

Big Game Commercial Services Board Report for the Board of Game – 21 JAN 21

Current Projects

1. Jason Bunch has replaced Henry Tiffany as Chairman of the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB). Mr. Tiffany's term ends March 1, 2020. We would like to thank him for his service and leadership to our State guide licensing program.
2. The board has officially come out of dept. We are entering into the third quarter of a non-licensing year with adequate funding to support the program. A financial review will be placed on the board agenda for the March 23-25 meeting.
3. Special regulations concerning the spring peninsula brown bear season are in place. They can be found under 12 AAC 75.230(g). BGCSB staff are prepared for potential guide use area registration hurdles associated with it and have been answering questions from licensees. We don't foresee many issues due to the timely manner in which it was put in place. Good job and thank you to the BOG for leading that endeavor.
4. The board passed 3-year Guide Use Area (GUA) registration requirements. 1 and 2-year registration is no longer available. The change is intended to reduce administrative workload and increase consistent use on state land. GUA's can still be changed at the end of the year, however; there will be no refunds when changed before the end of the 3-year registration.
5. The board approved initial assistant guide and transporter license tests implemented at the beginning of the year. There is a subcommittee currently discussing an option that would mandate all licensees complete a refresher course of statutes and regulations during bi-annual license renewal. This project was started to increase education to reduce Dept of Public Safety, BGCSB Investigations and Dept. of Law workload for administrative (paperwork) violations. Their next meeting is Jan. 26 in hopes of finalizing a proposal for the March meeting.
6. BGCSB Staff is prepared for auditing the use of the Unique Verification Code (UVC) system in Alaska's Big Game Drawing this February. Although not granted to date, the board will continue to request ADF&G further support these efforts by providing the draw results to the Dept. of Commerce staff member performing the audit before the draw. The board will take up proposed regulation language to increase clarification of UVC requirements in March. Monthly emails and one hardcopy mailer have been sent to licensees in order to educate them on UVC requirements for the draw. Division policy for providing UVC's has been updated and consistently adhered to.
7. A subcommittee was formed to work on survivorship regulations or policy. They have met once to date and will meet again on Jan. 26
8. The board continues to work with the Forest Service on permitting in accordance with the MOU signed last year. The agreement has proven to be successful. It is a template we would like to implement with other agencies who play critical roles managing use of our public lands and the conservation of our wild game.

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9. The board has currently began fielding questions concerning permitting and statutes and regulations with DNR. We hope this will lead to some consistency within the two state agencies. Time will tell.
10. We started a monthly newsletter for licensing updates and notification via email. We are currently sending these newsletters via postal mail until March to garner email participation moving forward.
11. We have a few seats that need filled, Private Land Owner, Transporter and Registered Guide Outfitter. Pete Buiste has been renewed for another term as a public member.
12. Ongoing testing requirements review.
13. Ongoing regulations review.

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14. We have a disciplinary matrix review and a disciplinary education proposal in the works. We would like the professional development subcommittee to finish its work before moving forward.
15. Transporter regulations have largely been left un attended. We will be starting discussions concerning that part of our licensing program in March. There is no agenda at this time. We foresee a subcommittee being formed to begin the project.
16. Online training and testing program. We have models to implement this program. We have the funding to construct it. We are currently looking at the HOW. It is largely an IT project. We will be contacting the ADF&G IT department after the draw to begin working on this project.

The board held the December meeting via Zoom. We had over 50 participants with a great deal of public comment. It was largely a success. Most found it to be more efficient, provide more opportunity for public participation and in many ways more successful overall than “in-person” meetings. In the future we will look to provide the Zoom option even when meeting in person.

We successfully tested 11 applicants for registered guide licensure. Written exams where completed in person. Oral and practical exams where conducted via zoom. It was largely a success with no known degradation of the testing program.

Division staff support to the BGCSB is the best it has ever been. We are excited to have Thomas Bay (Licensing Examiner) and Renee Hoffard (Executive Administrator) with us. Renee’s position with the board was constructed last year by the Department of Commerce. Her competence, efficiency and passion has been crucial to the success of this board in the past year. We look forward to finally having consistency and moving forward with programs to ensure guide licensing remains as professional as can be.