1 of the current tournament year), may have the rod passed one time to them. After the rod has been passed, only the angler is allowed to touch the rod.** Once the leader is brought within the grasp of the crew member or is wound to the rod tip, then the angler may have assistance to catch and release or boat the fish. Series points will accrue towards Series awards for these fish. Vessels may provide assistance to other vessels for boating fish. **Any deviation from these guidelines will lead to disqualification.**

2. White marlin and sailfish are catch and release only. Tagging is optional and not required for points. The minimum size for Series points or awards consideration for landed blue marlin is 105 inches measured in a curved line along the body from the fork of the tail to the tip of the lower jaw (LJFL). **Federal regulation dictates that a boated billfish cannot be returned to the water.**

Note: 105 inches exceeds the federally mandated minimum size limit. Should the federal size limit be increased, the minimum size for blue marlin eligible for weighing in SC Governor's Cup Series tournaments will be increased automatically to exceed the new minimum size by two (2) inches if required.

3. A penalty of 600 points will be assessed against a boat for each blue marlin brought to the dock not meeting the minimum South Carolina Governor's Cup Series size requirements.

4. Boats guilty of wanton waste of fish taken in a Series event will be disqualified from earning points in that event.

5. All landed fish are to be iced or refrigerated until such time as they are released by tournament officials to the boat after which the edible tissue is to be processed and the carcass disposed of. Boats landing Blue Marlin will have a maximum of three hours to complete this task.

6. Scoring for eligible billfish weighed-in is based solely on those points officially awarded each boat by each tournament. Boats earn one point per pound and fraction of a pound for their single heaviest billfish weighed in each tournament. No points are awarded for additional billfish weighed in any one tournament.

7. Only blue marlin, white marlin and sailfish are eligible for billfish catch and release points. Tagging is optional and not required for points. Billfish boated for any reason will not qualify for release points. Scoring for billfish caught and released in good condition is as follows:

Blue Marlin	600 points
White marlin	300 points
Sailfish	200 points

8. To qualify for catch and release points, a billfish must be fought to the boat according to program guidelines. A billfish is considered caught and points will be awarded when **all** the following has occurred: 1) the leader is grasped by the crew or the leader is wound to the rod tip (a leader may be no longer than 30 feet); 2) the billfish is positively identified through digital photography/videography; and 3) the fish is released in a healthy condition. Boats are encouraged to remove the hook or to cut the leader as close as possible to the hook.

9. Billfish may not be brought into the boat unless it is to be brought to the dock for weighing.

10. Any billfish gaffed, harpooned or otherwise injured in an attempt to boat the fish will not qualify for catch and release points. Additionally, if the gaff crosses the vertical plane of the boat, the boat will not qualify for catch and release points.

11. For a vessel to qualify any billfish for points, every person aboard the vessel 18 years of age or older must sign an official Governor's Cup Released or Tagged and Released Billfish Affidavit or Landing Billfish Affidavit swearing that all rules and regulations were observed in reference to the described fish. Failure of any person to sign the affidavit, for any reason, disqualifies that fish. In addition, all released billfish must be clearly digitally photographed or videoed (preferable image would include a visible dorsal fin) at time of release by each vessel using a digital/video camera provided by the vessel. The image must include a time and date stamp that corresponds to the time of release recorded by the tournament designated committee boats. Photos/videos must be provided on a removable storage device, and will be used to confirm species identification and release information, and will be used to resolve potential conflicts or formal protests.

12. Affidavits must be completed the day the catch and release or landing occurs, except when a medical emergency involving the boat's crew prohibits completion of the form or when a mechanically disabled boat cannot return within the prescribed weigh-in period. In these instances, the forms must be completed and returned within ten (10) days of the catch and release. If applicable by the individual tournaments, boats fishing out of other marinas or ports must fax or hand-deliver the completed official Governor's Cup Released or Tagged and Released Billfish Affidavit and email digital images to tournament headquarters or SCGC personnel prior to the close of the weighing scales on the day of catch with the exception as noted above.

13. Boats will be awarded 25 participation points for each Series tournament entered up to a maximum of three events. A boat's points total will include participation points as indicated along with points for landed or caught and released billfish from all tournaments fished. Points will count toward aggregate point totals for Outstanding Billfish Boat and Outstanding Billfish Conservationist. Points cannot be transferred from one boat to another.

14. Boats must fish a minimum of two Series tournaments to qualify for Outstanding Billfish Boat and Outstanding Billfish Conservationist. Vessels fishing only one tournament qualify for Outstanding Billfish, Youth Angler awards, Lady Angler awards, and Outstanding Dolphin/Wahoo/Tuna.

15. Boat points are awarded at the time of release or landing (boated). Ties between points are broken by the time of release/landing. The date of the release/landing is based on the boat's fishing day (day 1 or 2) as opposed to the tournament fishing day (day 1-2-3). If a tie still remains, the boat fishing in the most Series events will be declared the winner.

16. Tournament awards will be presented for the heaviest tuna (**eligible species include Yellowfin, Bluefin, Blackfin and Bigeye tuna**) dolphin, and wahoo caught by boats participating in the Series and for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place Youth Anglers (under sixteen years of age) and Outstanding Lady Anglers (female over sixteen years of age). The tournament awards for Youth and Lady Anglers will be awarded for the heaviest tuna, dolphin or wahoo if no Youth or Lady Angler has landed or caught and released a legal billfish. Billfish caught by Youth or Lady Anglers will earn regular Series points for the species. Series awards for non-billfish species will be awarded for largest tuna, dolphin, and wahoo.

17. A Blue Water Conservation Award will be presented to the boat accumulating the most points tagging dolphin (50 points), yellowfin tuna (100 points) and wahoo (150 points). All fish must be caught on legal Series tournament fishing days and tagged using official tags supplied by the Marine Resources Division's Marine Gamefish Tagging Program. Completed tagging reports will serve as official entry forms and must be submitted to Marine Resources Division personnel working the tournament or the weighmaster on the same day the fish was tagged.

18. Creel limits for dolphin are 10 per angler per day with a limit of 60 per boat per day, with a minimum size limit of 20 inches fork length. Creel limit for yellowfin tuna is 3 per angler per day with a minimum legal size of 27 inches curved body fork length, see current federal size and creel limits for other tuna species. Creel limit for wahoo is 2 per person per day.

Note: Size or creel limits will automatically be changed in SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series tournaments to reflect changes in federal or state laws.

19. All awards are presented to the boat. Invitations to the annual Governor's Cup awards reception are limited to winning boat crews and to boat owners whose boats fish two or more yearly Series events.

20. It is the intent of the S.C. Governor's Cup to encourage release of healthy billfish, therefore the use of 130 lb. class line is allowed.

21. A boat owner may request an official ruling from the S.C. Governor's Cup Series. The request for a ruling must be submitted in writing to a member of the Tournament Committee. The Tournament Committee shall rule on the request within seven (7) days. Any ruling of the Tournament Committee may be appealed by writing to the Board of Directors within forty-eight (48) hours, excluding weekend days and holidays. The Board shall render results of an appeal, in writing, to the appellant within thirty (30) days. All decisions of the Board are final. Voting individuals representing either the Tournament Committee or the Board of Directors will recuse themselves from the decision if there is a conflict of interest. All rulings will focus solely on compliance with Governor's Cup Series rules, not individual tournament rules.