

2026 Big Trout Campout Official Rules

***PLEASE READ THESE RULES CAREFULLY AS THEY APPLY TO ALL CONTESTANTS**

1. Contestants may fish from shore, float tube, canoe, kayak, boat, or any other legally permissible vessel provided they meet all local, state, and federal regulations.
2. All boats, including float tubes, canoes, and kayaks used during The Big Trout Campout, must be properly outfitted with the USCG mandated equipment for their vessel, which may include but is not limited to, anchors, running lights, throw cushions, life vests, signal devices, oars, and bailing devices. All vessels must also possess current state registration stickers if required.
3. Contestants using their own vessels must obtain a personal launch pass, which is obtained through the Lake Hemet website prior to the contest or onsite at the gate. Vessels are also subject to a Quagga Mussel inspection and must pass prior to launch on Lake Hemet.
4. All participants under 13 years of age fishing from a vessel 26 feet or less are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life vest (PFD) during on the water tournament hours. See dbw.ca.gov for details concerning life vests.
5. At the time of check-in, all Big Trout Campout contestants will be issued a wristband with their raffle number on it. These wristbands must be worn for the duration of the event and should not be removed until the close of the contest at 6:00 pm on April 26th, 2026.
6. Pre-fishing with a licensed guide is permitted up until 5:00 pm on April 24th, 2026. Other than providing emergency assistance, no fishing guides licensed on Lake Hemet may participate, or in any way assist other Big Trout Campout participants during the contest period.
7. All California Department of Fish and Wildlife regulations will apply to the Big Trout Campout. All contestants 16 years of age or older will be required to possess and carry a valid California Fishing license. Any angler cited as being in violation of California or Federal Fish and Game laws will be disqualified from the Big Trout Campout prizes.
8. All fish submitted for weight during the Big Trout Campout must be taken from the waters of Lake Hemet during the official contest hours. Fish brought in from outside of Lake Hemet as judged by the tournament staff will result in angler disqualification. All fish must be caught live, with rod and reel, fair game hooked, per California Department of Fish & Wildlife regulations. No snagged fish will be accepted. CA Fish and Wildlife regulations may be viewed on-line at wildlife.ca.gov.
9. All California Department of Boating & Waterways and all local Lake Hemet boating regulations must be observed during the tournament. Any boat operator cited by local, state, or federal agencies for violating boating laws during the tournament will be disqualified.
10. Lake Closures – Lake Hemet will be closed to Big Trout Campout contestant fishing from 5:00 pm on April 24th to 7:00 am on April 25th. The lake will again close to Big Trout Campout contestant fishing on April 25th at 4:00 pm and reopen on April 26th at 7:00 am. It will close again on April 26th at 2:00 pm. Contestants may be on the water during off-limits times but are not allowed to have lines in the water. Anglers found fishing during the off-limits period will be disqualified from the Big Trout Campout.
11. Official Contest Hours – The Big Trout Campout will start at 7:00 am on Saturday, April 25th and cease at 4:00 pm on April 26th. To facilitate vessel launching, anglers may be on the water earlier than this, but MAY

NOT have any lines in the water. Scales will open Saturday at 1:00 pm in the parking lot of the Lake Hemet Marina parking lot and close at 4:00 pm. All anglers who are in line prior to 4:00 pm will have their fish weighed. On Sunday, April 26th, the contest will start at 7:00 am and cease at 2:00 pm. Scales will open at 11:00 am and close at 2:00 pm. Again, all anglers in line prior to 2:00 pm will have their fish weighed. The tournament director is the keeper of the official event time.

12.Limits/Size – Trout submitted for weight during the Big Trout Campout must be a minimum of 10 inches in overall length (from tip of nose to tip of tail). All fish under 10 inches as determined by our weigh staff will not be included in the total weight. Each angler in the Big Trout Campout may weigh 5 trout per day. Once you weigh your fish, you are done for the day and may not submit any additional fish for inclusion to your daily weight. You may not go back out fishing once you have weighed your fish.

13.Unless cooperating jointly, all boats must maintain a distance of 50 feet between them when anchored or drift fishing. Boats which are trolling are exempt from this rule. There is no minimum distance for shoreline anglers.

14.The Tournament Director has the sole discretion to disqualify any catch for any reason deemed to violate any tournament rules or the spirit of the competition. The decisions of the Tournament Director are final and may not be appealed. All anglers are responsible for weighing in their OWN fish and may not pass or hand off any fish to anyone else. Handing off fish to junior anglers will not be accepted, and if you are caught handing off a fish, both anglers are subject to immediate disqualification. Protests must be filed in writing with the Tournament Director no later than 2:30 pm on Sunday, April 26th, to be considered.

15.Divisional Prizes – Merchandise prizes will be awarded to the top 5 finishers in the Adult, and Junior's divisions based upon total weight at the close of the competition. The largest trout of the tournament will also receive a trophy and merchandise. Junior division consist of anglers under the age of 14. All divisional winners must be present to receive their prizes, or the merchandise portion of their prizes will be donated to the general raffle.

16.Ties – In case of a tie based upon weight, the greater number of fishes caught over the course of the two-day event will determine the winner. In case the anglers each caught the same number of fishes, the winner will be determined by their entry date. The earliest entry date will win the tie breaker, so sign up early!

17.Raffle Prizes – All anglers as a part of their entry will have their raffle number (from their wristband) placed into a raffle bin. Raffle numbers will be drawn, and raffles will be awarded to those persons who are present. Contestants who are not present will forfeit their prize.

18.Blind Bogey Contest – Each person entered in the Big Trout Campout is a part of the Blind Bogey contest. \$5 of each entry fee is allocated for this contest. There will be 10 random weights for each day pre-picked before the event start date, those anglers whose combined weight is closest to without going over the predetermined weight will win that Blind Bogey. Both Saturday and Sunday Blind Bogey prize drawings will be held Sunday during the awards ceremonies. Example payout – 600 anglers x \$5 = \$3000 total pool. Divide the total by 2 for each day, leaving \$1500 for each day. Divide \$1500 by 10 and each payout is \$150 per day.