

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**BASS Announces Schedule for 2009 Bassmaster Opens; New Northern Division Highlights Diverse Schedule
Three Divisions Provide Direct Avenues to Bassmaster Classic, Bassmaster Elite Series**

The 2009 Bassmaster Opens, comprised of three qualifying series in a Southern, Central and revamped Northern division, each with three events, will visit diverse and productive fisheries for a total of nine events in Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Louisiana and Texas, BASS announced today.

BASS has adjusted its qualifying berths with the addition of the Northern Open division, which will visit Maryland's Chesapeake Bay, New York's Lake Champlain and Ohio's Lake Erie. As in past years, the Open format will provide direct qualifying avenues into the Bassmaster Elite Series and the Bassmaster Classic.

In 2009, the top two pro competitors from each of three divisions will advance to the Bassmaster Classic and the top seven pro anglers to the Bassmaster Elite Series. The points system for the Opens that will determine Elite Series and Classic qualifiers will mirror the Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year standings used in the Elite Series.

"We continue to enjoy high participation levels in the Open circuits and we get great feedback on the format," said Jamie Wilkinson, senior director of event operations and business development, BASS. "The Opens have certainly developed into a viable feeder system to our top level of competition, the Bassmaster Elite Series."

A number of anglers, including 2008 Advance Auto Parts Rookie of the Year Bobby Lane of Lakeland, Fla., and 2007 Bassmaster Classic champion Boyd Duckett of Demopolis, Ala., have qualified for the Elite Series via the Opens and achieved considerable success at the highest level. Lane qualified for the Elites through the 2007 Bassmaster Southern Opens on his way to a dominating first Elite Series season, throughout which he lead wire to wire in the rookie standings.

Mike McClelland of Bella Vista, Ark., who finished third in the 2008 Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year standings, feels that the Opens are the ultimate avenue and preparation tool for the Elites.

"For an angler looking to advance to the Elite Series, the Opens afford you the type of competition and preparation that you need to be successful," said McClelland, a six-time BASS winner. "They are a fantastic experience, especially for those looking to transition and get a taste of the top levels of tournament fishing."

As in 2008, the Opens will feature an all-cash payout for pros. The payout will be based on 175 boaters and will adjust to the actual field size. Pros will compete for more than \$190,000 in cash, with the winner receiving \$45,000. Co-anglers will continue to compete at the Open level for more than \$70,000 in cash and merchandise, including the top prize of a boat/motor package valued at \$32,000.

Full fields will fish the first two days of competition, and the top 30 will advance to the third and final day. The best cumulative three-day total will win the event.

The Southern Open circuit launches Jan. 29-31 on Florida's Harris Chain of Lakes out of Tavares, Fla., which will serve as the host city. The Harris Chain was the site of an Elite victory for McClelland in 2008 and has hosted more than 10 BASS events. McClelland won the season-opening Elite event with a four-day total of 59 pounds, 2 ounces.

For the second Southern Open, April 30-May 2, anglers head to Wheeler Lake and Decatur, Ala., site of the seventh Elite event in 2008. Jeremy Starks of Charleston, W.Va., edged out four-time Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year Kevin VanDam with a four-day total of 78 pounds, 10 ounces. The Decatur Morgan County Convention and Visitor's Bureau will serve as the host and Wheeler will also serve as the tournament waters April 2-5 for the Dixie Duel, the third Elite event in 2009.

Southern Open anglers will close the circuit Oct. 22-24 on Santee Cooper Reservoir out of Manning, S.C., an event hosted by the Clarendon County Chamber of Commerce. Elite Series angler Preston Clark of Palatka, Fla., set a BASS record in 2006 on Santee Cooper – which has since been broken twice – for the four-day heaviest catch when he won a Bassmaster Elite Series event there.

The Northern Opens will kick off April 16-18 on the Chesapeake Bay hosted by Cecil County, Md., marking the first BASS event there since the 1991 Bassmaster Classic, when Ken Cook scored a victory.

From Maryland, anglers travel north to the city of Plattsburgh, N.Y., which will host an Aug. 20-22 competition on smallmouth paradise Lake Champlain. The fishery is also slated to host a Bassmaster Elite Series event in 2009, the Aug. 6-9 Empire Chase. The final event in the Northern division is Sept. 24-26 on Lake Erie out of Sandusky, Ohio. Erie has hosted eight BASS events and is set for its third Elite Series event in 2010.

For the Central Opens, anglers will start in Louisiana, the host state of the 2009 Bassmaster Classic. The first Central division event, March 5-7 out of Many, La. and hosted by the Sabine Parish Tourist Commission, will be on tournament favorite Toledo Bend Reservoir. Toledo has hosted more than 10 BASS events, and the Central Open will be the first BASS tournament after the 2009 Classic, set for Feb. 20-22 on the Red River out of Shreveport-Bossier City.

From Louisiana, anglers will move over one state to Sam Rayburn Reservoir and Jasper, Texas, which will serve as the host destination on Sept. 3-5. Rayburn is another tournament hot spot, and it last hosted a BASS event in 2006. To finalize the division and the entire Open circuit, anglers will head back to Louisiana to Morgan City and the Atchafalaya Basin on Nov. 5-7. Atchafalaya has hosted three BASS events, including one Open in 2003. The Cajun Coast Visitors & Convention Bureau will host the event.

Registration for BASS members begins at 9 a.m. ET Thursday, Nov. 13, but early registration is available for Federation Nation, BASS Insider and Lifetime members as well as certain pre-qualified anglers. Interested participants can sign up at www.Bassmaster.com or call 1-877-BASS-USA.

For more information, contact BASS Communications at (407) 566-2208 or visit www.Bassmaster.com. Visit www.espnmediazone.com for ESPN's latest releases, schedules and other news, plus photos, video and audio clips and more

2009 Bassmaster Southern Open Division

Jan. 29-31	Harris Chain of Lakes	Tavares, Fla.
April 30-May 2	Wheeler Lake	Decatur, Ala.
Oct. 22-24	Santee Cooper Reservoir	Manning, S.C.

2009 Bassmaster Northern Open Division

April 16-18	Chesapeake Bay	Cecil County, Md.
Aug. 20-22	Lake Champlain	Plattsburgh, N.Y.
Sept. 24-26	Lake Erie	Sandusky, Ohio

2009 Bassmaster Central Open Division

March 5-7	Toledo Bend	Many, La.
Sept. 3-5	Sam Rayburn Reservoir	Jasper, Texas
Nov. 5-7	Atchafalaya Basin	Morgan City, La.

Bassmaster Open sponsors include Toyota Tundra, Advance Auto Parts, Berkley, Lowrance, Mercury, Purolator, Skeeter, Yamaha, OPTIMA Batteries and Triton Boats.

About BASS: For 40 years, BASS has served as the authority on bass fishing. With its considerable multi-media platforms and expansive tournament trail, BASS is guided by its mission to serve all fishing fans. Through its industry-leading publications *Bassmaster Magazine*, *BASS Times* and *Fishing Tackle Retailer* and comprehensive Web properties in Bassmaster.com and ESPNOuthdoors.com, the organization is committed to delivering content true to the lifestyle. Additionally, television programming on ESPN2 continues to provide relevant content – from tips and techniques to in-depth tournament coverage – to passionate audiences.

The organization oversees the prestigious Bassmaster tournament trail, which includes the Bassmaster Elite Series, Bassmaster Opens, Women's Bassmaster Tour and the Bassmaster Classic, the ultimate celebration of competitive fishing. Through its grassroots network, the BASS Federation Nation, BASS sanctions more than 20,000 events annually.

BASS also offers an array of services to its more than 500,000 members while spearheading progressive, positive change on issues related to conservation and water access. The organization is headquartered in Celebration, Fla.

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