



Guide Concession Program (GCP) Workgroup

July 20, 2023, at 9:00 AM via Zoom

Members: Jason Bunch, Chair of the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB); Registered Guide; DCCED
Christy Colles, Division Director, Mining, Land, and Water; DNR
Rick Green, Special Assistant; DFG
Coke Wallace, Master Guide

Absent: Ted Spraker, Public Member

Facilitator: Sara Chambers, DCCED Boards and Regulations Advisor

The meeting convened at 9:09 a.m. Many members of the public observed via Zoom.

Chair Bunch acknowledged that the Transporter discussion cancelled for the previous week would be rescheduled to July 27 (in addition to the Enforcement topic) and apologized for the cancellation. He reviewed several transporter regulations changes that were in progress by the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB) and would be publicly noticed in the near future. He mentioned the bag limit reduction for deer made recently by the Board of Game to address an overabundance of hunters in Kodiak. He mentioned that restricting transporters would reduce services to resident hunters, which the BGCSB wanted to avoid doing.

The workgroup discussed the need to ensure DFG and Board of Game are included in the development of a concession plan, especially if the concession proposal is piecemealed in areas and not implemented statewide. Workgroup members felt that reductions in sheep limits are inevitable. The goal today is to hear the public's concern.

Thor Stacey, Alaska Professional Hunters Association

He stated that conservation is a prominent concern. APHA looked forward to DFG's input on the conservation angle relating to concessions. He cited that the federal concession programs have been functioning well for several years. Guides participating in these program expect to be successful, so their applications reflect trophy quality, as well as high success rates. This leaves a surplus of game for resident hunters and to prioritize subsistence hunting. Guide behavior favors conservation to ensure continued success, especially in a concession model. The competition is greater outside of a concession area, which eats into to availability of game. APHA favors a concession program that provides a "soft landing" for concessionaires when a die-off happens, as it did in GMU 19C. The current process of the Board of Game setting reductions and cancelling hunts as a reaction is difficult for businesses. APHA recommended taking a more proactive management approach that would create a higher guarantee for hunters and clients. APHA believes a concession program would create that climate. A draw leaves the outcome to chance and is not desirable. The current model encourages unlimited resource use, which doesn't support wise conservation. He said he would provide written comment on these points.

Wayne Kubat

He believes bears are more durable than other big game animals. He has heard that guides and transporters who can't hunt in GMU 19C are just going somewhere else. He operates using a conservation-focused business model. There are options outside of concessions.

Spencer Pape

He appreciated those who have expressed concern about his operations in 19C. He had reduced his numbers of hunters up to 50% to conserve the Dall sheep population and is now unable to operate. His goals are to encourage sustainability of the resource.

Chris Zulinsky

He has observed that many hunters are simply greedy. Just like farming, sometimes there is drought, and sometimes there is bounty. Proactive management is needed and is not currently the Board of Game's way of operating. Limited entry is very important. Emergency closures are not helpful to sustain businesses.

Mr. Wallace made an observation that guides who are operating unethically may need peer pressure from fellow guides to change their behavior. Mr. Stacey stated that Mr. Zulinsky is a respected guide who worked ethically and responsibly but whose business was suffering because there are too many other guides in his area.

Chair Bunch suggested that workgroup members bring ideas to the next meeting on July 27 regarding Transporters and Enforcement.