
Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by ghoutteman - 2008/05/29 21:56

I've talked to many anglers by phone, through email, and face to face about this topic and I'd like to hear your ideas. Please use this thread to put forth your ideas on when and how you feel weather evaluations should be made and how cancellations should be handled.

So many people have overwhelmingly offered their assistance in any way - well this is one way all of us can help.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by 1 MAINIAC - 2008/05/30 08:30

Well as I write this I can hear thunder to the SW of me and I am NE of Grand Haven. Could my boat and me fish today most likely would I take a group of ladies fishing today not likely. Even though I am 10 to 12 miles from the pier at Grand Haven I don't know what the exact cond are there. But would have to say if there is lightning present the start should be delayed. Other than that it will likely be a miserable day of fishing in bad weather with building waves according to the lake report I got it should be captains call on fishing today. So based on what I see from my house I would not take the ladies out till the weather clears but I would sure have the rain gear on and be fishing with the guys if there was no lightning present. That is based on my 26ft boat my 18ft boat would not get hooked to the truck today. So I think a delayed start today could be wise but let em fish when lightning pass's the area. Captains call on early stoppage make the weather announcements and suggestions but if you send them out let them fish.
GOOD LUCK TO ALL

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Rawhide - 2008/06/02 13:32

I applaud the GH Offshore weather boats and committee for allowing the start to go on as scheduled. Yes there was lightning present, but sending folks back up the river only would have risked longer exposure to the storm. It was nice to see common sense prevail over paranoia. Well done!

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Wingnut - 2008/06/03 15:25

I liked the way the GHOC committee took roll call of the weather boats for fish/no fish votes. It makes sense to me. It gets the weather boats/competitors involved in the decision making which should appease the majority of the teams. The decision came from fishermen, not "the evil tournament committee" lol. Of course that's not the way I feel, I just used that phrase to make my point.

Conditions to delay: Severe Thunderstorm warnings, Gale warnings, Tornado warnings that are nearing an end. In the event of nasty weather without coinciding warnings leave it to a vote of the weather boats as was done in the GHOC. Maximum delay of 3 or 4 hours with that time added on to the end of the days fishing period so that it isn't shortened if possible.

Conditions to cancel: Severe Thunderstorm warnings, Gale warnings, Tornado warnings that are not nearing an end. If no coinciding warnings are present but the fishing was delayed by the vote of the weather boats take another vote each hour with a final vote at the end of the 3 or 4 hour delay window. If at the end of the delay window the weather is still too bad as voted by the weather boats, the fishing is cancelled for the day.

Conditions for early end to fishing period: None. But if that isn't possible I'd like to see the decision to once again be by vote of the weather boats as they are the ones with the best grasp of the current situation. In the event of an early quit, lines out immediately, make your way safely back to port by the original time. No early return times.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

I too agree that the right decision was made concerning the start of the Offshore challenge. An interesting start to the day though. I guess it pays off to have some pros with Nexrad weather radar on their boat.

Here is my concern though! Take a look at the majority of the weather boats. They are mostly 36' boats. Now, take a look at the majority of the participants in the tournament. In Grand Haven there were 71 AM boats and 36 Pro boats. In general, the AM boats are much smaller but still the larger pro boats (who are the minority) are the ones making the call as to when we stay on the lake. I love the scapegoat of, "It is the captain's responsibility to keep his crew safe." Seriously, we are all out there because we are competitive and want to win. If we just wanted to fish, we wouldn't pay the entry fees and we would go out anyway. I don't think there are more than a handful of people that are going to go back in the pierheads after weather boats say that we should stay out. People are going to take the risks and try to endure the weather. I am not saying that all weather boats should be 19' open bow boats, but at least a few should be smaller boats. The way it is now, the majority of the boats don't have a say, the minority do.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by ghoutteman - 2008/06/04 09:59

Sea Buck wrote:

I love the scapegoat of, "It is the captain's responsibility to keep his crew safe." Seriously, we are all out there because we are competitive and want to win. If we just wanted to fish, we wouldn't pay the entry fees and we would go out anyway.

This is exactly why weather committees and tournament committees are forced to delay or cancel days of fishing. Captain's Responsibility is not just a convenient slogan it's a fact of the maritime lifestyle. If decisions can be swayed by money or fame and for that Captain's are willing to put their crews lives at risk then chances are they're willing to be unsafe at any cost and more experienced Captain's are forced to take in to account the safety of those crews.

I was impressed with the behavior of most boats at Grand Haven as they safely and slowly motored through the weather instead of putting it to the pins and letting it all hang out. Once conditions began clearing and the field had spread out boats began to run harder - that was very nice to see and proof that most Captain's understand safety.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Flat Rate - 2008/06/04 12:22

Setting up and running a Tournament is not an easy job and one I don't envy. These guys have to try to please several hunderd people all at the same time, from the competitive captains (most of us have an ego as well) to the crew members that are fishing with these captains and the sponsors. You can not please all of the people all of the time, but I think they do a damn fine job of trying.

Every boat is different as is the seamanship of the captains, look at the 36 foot boat that went down in Wisconsin last weekend, just because they were on a big boat and had an experience captain dosen't mean bad things can't happen. If we were to sit around and wait until conditions were perfect, we would never fish and I think it comes down to the call of the captain and the crew together as to if they can handle the conditions safely (personally I have complete confidence in my captain and my ability but if he made the decission to not fish or return early, I would support him 100%). I realize that the smaller boats many not be as COMFORTABLE as a larger boat in rough conditions but as far as being as safe, I'm not sure I would go that far as there are some pretty safe smaller boats being made, again every boat/captain is different. If a person can afford the price of a large boat then they should be rewarded with the comforts as well, if not and they go for a smaller more affordable boat then they have to be willing to sacrificce comfort as well, keep in mind most smaller boats have the big speed advantage over large boats in calmer conditions, should we penalize them and issue a speed limit on tournament boats.

I kind of feel like if there are not severe thunderstorm / tornado warings out or Gale warings then let the weather committee make the call and we should fish. The committee should be a good mix of boats from the entrys but you can't always make that happen. Once the tournament starts I think it should continue unless severe weather/gale warings come up and if it is called early I don't think a time limit should be imposed that may create a hazzard to the boats or crew trying to return to port within a set time frame.

The Grand Haven Offshore tournament committee did a great job last weekend in my opinion and should be congratulated for their job. Using the weather boats as input showed guts and compassion and as it worked out it was best not to call all the boats back in during a short squall and have people in the river mouth and marinas trying to dock their boats possibly running into each other or worse.

I think if a steering committee is set up for tournaments to gather ideas and comments and set some ground rules as far as weather decisions, then at least everyone will know what to expect at every tournament and we wouldn't have the problems we have now at some tournaments. Again, not an easy call for any tournament committee and these guys all do it as volunteers so we need to put the shoe on the other foot sometime before we go off on someone or committee and start ripping in to them. I guess if some one don't like the way a tournament is run they have 2 options, get on the tournament committee and try to help out, or don't go out and play with the big boys. :S

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Sea Buck - 2008/06/04 13:56

Greg,

I agree completely with what you had to say concerning the reason why committees are forced to make decisions as when to cancel and I would never second guess their decision. South Haven the call was made and it turned out being a decent day, but when the call was made that was the right decision based on the facts they had. Many times when we are already on the water though, I think the larger weather boats are much more apt to stay on the water than smaller AM boats if it gets rough. I am glad that the committees are made up of experienced captains as you mentioned but I think we are all kidding ourselves if we think that money is not a factor when a captain is thinking about heading back in. Especially with newer and less experienced captains, they might not know how dangerous it actually is. I also think that the boats in Grand Haven did an excellent job with being careful and was glad safety prevailed.

Flat Rate,

You said, "Again, not an easy call for any tournament committee and these guys all do it as volunteers so we need to put the shoe on the other foot sometime before we go off on someone or committee and start ripping in to them." Refer back to my first line - "I too agree that the right decision was made concerning the start of the Offshore challenge." I wasn't ripping into anyone, I actually commended them for making the right call. I am also glad to see the majority of the posts on here people are saying that they don't envy the committee members' jobs and think they do a fine job, myself included. Also, this thread was created by Greg to gather input on how people think that weather calls should be made. I don't think valuable input is (your words) "if some one don't like the way a tournament is run they have 2 options, get on the tournament committee and try to help out, or don't go out and play with the big boys."

My input was just that more smaller boats should be included with the weather boats, period. Didn't mean to start a riot, sorry Greg!

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by ghoutteman - 2008/06/04 14:02

I don't think Flatrate was referring to you ripping the GH Committee - it was meant more as a general comment for those that actually did rip the committee in Grand Haven.

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Sea Buck - 2008/06/04 14:07

It is disappointing that some would rip into the committee. I agree that having weather boats make the ultimate decision is a good idea. I was surprised that they made the boats say their decision right over the radio and then ask if committee members wanted to overrule that decision. Do you think some teams or members may have answered differently if they could have talked to Mark in private and not over the air?

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Flat Rate - 2008/06/04 15:10

Sea Buck ,I appologize as my comment was not directed at you but more towards the guys who did some complaining at the start, at the weigh in and also to an individual that called Mark to complain.I agree it was a great run tournament and I also have to say as Greg did that I thought everyone did a good job at the start of not jumping the gun and running hard under less than ideal conditions and keeping the start a safe one.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by br grand haven - 2008/06/04 15:44

Not all the weather boats are 36 foot. The Tournament usually picks one of the larger PRO boats with Capt that has years of fishing on the Lake and also has the latest and best equipment for weather issues. Often in Grand Haven Willis will consult with Dave Engle and Bill Bale before the event to get their advice. Willis also picks a mixture of weather boats for example last weekend we used the Maatley Crew which is a 24-25 older Slickcraft AM boat that fishes a lot of tournaments.If I remember I think J-bird from the AM was also a weather boat.Weather is always a hard call,The Tournament in GH has tried to show the lake the respect it needs when dealing with safety.
thanks Bill (my personal views does not reflect the GH tournament board)

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Thunderduck - 2008/06/04 16:40

The weather boats were picked at the captains meeting and there were two Pro boats the Hunter that is 36' and Get Some which is perhaps the smallest boat in the Pros. The Ams were J-Bird a 30' and Mottly Crew a 25' and In Pursuit a 34' boat. The vote was 4 fish and 1 no fish. I believe they made the best possible call, what good would it have been to be inside the harbor with a hundred boats going the same direction as the storm, which was a very narrow line as it turned out just as we were told from Winn Wolfe and Dave Engle prior to going out. I believe the best and only choice was made in a fast and safe manner.

Capt. Willis

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Sea Buck - 2008/06/04 16:45

Ageed they all are not 36'. Maybe a random draw could be done for weather boats at the captain's meeting. Three from the AM division and three from the PRO division. If there are other boats that have the weather radar like Best Chance, then they should also be included as their tools are invaluable. This way, the results are random and an equal voice is given to each division.

I agree with you Willis that the correct call was made and that time was certainly not on the committee's side.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Wingnut - 2008/06/04 18:34

I'm not so sure I'd like the decision to fish or not fish to be determined by a group randomly drawn. I'd feel better with the group to be made up of a sampling of seasoned captains that can be trusted to make the decision with professionalism based on experience.

Hopefully in the future the decision will be made for each division seperately. The pros shouldn't be kept at the dock because there are smaller boats in the am division just as the ams shouldn't be sent to fish in rough seas just because the pros have larger boats that can handle the waves.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Sea Buck - 2008/06/04 19:51

You are right Wingnut. A decision based on each division makes sense. I agree that this type of decision based on pro or am would probably make the most people happy.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by jswinehart - 2008/06/04 21:04

How does the division that one fishes in make it any safer in nasty weather? There are 36 foot boats in both the am and pro divisions. How do you tell a 36 foot boat in the am division they can not fish but a 36' boat in the pros can?

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Wingnut - 2008/06/04 21:21

jswinehart wrote:

How does the division that one fishes in make it any safer in nasty weather? There are 36 foot boats in both the am and pro divisions. How do you tell a 36 foot boat in the am division they can not fish but a 36' boat in the pros can?

First question: Professionals are supposed to be just that, professionals. As it is now, anyone that pays the entry fee can fish the pro side. To my understanding this won't be the case in the future and the pro side will consist entirely of seasoned captains that, as a whole, will be able to fish in nastier weather with reasonable safety. Safety is a lot more about a captain's ability than his boat size.

Second question: Because he is by definition an amateur.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by ghoutteman - 2008/06/04 23:16

consisting of seasoned captains? For the foreseeable future there will be requirements that force you to fish pro, licensed captain, etc... but no requirements that would disqualify you.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Wingnut - 2008/06/05 00:03

ghoutteman wrote:

consisting of seasoned captains? For the foreseeable future there will be requirements that force you to fish pro, licensed captain, etc... but no requirements that would disqualify you.

Misunderstanding on my part I guess.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Rawhide - 2008/06/05 08:58

Thunderduck wrote:

I believe the best and only choice was made in a fast and safe manner.

Capt. Willis

It certainly was Willis. You guys did a fantastic job.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by CITM - 2008/06/05 20:25

I like Wingnut's ideas about delays and cancellations for the most part. I don't like the idea of adding to the end of the fishing period - it's hard enough to find team members sometimes. I can't imagine telling someone I need them from 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM, especially on summer weekends with weddings, open houses, etc. I imagine this could create problems with observers as well. I do think when there is a delay, if there is any chance that the conditions will improve enough to fish, it should be delayed an hour at a time until you can't get the minimum 4 hour (or whatever) fishing period in. We all planned to be fishing, what difference does it make if we sit at the dock and wait?

I wasn't so sure about the call to fish Saturday in Grand Haven but it turned out to be a good one. However, I think communication with weather boats should be done by cell phone if a decision like that is being made.

Gordy

Caught in the Moment

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Early Bird - 2008/07/03 14:00

Quick two cents. With the technology today we know far in advance (for the most part) if a storm is going to hit the port. A timely decision should be made well in advance of the start of a tournament if it needs to be delayed, not when the storm is within a few minutes from hitting. I think safety should be foremost in our minds.

Ray V

Early Bird

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Flat Rate - 2008/07/04 12:47

Well I don't know quite what you guys want. At Grand Haven this year the tournament committee was tracking the storm earlier and had input from others as well and it looked like the LITTLE storm was going to go north of us, at the very end it tailed a little bit farther south than was predicted. I think they did a good job on the weather call and it would have been worse to call everyone back in while the storm hit. They did a poll of the weather boats and they decided to stay out, what more can you ask? Where do you draw the line on delaying the tournament or canceling it? A lot of boats would be very comfortable in fishing in 3 to 7 footers and others would be miserable but what/who makes the decision, small craft advisories, gale force winds, severe thunderstorm warnings, tornado warning, thunderstorm watch or chance of showers. A lot of latitude there and I think as long as the tournament committee works with the same guidelines all the time, that we leave it to the tournament/weather committees and quit trying to be arm chair quarterbacks because what I think is safe or unsafe is probably different than what others may think. Is all I want to do is fish and have fun doing it, if I feel it is unsafe for my boat or crew then I have a personal responsibility to not go out or to return early. If I feel it is too rough and I don't go out, then give me the option of a refund on my entry fee but don't have all the others not fish if they feel it is safe for them. I may be in the minority on this but that's my feelings on the subject.

=====

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by 1 MAINIAC - 2008/07/04 16:52

Flat Rate I think the committee people do a great job and there is no way to make everyone happy. Personally I think the choice to fish or not finally comes down to the boat captain. I do think there should be some basic weather guidelines on what will cause a delay or cancel to the start of a event. However the only thing I have disagreed with is the shortened events with mandatory run in times forceing guys to run in fast in weather determined to be too rough to fish in. That to me is not only unsafe it is not very fair if you give me 6 hours to fish and I plan my trip based on that then let me decide if I need to shorten it due to weather by all means let me know if there is something coming that I need to be aware of. I don't think you can let guys demand a refund for bad weather based on individual choices if the event is canceled due to weather than either offer a blow date or a refund and try again I do fully understand that reshedualing is not always possible so be it there are things that happen that we can't change every day.

Let me just say this to all committee members THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO even the stuff I don't always agree with. Cause I know full well that I am also one person that you can't always make happy and I can live with that. I know I have said a few unpopular things here and I hope no one takes it personally. However it is the 4th of July and I want everyone to take this personally. HAPPY 4TH OF JULY AND HAVE A SAFE AND FUN YEAR FISHING.

TIGHT LINES

JIM

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Early Bird - 2008/07/04 21:29

Flat Rate, we were asked our opinion and gave it. The GHOC is a awesome tournament and very well run, still think the wrong decision was made. My opinion on weather calls is not a reflection how the tournament is run its simply my opinion on an issue. Happy 4th of July to all.

Ray v

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by salmonhead - 2008/07/17 14:16

Since both days of Muskegon got cancelled, I have a thought. Hind sight is 20/20 and I truely feel the committe in muskegon made the best decisions with the information they had at the time. However, looking back now, leads me to a thought. Instead of calling Saturday early, no matter how bad it looks, delay as long as possible, even if that means changing the fishing times and weigh in. As it tuned out, Saturday was pretty fishable by 9:30 or 10 and we went out. Sunday is a different story as many people have a long way to travel to get home. So I guess on Saturdays delay delay and hope for a window to open up later in the day. on Sundays, delay until 4 hours from the designated weigh in and then call it so the awards can commence on time. For me and my crew, on Saturday, we wouldnt care if we fished 2-6 pm if that is what it took to get in 4 hours of fishing. In the grand scheme of things, the entry money is small change compared to the fuel of pre-fishing, and time off work for all the crew. All in all, I think the correct decisons were made.

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Early Bird - 2008/07/17 19:02

Well said Paul.

Ray V
Early Bird

Re:Weather Calls and Cancellations

Posted by Lures - 2008/07/30 16:19

This year has been a difficult year with regards to weather and fishing tournaments. I totally agree with Early Bird and Salmonhead. Safety has to be the #1 concern of all!

Respectfully submitted.

=====