



Alaska Department of Fish & Game – Division of Sport Fish

Guide Licensing and Logbook Meetings – Wasilla Meeting Summary

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Sport Fish (division) held a public meeting December 15th, 2015 in Wasilla. The purpose of the meeting was to engage in a dialogue with sport fishing business owners, guides and others (stakeholders) about the guide registration and logbook programs and solicit input on how they might be improved. House Bill 41 (HB 41), introduced during the 2015 legislative session, was also discussed at the meetings. If adopted, HB 41 would re-establish sport fish business and guide license and vessel registration requirements and modify fees that sunset in December 2014.

Stakeholder attendance included five freshwater and one saltwater guide, a legislator, and three legislative staff members. Those present received a brief overview of program history and general requirements, importance of data collected through the logbook program, and the benefits of an established guide licensing program. The purpose of this document is to summarize the general concepts and ideas that were presented by the stakeholders during the public meeting held in Wasilla.

Licensing Program

Passage of HB 41 would result in an increased fee for a sport fishing operator/business license from \$100 to \$200 and a guide license from \$50 to \$100. The increased fees are projected to generate approximately \$411,000 in revenue for the division. All license fee revenues remain with the division and fully fund the administration of the guide licensing and logbook programs, which currently costs approximately \$383,000. Specific to the 2016 season, registration and logbooks will be similar to 2015. If HB 41 passes, fees will not likely be implemented until 2017.

Several stakeholders commented on the noticeable impacts of not having a sport fishing guide licensing program in place in 2015. Substantially more freshwater guiding activity was observed in the Matanuska Valley and Susitna River drainage in 2015, and while many of the “new” sport fishing guides may have been registered it was believed that many did not have logbooks or current vessel registrations. The licensing program and adoption of HB 41 would protect the guiding industry and sport fishing clients from unscrupulous guides and result in an overall better experience for anglers.

Logbook Program

One reason the logbook program was implemented was to obtain more accurate and timely information on effort and harvest for Chinook salmon and halibut at a time when guided effort was increasing. The Board of Fisheries and the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) were both interested in logbook reporting as a means to provide more accurate and timely guided fishery information.

The division provides logbook data to the NPFMC and it has become the primary data used for management decisions impacting the guided sport fishery by the International Pacific Halibut Commission, NPFMC and National Marine Fisheries Service. Chinook salmon guided use data has also been used in Chinook salmon treaty discussions and domestic allocations in Southeast Alaska fisheries.

Stakeholders inquired whether the cost of the logbook program was justified and whether the data was really used for inseason management. Palmer Area management staff confirmed that logbook sheets were reviewed as they were submitted to area offices. The logbook data provided the fisheries manager an index of effort and harvest that was used in conjunction with other assessment data to make inseason management decisions.



Alaska Department of Fish & Game – Division of Sport Fish

Guide Licensing and Logbook Meetings – Wasilla Meeting Summary

There was considerable discussion on the reporting timeline for logbooks. The current reporting requirement of one week was difficult for guides to comply with when on long float trips in remote areas. Staff explained that a waiver on the reporting deadline could be granted in special circumstances and on a case-by-case basis. Stakeholders suggested implementing more lenient reporting timelines and to add language to HB 41 that formally requires the department to establish the waiver process and put the waiver process language into regulation.

Sport fishing licenses can now be purchased online. Stakeholders expressed interest in the division's progress towards electronic reporting and logbooks. Development of electronic logbooks and reporting capabilities is in progress. Electronic reporting was tested by Kenai River freshwater guides in 2015 and a pilot program is planned in 2016.

When fully implemented, the electronic logbook program should allow guides to use a downloadable program and mobile device in conjunction with electronic sport fishing licenses that could be scanned by the guide to upload angler information into the program. The program will upload data via the web. Paper logbooks will still be made available where electronic logbooks would be problematic and for operators who prefer that method. Only one method (paper or electronic) will be required. The department will be soliciting volunteers from among freshwater and saltwater guides to pilot electronic logbooks in 2016.

Penalties and Enforcement

Stakeholders expressed concern they could receive citations for not completing logbook sheets at the end of each day during a multiple day fishing trip due to logistics and the challenges of completing logbooks when some clients are done fishing for the day and others continue to fish while the guide is dealing with camp chores. The representative from the Department of Public Safety, Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) explained that the goal of the logbook program is to collect accurate information and not generate additional enforcement opportunities. Each potential violation scenario is handled on a case-by-case basis; specific offenses must be committed "knowingly" to warrant a citation. Operators/guides are only responsible for violations committed by a client if they aid in the commission of the offense or permit the offense to occur without attempting to prevent it and then not reporting the violation. Reporting timelines are set out under regulations, and not under the provisions of HB 41.