

## **Big Game Commercial Services Board - 2018 summary**

**Larry Van Daele**

**January 2019**

The Big Game Commercial Services Board was created by the Legislature “...for the purposes of licensing and regulating the activities of providers of commercial services to big game hunters in the interest of the state’s wildlife resources...” (AS 08.54.591(a)). The Board consists of nine members, including two active guides, two transporters, two private landowners, two members of the public, and one Board of Game member. In 2017, I was assigned to be the Board of Game representative. All of the seats on the Board are currently filled.

The Board’s duties include developing and administering guide examinations, overseeing guide applications and authorizations, assuring guides and transporters have appropriate permission from landowners, establishing codes of ethics, imposing appropriate disciplinary sanctions, and adopting procedural and substantive regulations (AS 08.54.600). The Board meets at least twice a year in person and periodically by teleconference – all meetings are advertised and open to the public, except for executive sessions. Funding for Board activities, including legal costs and associated support by staff from the Division of Corporations, Businesses and Professional Licenses, is provided by license fees collected from guides and transporters. There is one investigator assigned to the Board, one occupational license examiner (vacant) and one Executive Director who is also responsible for two other professional Boards.

Primary highlights during the past year were a comprehensive re-write of the guide examination, recovery from fiscal challenges, and development of regulatory revisions.

The exam re-write was long overdue, as many of the questions were out-of-date and/or confusing. It was a large undertaking made possible by a dedicated group of volunteers. The Board approved a final draft of the exam last month and the first test using the new exam will be conducted on January 24 & 25, 2019 in Anchorage. Even though tremendous effort was put into making it as fair and correct as possible, we recognize that it is a work-in-progress and we are willing to make modifications as needed.

The mandate that the Big Game Commercial Services Board be self-sustaining with funding from the industry that it oversees is a big challenge, especially when legal fees for services provided by the Department of Law have to be paid. In FY2013, those fees were partially responsible for the Board having a deficit of over a million dollars. The Legislature gave strict instructions to rectify this situation. Through a combination of guides and transporters voluntarily increasing the fees they pay, making greater use of Consent Agreements instead of court cases, and severe belt-tightening by staff and Board members, the Board now has a surplus of about \$100,000.

Regulations promulgated by the Board go through a much more convoluted process than we use in the Board of Game, often taking years from the time of inception to the time of implementation. A list of regulatory changes currently in progress is provided below. In

addition to those proposals, last year the Board liberalized the definition of a “qualified medical condition” to allow a registered guide to assign someone else to be in the field with a client so that the guide could assist their spouse/partner during late pregnancy and birth.

Our next meeting will be January 22 – 24, 2019 in Anchorage. This meeting was originally scheduled for December 2018, but the earthquake altered those plans.

<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Main Topic</b>	<b>Initial Review by the board</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
12 AAC 920(b)	Hunting, Guiding & Practical Experience	December 2016	As of November 2018: Back to the board
12 AAC 920(c)	Hunting, Guiding & Practical Experience	December 2016	As of November 2018: Back to the board
12 AAC 75.920(e)	Hunting, Guiding & Practical Experience	December 2016	As of November 2018: Back to the board
12 AAC 75.260(e)	RGO Contract Requirements	December 2016	As of November 2018: Back to the board-need to change as recommended by DOL or let the proposal go.
12 AAC 75.400(a)	Transport Activity Reports	December 2016	As of November 2018: Back to the board
12 AAC 75.230	Guide Use Are Registration	July 26th 2018	As of November 2018: Back to the board