



**Free Fishing
Weekend
July 7 & 8**



Catch and release fishing has increased in popularity in Saskatchewan over the past number of years. Results from the 2010 survey of recreational fishing in Canada indicate that 98 per cent of anglers in Saskatchewan practice some form of catch and release. Not all fish that are released will survive; however, and even with careful handling delayed mortality may average approximately 10 per cent for most Saskatchewan fish species. Therefore, it is important that the techniques used follow scientifically based best practices and result in limited delayed mortality to the fish.

Factors such as handling, hook placement and environmental conditions are variables that can influence post-release mortality. In order to minimize post-release mortality, follow these suggestions for effective catch and release fishing.

Proper tools for effective catch and release

- Have the proper tools for the job close at hand. This includes needle nose pliers, hemostats, or special hook removing devices, line cutters for deeply hooked fish, landing net or cradle, wet cloth glove and camera (if taking a picture).
- Landing nets or cradles should be constructed with non-abrasive, knotless materials such as rubber or tangle free coated nylon. Cradles are recommended for larger fish such as pike.

Angling techniques for effective catch and release

- Land the fish as quickly as possible to avoid fish exhaustion. The tackle used should match the size of the fish targeted; avoid using intentionally light tackle to prolong a fight.
- Catch and release fishing in depths greater than 9 m (30 ft.) should be avoided, as most Saskatchewan fish species, other than lake trout, are unable to rapidly adjust to the changes in water pressure as they are pulled towards the surface, resulting in greater mortality of released fish.
- Venting of distended swim bladders, or “fizzing”, is discouraged as it can cause stress and has the potential to harm other internal organs.
- Use unscented artificial lures rather than live/dead bait or other organic materials (eg: dough balls, corn, etc.) when catch and release fishing to minimize deep hooking of fish.
- Limit your angling during periods of extreme heat or cold, as extreme temperatures can contribute to post-release mortality.

Fish handling techniques for effective catch and release

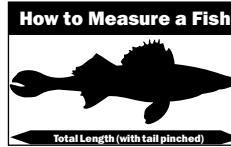
- Prevent or limit air exposure to the fish. Minimizing air exposure may be one of the single most important factors in limiting post-release mortality. Ideally, fish should be released without removing them from the water.
- Single, barbless and/or circle hooks can help to reduce handling time and air exposure.
- Handle the fish as quickly (under 30 seconds) and as little as possible. Use a wet cloth glove or wet hand to prevent damage to the fish's protective mucus coating.
- Once a fish is landed, be careful not to let the fish flop around as this can lead to bruising and other injuries.
- Do not hold or support a fish's weight by the gills, gill cover or the eyes. If a fish must be held, hold it in a horizontal position, with one hand placed under the forward belly area and the other hand gently around the tail area. This will help to minimize damage to the fish's spine and internal organs.
- If a fish is hooked in a vital area such as the gullet, gill or eye, consider keeping the fish if regulations allow it, as post release survival of these fish is greatly reduced.
- If you must release a deeply hooked fish consider cutting the line close to the hook and follow proper release techniques.
- Hold a fish horizontal in the water until it is fully revived and swims away on its own. Move the fish in an S-shaped pattern to allow water to run through its gills.
- If you must release fish that have been retained in a livewell, proper livewell management is crucial to ensure good fish survival. Stress from prolonged confinement and low dissolved oxygen levels from overcrowding and/or warm water can result in higher mortality rates. Limit the number of fish in a well aerated livewell to 0.1 kg of fish per litre of water or roughly one pound of fish per gallon of water. Limiting retention time of fish in a livewell can also help to reduce stress and improve post release mortality.
- Use common sense when releasing fish. If a fish is bleeding or cannot be revived, count that fish towards your limit, if regulations allow it.

Weigh Your Fish with a Ruler

Fish can sometimes be harmed when weighed. To protect your fish take a length measurement. With this chart you can quickly determine the approximate weight of your fish using a ruler or tape measure.

If you measure your fish by length, use the table below to convert to an equivalent weight. For example a walleye 66 cm in length would weigh approximately 3 kg. If you measure your fish in inches use the conversion chart below. For example a walleye 33 inches in length would be (33 x 2.54 = 83.8 cm) which is roughly 6.44 kg or (6.44 x 2.21) = 14.2 lbs.

- Centimetres to Inches** = multiply by 0.39
- Inches to Centimetres** = multiply by 2.54
- Kilograms to Pounds** = multiply by 2.21
- Pounds to Kilograms** = multiply by 0.45



Total Length cm	Approximate Weights, kg					
	in	Perch	Grayling	Walleye	Lake Trout	Pike
20	7.80	0.11	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.07
28	10.9	0.31	0.22	0.18	0.17	0.18
36	14.0	0.67	0.46	0.41	0.37	0.36
44	17.2	1.25	0.85	0.79	0.72	0.64
52	20.3		1.41	1.36	1.24	1.04
60	23.4		2.18	2.16	1.98	1.56
68	26.5			3.24	2.98	2.23
76	30.0			4.65	4.29	3.06
84	32.8			6.44	5.94	4.07
92	35.9				8.00	5.28
100	39.0				10.50	6.70
120	46.8				19.03	11.28
140	54.6					17.51
160	62.4					
180	70.2					



Saskatchewan Catch and Release Award Certificates

These certificates recognize conservation efforts of anglers who catch and release large fish. Such deeds merit recognition, as they help to maintain fish populations.

Rules and Regulations

- All fish must be legally angled within Saskatchewan. Fish that do not survive when released are not eligible.
- Application forms are available at www.environment.gov.sk.ca. Anglers may submit one application per species. Application forms must be received within 30 days of the catch.
- If fishing alone, the witness verifications may be omitted. Otherwise, all sections must be completed.
- Ministry representatives will be the final judge of all applications, and reserve the right to publish names and addresses of certificate recipients.

Minimum Qualifying Sizes

	Length		Weight	
(Approximate)	(cm)	(in)	(kg)	(lb)
Arctic grayling	35	13.7	0.5	1.1
Brook trout	45	17.6	1.1	2.4
Brown trout	45	17.6	1.1	2.4
Channel catfish	65	25.4	2.5	5.5
Goldeye	40	15.6	0.7	1.5
Lake trout	65	25.4	2.6	5.7
Largemouth bass	40	15.6	1.2	2.7
Northern pike	75	29.3	2.9	6.4
Perch	30	11.7	0.4	0.9
Rainbow trout	50	19.5	1.8	4.0
Splake	45	17.6	1.1	2.4
Walleye	55	21.5	1.6	3.5
Whitefish	55	21.5	1.8	4.0

How to Make a Barbless Hook

Barbless hooks, mandatory on all catch and release waters in Saskatchewan, are easier to remove and may help to minimize fish mortalities. Crimp barbs with pliers.

