

LOCALNEWS

Same fun, fundraiser — a different day

RLSC derby on Saturday, Feb. 22

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

It'll feature the same fish, the same ice and the same fun, but Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club's largest fundraiser will be featured on a different day of the week this year than in the past.

With more traffic to businesses and other places in Borderland, the RLSC's 29th Annual Family Ice Fishing Derby & Raffle will be held Saturday, Feb. 22.

"We just figured more people would be able to come out and enjoy the day," said Dave Peterson, longtime club member and one of the organizers of the event. "And this allows people to do what they do on Sunday."

The derby takes place from 1 to 4 p.m. on Rainy Lake's Sand Bay. To take part in the derby, anglers must have a \$10 raffle ticket, a 2013 fishing license and enter the ice from Rainy Lake Marine Service, off County Road 20. Peterson noted that ice road plower Travis Thompson has waived the need for ice road permits that day.

Hundreds of people are drawn to the derby each year in an effort to support the club's efforts, which include projects for the betterment of Rainy Lake and the fish that swim in it.

Proceeds from the derby go to funding fish habitat improvements in the area.



Shane Thramer, 15, of International Falls, registers a crappie in last year's derby with volunteer Ben Vondra clipping the tail fin to indicate the fish has been caught and registered in the derby.

"That's basically what the club is about," said Peterson. "Anybody that enjoys Rainy Lake is going to support it, that's a given if you care about the lake. It's pretty well supported."

The derby also helps to provide money for youth scholarships and to maintain the Rod Smith Memorial Kids Fishing Pond off County Road 93.

Derby prizes range from top raffles of \$5,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000 cash, plus a variety of prizes, that are awarded throughout the day.

"These days, when things might be a little tighter, people seem to really appreciate getting cash," Peterson said of the top draw prizes. "And we also have a lot of nice prizes, too."

Peterson said the club pays for the prizes itself. "We don't ask for donated prizes anymore," he said.

"Businesses get hit too hard. Our business community is very generous."

And while you need not be present to win, many ticket holders seek out the festive atmosphere at the derby as a break to the winter's icy grip. Warmer temperatures feature hot dog and other roasts on portable grills, impromptu games of football, and some of the best fort-building material around. And those forts become a natural draw from the many kids and dogs that seem to burn off energy built up from the long, frigid months of winter.

Banding together on the ice also builds a camaraderie among anglers. While some take the event very seriously, others are perhaps on the ice for the first time this season.

No lines may be in the water until 1 p.m. The Rainy Lake slot limit is enforced



STAFF PHOTOS BY LAUREL BEAGER

Alyssa Wolden, 3, watches her bobber during her first RLSC derby in 2013.

during the derby. Walleye measuring between 17 inches and 28 inches must be released and will not be accepted for registration.

Peterson encouraged people to help one another out if someone needs a hole or two drilled. And, he said, if a neighbor on the ice isn't available to do it, he'd be happy to drill some holes. Just come to the derby headquarters and ask.

Peterson urged anglers to avoid drilling holes in the Sand Bay ice roads. The

heavy weight of the snow causes flooding of the ice roads when holes are drilled in them.

Fish must be registered at the derby circle. Fish will be registered in one of four categories — walleye/sauger, burbot, northern pike, and alternative species. Anglers may enter one fish in each category, at which time they will be given a ticket. After the derby is completed, a random drawing will be held for the prizes.

Food and drink will again

be offered on the ice by the Lion's Club Food Wagon.

Children under age 16 will receive a free hot dog ticket, but must be accompanied by an adult to get the hot dog.

Meanwhile, Peterson says the fishing—or did he mean catching?—"has been hot" on Sand Bay.

"You can fish using anything from a plain hook and minnow to a jig," he said. "There will be a lot of fish caught at the derby. There always is."

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