

Feb. 15, 2017

Greenville, Lake Hartwell To Host 2018 Bassmaster Classic

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Some lakes are known for how deep they are.

Some are known for the type of structure and baitfish they have.

Others are known for serving as the sites of some of the greatest moments in professional bass fishing history — and one of those from that latter column has been chosen as the home of next year's GEICO Bassmaster Classic presented by DICK'S Sporting Goods.

The 48th annual world championship of professional bass fishing will be held March 16-18, 2018, in Greenville and on Lake Hartwell at Anderson, S.C., it was announced today in a news conference in Greenville's Bon Secours Wellness Arena, which will be the site of daily weigh-in ceremonies.

“The opportunity to host the Bassmaster Classic for the second time in four years solidifies the Upstate of South Carolina as a destination, nationally, for bass fishing,” said Neil Paul, executive director, Visit Anderson. “Lake Hartwell is a tremendous natural resource and continues to gain national attention as a championship fishery, and we welcome anglers from all levels to enjoy its greatness. Our Anderson County team, our partnership with Greenville, support from our regional partners and the state of South Carolina have proven vital to our overall success where we continue to experience returns in residual tourism from hosting the 2015 Bassmaster Classic.”

“GEICO is proud to continue its successful partnership with the Bassmaster Classic,” said Ted Ward, vice president of marketing for GEICO, title sponsor of the event. “The Classic offers a great platform for us to engage and connect with a growing bass fishing audience, who are some of the most passionate and loyal fans in all of sports.”

The event will mark the third time the “Super Bowl of Bass Fishing” will have been held here. As in previous visits in 2008 and 2015, fishing competition will take place on Lake Hartwell, a 56,000-acre impoundment on the Savannah, Tugaloo and Seneca rivers along the South Carolina/Georgia border.

Takeoffs will be from Green Pond Landing and Event Center, a modern, \$3.1 million launch facility in Anderson, S.C., that was completed just in time for the 2015 Classic and was built to accommodate that and similarly large bass tournaments.

“Nothing says ‘I love you’ more than a repeat customer,” said Chris Stone, President and CEO of VisitGreenvilleSC. “Seeing the wild enthusiasm outdoorsmen have for the Bassmaster Classic has made this a must-attend road trip for area anglers. The entire upstate will have its collective arms wide open to welcome back our friends in March 2018.”

The fan-favorite Bassmaster Classic Outdoors Expo presented by DICK'S Sporting Goods will again be held in the 250,000-square-foot TD Convention Center in Greenville March 16-18.

“Bringing the Bassmaster Classic back to the Upcountry of South Carolina was an easy decision,” said Bruce Akin, CEO of B.A.S.S., which conducts the event. “Despite record-cold temperatures when we were there in February 2015, fishing fans turned out in force. Our attendance of 103,000 those three days marked a 40 percent increase over the 2008 Classic and was one of our biggest turnouts ever.

“We expect next year's Classic to be even bigger and better — and warmer,” Akin added, noting that the fishing competition will take place almost a month later in 2018 than during 2015.

Perhaps no Classic in history has shown the strength of a fishery like that 2015 event, when temperatures made such a monumental dip. It was just 9 degrees for the opening morning of the tournament — a morning that featured the National Anthem being performed by South Carolina angler Casey Ashley — and competition was delayed with the anglers' safety in mind.

Despite the conditions, there were still multiple five-bass limits of 20 pounds or more brought across the scales at the Bon Secours Wellness Center Arena, and Ashley needed an average of more than 16.6 pounds per day to win.



Casey's winning catch of 20 pounds, 3 ounces, was just a little heavier than the 49-7 needed by Texas pro Alton Jones to win here in 2008.

"It was really just an amazing thing to watch," said Trip Weldon, B.A.S.S. tournament director. "The conditions were tough — some of the toughest we've seen for a B.A.S.S. event, especially a Classic — and the lake still produced so many good fish. It's a credit to the fishery and to the quality of our anglers — and it shouldn't surprise anyone that we've decided to go back."

After that 2015 Classic, which was held Feb. 20-22, B.A.S.S. elected to back up the date for the 2016 event on Oklahoma's Grand Lake O' the Cherokees to March 4-6. This year's Classic, which is scheduled for March 24-26 on Lake Conroe near Houston, Texas, should also be warmer.

The economic impact of the Classic on host communities each of the last few years has averaged more than \$24 million, according to independent research by local hosts, and coverage of the event by more than 250 registered media representatives will continue to focus attention on Lake Hartwell, Anderson, Greenville and other Upcountry destinations.

For more information about the 2018 GEICO Bassmaster Classic presented by DICK'S Sporting Goods, go to Bassmaster.com; visitgreenvillesc.com; scprt.com and visitanderson.com.

About Greenville, SC

Nestled into the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Greenville, South Carolina has combined traditional southern charm, stunning natural beauty and an unexpected contemporary cool to create one of America's hottest emerging destinations and fastest growing cities. From a revitalized downtown ranked among "America's Ten Best" by *Forbes* Magazine to downtown Greenville's one-of-a-kind Liberty Bridge, quaint shops, boutiques, and fabulous restaurants to a world-class collection of museums, galleries, and theaters to some of the most beautiful lakes, rivers and mountains in the world, Greenville, South Carolina is everything they say it is and more. Check us out and see for yourself why we're not just any Greenville - we're THAT Greenville.

About VisitGreenvilleSC

VisitGreenvilleSC is a non-profit, economic development organization that is responsible for promoting the greater Greenville area as an attractive destination for meetings, conventions, tradeshow, sporting events, and leisure travelers. As the official sales and marketing organization of the City and County of Greenville, the goal of VisitGreenvilleSC is to increase visitor-generated revenue from local, regional and national markets, thereby strengthening Greenville's economy.

About Visit Anderson

From its early beginnings at the frontier of the U.S. to its textile heyday and beyond, Anderson has been a bright part of the upcountry of South Carolina. Located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and on the shores of Lake Hartwell, nearly 200,000 people call Anderson County their home. Find a perfect home away from home, with all the variety that Anderson has to offer, we are sure you will find exactly what you are looking for. While you are here, enjoy the genuine hospitality that is pure Anderson.

About B.A.S.S.

B.A.S.S. is the worldwide authority on bass fishing and keeper of the culture of the sport, providing cutting edge content on bass fishing whenever, wherever and however bass fishing fans want to use it. Headquartered in Birmingham, Ala., the 500,000-member organization's fully integrated media platforms include the industry's leading magazines (*Bassmaster* and *B.A.S.S. Times*), website (Bassmaster.com), television show (*The Bassmasters* on ESPN2), social media programs and events. For more than 45 years, B.A.S.S. has been dedicated to access, conservation and youth fishing.

The Bassmaster Tournament Trail includes the most prestigious events at each level of competition, including the Bassmaster Elite Series, Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Open Series, Academy Sports + Outdoors B.A.S.S. Nation presented by Magellan, Carhartt Bassmaster College Series presented by Bass Pro Shops, Costa Bassmaster High School Series presented by DICK'S Sporting Goods, Toyota Bonus Bucks Bassmaster Team Championship and the ultimate celebration of competitive fishing, the GEICO Bassmaster Classic presented by DICK'S Sporting Goods.

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