

Maine's largest ice fishing derby shatters attendance records

The Long Lake Ice Fishing Derby, the largest event of its kind in Maine, shattered its attendance record this year, with a total of 2,184 registered participants, up more than 300 from the last derby.

Last year's derby had 1,852 registered participants, which also broke the record from the previous year of 1,806.

This derby featured the largest ever cash purse at \$25,000, which is the maximum allowed by the state Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, according to derby organizer Paul Bernier. The event offered \$70,000 in prizes, including an ATV and an ice shack.

First place winners in the adult division were Jason Landeen with a 6 pound and 12.9 ounce salmon, Camden Huck with a 19 pound and 1.7 ounce togue, and Shelly Daigle with a two pound and 0.3 ounce brook trout.

Although the event is named after Long Lake, participants can fish in a total of 10 lakes in the St. John Valley region. Bernier said the derby brought in fishers from 20 different states, including California, Arizona, Canada, and every state in New England.

A press release issued by the derby on a Sunday afternoon also recognized the event's benefits to the northern Maine economy, as it led to an influx of business at hotels, restaurants, gas stations and other businesses.

That's on top of its charitable donations, with the derby donating to initiatives such as the Edgar J. Paradis Cancer Fund — which benefits families of local cancer patients who have to travel to see

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"We can't thank everyone that supports this derby enough," Bernier said. "The hundreds of businesses that each year sponsor us, our registration outlets, weigh station partners, the volunteers that work hundreds of hours to organize, and the over 2,000 participants that come and enjoy the event each year."

When all of this is said and done, the Derby organizers are requesting this committee to up the "Cash Purse" up to \$50,000.

This amount would increase attendance and participation, benefiting the Edgar J. Paradis Cancer Fund substantially.

I can answer any questions you may have.