

**From:** [Robert Fithian](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C. \(CED\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Ted Spraker](#)  
**Subject:** GCP Talking Points  
**Date:** Friday, January 20, 2023 12:04:22 PM  
**Attachments:** [DNR Guide Concession Development Talking Point1.doc](#)

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Dear Ms. Chambers,  
First of All, Thank You and Your Team Members on behalf of Alaska and Alaskan's like myself, for putting your big pants on and taking up the long needed Guide Concession Program.

When compared to our forestry, commercial fishing, mining, oil and gas, and agriculture industries', why Alaska has not already adopted a program to protect what many consider our most treasured natural resource from commercial exploitation represents a failure of stewardship. Both, for those of us who depend upon prudent and respectful stewardship of our wildlife, and most of all for our treasured wildlife resources, those who have no voices of their own.

Sorry for the heartfelt rant, please find attached my comments from this morning to share as you wish.

Please be strong, respectful and transparent with your tasking.

Note that when the existing GCP was shelved, it was due only to no available funding within DNR for implementation for two years. There simply was no money available to create new staff positions. When the SOA financial situation changed a bit for the good, traction for the program was challenged from the industry and the legislature. Note that when utilizing a similar concession fee of what service providers currently pay on Federal lands, the program will pay for itself and will provide revenue for SOA beyond cost. It will take funding to start but the positive revenue will soon follow implementation.

There has always been the question of where the program should be administered from. Please look carefully at what DCED can and cannot provide compared to DNR. Note that DNR has limited enforcement capability. There will have to be a foundational basis for the governing of the GCP.

Please feel free to reach out anytime.

As Always,  
Most Respectfully,

Bobby Fithian  
(907) 320-0228

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**From:** [Big Game Commercial Services Board \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C \(CED\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:22:35 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Al Furney <[alaska4496@windstream.net](mailto:alaska4496@windstream.net)>  
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 8:02 AM  
To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <[biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov](mailto:biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov)>  
Subject: Guide Concession

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At this time I do not feel like this would be of any benefit to our industry. At this time everyone works together and respects one another. This would only cause problems and animosity. I do not approve!

Al Furney  
Guide# 1048

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Big Game Commercial Services Board \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C \(CED\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide concessions  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:22:37 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Johnny Richardson <areyouready.adv@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:40 AM  
To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
Subject: Guide concessions

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I believe I understand what you're trying to accomplish with this GCP. My question has to do with BLM state selected lands. And how you plan to address this. I'm registered to guide in GUA's 22-07 and 21-01. The majority of this land is BLM land, but has state select land within its boundaries. I talked with BLM and they say this land has been in limbo for almost 40 years. But whose to say that one day they decide to convey it back over to the state. Then what happens to those of us who have permits with BLM? Now part of there application process is, they obtain permission from the state for us to guide on these state select lands but it is still BLM lands. This land has been in limbo for almost 40 years and who knows how long it will be before it's transferred over to the state. But I'd hate for this transfer to take place right before or even during the guiding season and we're out there commercial guiding on land we're not supposed to be on. Not sure if I'm overthinking this but just wanted to bring it to your attention so that it could be made aware of and be addressed. Unfortunately I'll be traveling on the 9th and won't be able to listen in on the meeting but thanks for hearing me.

Johnny Richardson  
Registered guide #140690

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Big Game Commercial Services Board \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C \(CED\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide concessions  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:22:46 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Horstman <nevacove@icloud.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:44 AM  
To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
Subject: Guide concessions

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I think Guide concessions {exclusive} are the only way industry can survive the user group is too big the games not being managed properly and we're continuing losing our resources at the expense of a few greedy people that are over hunting.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Big Game Commercial Services Board \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C \(CED\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: "Guide Concessions"  
**Date:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 8:53:05 AM  
**Attachments:** [2023 Guide Concession Comment.docx](#)

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**From:** Tyler Kuhn <[alaskanguide2017@gmail.com](mailto:alaskanguide2017@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 12:11 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
<[biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov](mailto:biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov)>  
**Subject:** "Guide Concessions"

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Please Let me know if you received this.

**From:** [Big Game Commercial Services Board \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C \(CED\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession  
**Date:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 8:52:41 AM

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**From:** Zach <zachbass29@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 6:03 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
<biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Guide Concession

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To Whom It May Concern,

Hello, my name is Zach Basmajian and I am writing in because I would like to provide my input on the proposed state land guide concession plan. I have been an assistant guide in the state for 5 years and I am hoping to obtain my registered guides license in the next year or two. As it stands, I struggle to see any benefit that will result from converting state land to a concession system. I also know that I am not alone, as everyone I've conversed with in the industry agrees with my sentiment. While there are many issues I see with this change in management, a few major ones come to mind.

As someone who is trying to advance in this field, it is clear that state concessions would only benefit the few who have enough money and connections to hire the best prospectus writer, have potential political influence over those reviewing these plans, and those who are well-established enough to get their initial "foot-in-the-door" and acquire as many concessions as they can in order to obtain a de-facto private Alaskan hunting lease. This plan would in turn dramatically decrease the number of people that will be able to operate in the future, effectively putting up a major barrier to entry for future generations due to decreasing access to public lands. This would also result in major decreases in state revenue due to less outfitters able to take non-resident clients simply because the state would "box-out" 90% of the guides from being able to operate in the manner they have been, which has been working fine throughout the state. The documentation suggests that a concession holder in good standing will be reissued a permit "non-competitively", so therefore, anyone fortunate enough to receive one on the first round of issuance would have it indefinitely unless they fall out of good standing? Not only would this effectively shut out subsequent generations of guides, but the loosely defined "good standing" measure is ripe to be used as a political weapon against a permit holder for reasons that may not otherwise warrant the revocation of the concession, simply to remove someone less preferred or connected, regardless of their land stewardship. The public land of Alaska is the definition of wilderness in America, and by creating concessions the state would essentially form a private club of which most people currently operating in the state would be excluded due to yet another ring of unnecessary regulation. Not to mention, further complicating and regulating these processes opens another avenue for which the anti-hunting/animal rights groups can and will find ways to hinder, limit and attack us all in the industry we cherish and share. This is not something that seems to align with the true American values of opportunity.

Secondly, I fail to see the benefits toward wildlife management in this scenario. I am aware that, while few and far between, there are occasional issues on particular swathes of state land between multiple outfitters, but when since the inception of wildlife and land management has a widespread geographical solution been the answer to an extremely localized problem? This would be a hazardous approach to take if we were discussing the active management of a particular game species. For example, the state will be culling brown bears in unit 17 to protect the struggling Mulchatna caribou herd, so should we also be culling bears in unit 20 or unit 9 just because there are too many in 17? A blanket approach to fix a problem that isn't really there for most people is never a good idea. Realistically, the vast majority of outfitters are already proper stewards of their game populations in their guide use areas, for to not be, one is a fool. Every outfit I have worked for wants to manage for healthy populations of game, never taking too many animals and allowing younger animals to mature. With the nature of the industry, this is also an insurance policy in retirement. For example, an outfit's value is based on the equipment, improvements to the land (if applicable) and most importantly, the track record of animals taken and resources properly managed in those camps. The concession system would devalue the sale of a camp to only those items physically owned by the outfit, and what is to stop a retiring guide from pillaging the animals in their area toward the end of their career? In fact, a concession system incentivizes it considering the outfitter has no control over who will receive the area after they retire, and if they can't sell a camp, why not overtake on every species you can for the last few years in order to maximize revenue since you no longer have the incentive to pass on a healthy, well-managed resource to the next person? When the state is in complete control of the land-use succession, there is no possible scenario where resources will be managed as well at the end of a person's tenure as opposed to the current system.

Overall, there are many issues with the proposal of state land concessions, and I think there are many that we have yet to even think of. It is something that feels wrong and I struggle to see any benefit to anyone who isn't connected or lucky enough to be one of the few at the top of the system. As someone who has education in biological sciences, as well as experience working in wildlife management for multiple state and federal agencies, I think this idea is wrong politically, environmentally and ideologically. Alaska is the last great wilderness we have as Americans, and it would be a shame to see it staked claim throughout in the guiding industry. All I ask is to have the same opportunity to continue my career in this industry as those before me, and hope to see these same opportunities remain for those who come after.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Zach Basmajian



Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing (CBPL)  
Alaska Board of Certified Real Estate Appraisers  
550 W 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Suite 1500  
Anchorage, AK. 99501

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
<[biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov](mailto:biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 8:53 AM  
**To:** Sather, Sara E (CED) <[sara.sather@alaska.gov](mailto:sara.sather@alaska.gov)>  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession Program

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**From:** Dave <[dave@biggamebigcountry.com](mailto:dave@biggamebigcountry.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 7:02 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
<[biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov](mailto:biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov)>  
**Subject:** Guide Concession Program

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To Whom It May Concern,  
February 9th, 2023

I am emphatically OPPOSED to the proposed GCP that has reared its ugly head once again. I strongly believe it is another "broad brush" attempt to solve user conflict problems that may exist in only *some* areas. I for one have absolutely NO interest in going through the onerous permitting process that this would entail. As a 27 year veteran of contracting hunts on State lands (Wood-Tikchik State Park) I have had ZERO problems associated with other outfitters. Furthermore, if the GCP was implemented I'd be in jeopardy of losing my guiding privileges there altogether if I weren't selected in yet another time consuming and competitive exercise.

Respectfully Submitted

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Dave Marsh  
Big Game Big Country  
[www.biggamebigcountry.com](http://www.biggamebigcountry.com)  
Direct: 859-338-4710

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 10:38 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: State lands concession

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Brian Donovan <donovanhunting@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 7:32 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** State lands concession

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Hello BGCSB,

I want to express my thoughts on the state land concession issue. I am a master guide 201 that exclusively hunts on state land in unit 17 out of Dillingham. I am against the concession plan. It's just going to limit us more and more and that seems to be a pretty common thing in the hunting industry any more less land to hunt less opportunity. My opinion is they should open up the federal ground and make it like the state ground is now. Which would spread out the outfitters and would give a lot more opportunity. Also I would like to see them change it to where non-residence have to have a guide for a moose, which would relieve the pressure on the moose just like sheep, goat and brown bear.

Thanks Brian Donovan  
Nushagak Guides  
Master Guide 201

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Monday, February 13, 2023 8:12 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: State land GUA comments

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

-----Original Message-----

From: jonah stewart <jonahsalaskanoutfitters@gmail.com>  
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2023 4:17 PM  
To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
Subject: State land GUA comments

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Hello Jason and Board,

My name is Jonah Stewart and I have operated on State land primarily in the Brooks Range and in unit 16b for the last 14 years.

I also operate on BLM land in the Brooks Range that has been limited with non overlapping guide areas for over a decade. In all honestly, I have not seen any difference in the quality of experience between the two land agencies. I think that for the most part good outfitters are not fighting over areas to hunt. Over time I have bought out my neighboring outfitters on the State land instead of trying to compete with them directly. I do not see a benefit to making these more like the federal concessions. It will cost the state more money, cost the outfitters more money, and do very little for the resource and quality of hunt experience in most areas. Unlike most of the federal agencies the state is extremely easy to deal with. I don't see how more regulation and limitations will make that any better. It will only make it more difficult. The other down side to "Exclusive" Guide areas is they tend to see far more pressure from resident hunters and air Taxis than most of the state land areas. I can guarantee that limiting the number of outfitters in an area is not going to reduce to impact or pressure. The pressure will come from somewhere else. It is my opinion that most of the people in favor of making Exclusive guide areas on State land are not the ones actually hunting there. Thank you for taking the time to read my opinion on this matter but I am Definitely not in favor of DNR confession areas.

Regards,

Jonah Stewart

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 10:38 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide consession

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Michael Sciotti <bigakoutdoors@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 9:44 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Guide consession

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Hello,

I wish to add to my original email about the Guide consession.

I present some other possible solutions for the more localized issues that the board is trying to address with the state consession program. Implementing a consession program on state land is not the solution to the problems trying to be solved in the problem statement. They are as follows:

-Close state lands to those who hold Exclusive Federal land Conessions or Native land Conessions

Though I never believe less access is ever the right answer, I know that changing the federal system would go over with those operating on those lands, about as well as this change is going with us state land operators. A simple solution would be to close state lands to those with exclusive federal or Native concessions. Thus limiting the outfits taking people on state land by people who already have thousands - millions of acres to themselves already. This would directly benefit conflict areas in Units like 9 or 8 where these said conflicts are to be taking place between guides. This would impact very few businesses overall versus an implementation of a consession program on state lands.

-Make Moose a guide/first degree kindred required species the same as Goat, Sheep, Brown/Grizzly

This would limit the moose hunters and moose taken by DIY non-resident hunters. I know personally of one transporter that takes almost 50 moose clients yearly. I fail to see the view that Guides have to further limit themselves and their area, yet transporters and air taxis can still take as many hunters as they wish and drop them in where they choose, as either productive to solving the problem statement or fair to the guiding industry on state lands. In places like Farewell where the moose are in a situation that the hunting population outweighs the harvestable surplus this would have a direct benefit. It would also lower conflicts with resident and non-resident hunters. For the novice moose hunter, moose are extremely hard to judge, sub-legal harvest of Bulls would also decline. Again this would hurt very few businesses as compared to the implementation of a consession program on state land.

-Put Sheep and Moose in the areas of concern on a tag system. Allocate a certain number of tags to outfitters in the area, non-residents (in the case of moose), and residents.

This allows for the current system of ADF&G to manage the resource for Alaskans to stand in place and be implemented. The set number of hunters afield would be determined yearly. Systems like this work in Units throughout the state where there is clear and obvious demand from hunters for a resource that far outweighs that resources surpluses and capacity to fill the demand put on it. There is clear precedent for this many times over. This would have the lowest impact on any single user group and be the best way to spread the "pain" around.

-Increase the current GUA limit

Again more access is the answer, not less! Give guides a chance to spread out more, utilizing more land and thus spread the pressure around. This allows cases when an areas animal populations become low, or if there is someone in "their spot", for a guide to move and adapt without conflicts! To restrict more with concessions or 2 GUAs can only add to the issue of over crowding. For instance, 17B is the only nonresident moose hunting subunit in 17 that has any real state land offerings that even allows non resident moose hunting. With that I operate in GUAs 1704 for Moose and 1703 for bears. Should the board choose to continue to shrink access to guiding on state lands, I would be forced to congest my area to 1704 for everything, as would all state land guides in 17 due to the F&G regulation already in place. Meaning GUA 1703 would be totally unutilized and 1704 overutilized and populations harmed.

I hope to show that there are numerous possible solutions that would have a localized effect and minimum negative impact on the industry. The state land concession program is neither wanted or viable for state land operators.

Thank you for reading,  
Michael Sciotti  
Big Alaska Outdoors LLC  
Full-time state land operator

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 10:49 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Cc:** Jason Bunch  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession Program

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

FYI

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**From:** Conner Johns <conner.johns10@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 1:44 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Guide Concession Program

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Jason,

It is great to see the this program taking further shape.

Appreciated the notification regarding the delay of the GCP workgroup/meeting.

Significant impacts on the future of the Alaska professional hunting community will come of this Creating a more valuable and enriched hunting experience for both guide and hunter.

Thank you!

Per your questions in an earlier email:

1. Your personal issues on state land, if any.

On SW Alaska State lands, none with other RGOs. Due to increased demand, awareness of access, technology, human population etc.... The inherent "exclusivity" of recreating in remote locations on state land is dwindling. The country is getting "smaller" if you will. The writing is on the wall that a program such as the GCP is prudent to protect the integrity of providing positive outfitted hunting experiences.

Macro issues for RGOs operating on state land

- Inability and uncertainty of providing a professional hunting experience due to a lack of control .
- RGO is less likely to make further financial investments into assets (equipment, education i.e- WFR cert) and hiring asst. guides when they have less "control" over the experience they are providing.
- Lacking relationship(s) between RGOs and biologists regarding management and game population dynamics.

2. Your recommendation to address a problem on state land.

what I have read in the GCP draftwork.

Ensure anecdotal reporting and dialogue between area biologists and RGOs.

3. Your thoughts on the 2013 DNR framework.

A good basis to work and model from.

Lottery for Areas is a poor decision.

4. Your recommended change to any portion of the 2013 DNR framework.

None at this time.

--

Conner Johns

Fishing Bear Lodge  
& North Alaska Expeditions

(208)-920-3526

[conner.johns10@gmail.com](mailto:conner.johns10@gmail.com)

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 2:31 PM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Concession

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** gabriel davis <davisoutfitter@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 1:29 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Concession

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Hello, my name is Gabe Davis I'm a registered guide in unit 17 and I wanted to write in and give as brief a comment as possible on the concession proposal.

From what I have read, this concession idea is not well suited for 17 for a number of reasons I hope the list below.

In unit 17 as registers guides, a massive areas taken up by the Togiak national wildlife refuge, and is as you know, a federal concession area, off-limits to the existing guides.

On top of that unit 17 C is completely closed to non-resident Moose Hunter's removing an additional thousands of square miles of Hunting Area from register guides to hunt moose.

As I see it now, the only issue in unit 17 in terms of any crowding issues comes from an Air Taxi operator who recently gave up his register guide license and transporters license in order to circumnavigate any restrictions from the board and avoid paying any fees from the state park, Big Game commercial services board or the state.

All the register guides that I know in 17 have been getting along more or less successfully.

The other major issue I have with this concession is that 17 is a predator control area for bears, and in the spring we travel huge different distances up to 100 miles a day by snowmobile, glassing and hunting. truly spot and stock Hunt and hike in multiple valleys over the course of the week. If for example, a registered guide only had a concession in 17 B he wouldn't be able to hunt moose at all and although 5000 acres sounds large it is not nearly the size of area most outfitters in 17 use in the spring.

Geographically unit 17 is massive, but there are certain areas like the park that have further restricted access to the large bodies of water and the Tikchik river. I want to bring this up because I'm not sure it's common knowledge that during hunting season they've already installed a policy of a maximum of six float trips for the entire season on the Tikchik river, and on each of the upper lakes in the state park there are only between two and six permits per lake per season. So this puts additional squeeze on any outfitters who operated that area. That is for example, a majority of the



state permits are allocated to hunters who are not hunting with you and on top of that you have a very restrictive concession hunt area your options become extremely limited to point that our lively is now compromised with very little upside for the state or the wildlife.

The harder the registered guides get squeezed the more "pirate" transporters will just take over. Because they have now oversight and no fees, and no licensing requirements.

I want to keep this as short as possible and I hope that we will have a chance to make a verbal comment because most guys I am not exactly a world class writer and this issue has far-reaching consequences for every guide involved and I truly believe that unit 17 does not fit the model for the concession idea.

Thank you and I hope to hear back from you guys  
Gabe Davis

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 14, 2023 9:37 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Concession Concerns

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Jason Bunch <jkbunch@acsalaska.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 13, 2023 8:36 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Concession Concerns

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A letter concerning concessions on state land.

Sent from my iPhone

Please find enclosed a few things about the Guide Concession Program being worked on. I hope I portray what I see in an understanding manner.

1. Is the Concession actually really needed?
  - A. In unit 17 the our Brown Bear take is 2 bears per calendar year per nonresident hunter.
  - B. Wolf hunters are allowed up to 10 wolves per day and no limit.
  - C. Moose hunting is only a 11 day hunt and nonresidents can only hunt the northern part of the unit, with limited hunting in the westerly third.
  - D. Caribou season is closed to nonresident hunters.

With that stated, the Department of Fish and Game is conducting an all out Helicopter shooting program this coming May starting on the 10th to fly and shoot as many Brown Bears and wolves as possible to help with depredation on our Moose and Caribou

It is very apparent that there is not enough hunting being done to help control the Brown Bear and Wolf population by Outfitters.

If there is any conflict in Unit 17 it comes from the AIR TAXIES PROVIDING gear and camps for Moose hunters in the Fall. Why are Air Transporters/Air Taxies gearing up camps for Moose hunters. I thought doing Guided and Non Guided Hunts was something a Registered Guide Outfitter and a Master Guide is Licensed to Provide. The flying of Hunters to hunt moose and providing equipment for a camp or floating gear by an Air Taxi needs to stop , and by the way I do not have a dog in the fight, I only Guide for Bear and Wolf.

The other issue in our region is the very limited hunting done in the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, due namely to the very limited number of Permits by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Office for Registered Guide Outfitters and Master Guides. Our Predation by Bears and Wolves can be directly linked to the Very Low number of hunts allowed in that Portion of unit 17 and 18. The process to apply for a permit on the Refuge is very in depth and the time needed to complete and collect all the needed paperwork for the application is very extensive.

As we know most of us Guides and Outfitters hate paperwork, if this Concession thing is going to happen it must be fair and not made into a giant paper trail that creates paperwork for both the Guides

and Outfitters and also the office personal , of which we all know we are having a hard time getting people to work in the office and keep on staff for the Outfitters.

The 2013 parameters looked to me and the reason it was not received well , was because it was not going to be fair and was going to be a lot of paperwork to get things correctly done. if done for the good of all.

One of the things that would be the most helpful is to stop issuing new Registered Guide/Outfitter Licenses and create a Program in our Industry for new Outfitters. We must first Identify how many Outfitters a region can support. Then in order to become an Outfitter you must have a Purchasing Agreement with an Existing Outfitter to take over his or her business and the Existing Outfitter then signs a Relinquishing Statement giving up his right to do any and all services as provided by and Registered Guide/Outfitter or Master Guide.

This process works very well in Idaho and should be looked at for Alaska.

Another way to look at the process for the Concession program is to look at the Number of Hunt Records by each Registered Guide/Outfitter or Master Guide, The Dates will time of year usage and the amount of hunts provided for each species and what unit hunted in. With that being said in Unit 17 there are 8 GUA's and we can only use 3 GUA's per year so we already are very limited to the amount of hunt area we can operate in, going to a concession program will only reduce the amount of hunting on bears and wolves by us and help the issue of predation by bear and wolf.

I can talk much more in depth better by voice then by writing, another thing most of us Outdoorsman are not very great at, writing, we just love to hunt and provide and great top service and facilitate logistics operation for Guest coming to visit Alaska and can't do it for themselves.

We need to identify the true problem areas , if that is Sheep hunting, then deal with that area of issue, if it is Moose hunting then deal where that is an issue. Imposing a State wide program I do not believe is warranted or needed. More research into the problem area or units must be done first and then work at correcting and creating a program to directly help resolve the issue at hand there.

I hope I conveyed my thoughts in a manner that is understanding.

I appreciate your time and work, please forward to whoever needs to see these comments.

Sincerely , Darwin Vander Esch, JD's Kniktuk Outfitters, 907-843-1715

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**From:** Shay Rosser <shay.rosser@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 15, 2023 5:54 PM

**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>

**Subject:** GCP comments

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I have a few questions and concerns about the GCP.

1. What are the gates of entry for the new program? The past programs provided no legitimate gate of entry for new registered guides. It would have awarded unlimited permits to the biggest players in the industry and limited permits to the next best. This would be fine, if it provided a way for a new registered guide to book clients and provide a working resume to compete as a new applicant. The past model wouldn't allow for that in my opinion.

Example: I received my registered license the same year the GCP was implemented. I wouldn't be competitive in the permitting process. Now, I'm forced to work for another guide for a minimum of 5 years before the possibility of permit renewals and most likely 10 years due to the next 5 years being non-competitive if the state renews the permit (most likely scenario). So, in my 10th year as a licensed registered guide I still have zero hunt contracts to my name and no real qualifying experience to be competitive in the permitting process.

I only see this resulting in the "passing around" of permits between established outfitters every 10 years until death or retirement of permit holders. Making it a once in a lifetime opportunity to initially be chosen for any level of permit.

2. User conflict isn't enough of a reason to implement or justify the GCP. Although it may not be a fun or a preferred reality, the Kenai river is a great example of this. The Owsichuk decision named 4 main reasons for unconstitutionality and user conflict wasn't one of them. The 2003 Kenai river guide moratorium was found to be unconstitutional. That failed because they had to provide empirical evidence that user conflict negatively affected fish stocks ( To this day they haven't provided empirical data linking user conflict and negative impact to the resource). I feel that if the BGCSB was able to pass a new GCP it could be struck down because it could easily be burdened with the same task. I'm not saying it would happen but it's not that far of a stretch from guided sport fishing and guided sport hunting.

3. The two tiered permit system didn't seem very practical. It seemed too imbalanced and would restrict the bottom tier too much. The limited permit only allowed 4 hunters per GUA. The cap would basically eliminate all ability to a limited permit to do drop or partially outfitted hunts (outfitted with gear but not guided) due to having to sign a hunt contract for transporter services. That's in stark contrast to the unlimited where there's no cap on the number of hunt contracts they can sign. Allowing for the potential for massive dropoff numbers and guiding hunter operation simultaneously. Once again it cripples any real competition and only favors the individuals that receive the unlimited permit. A more stratified/nuanced approach might be more palatable.

4. How will the program be managed? The BGCSB is limited in its abilities as it is currently structured. Implementing a new program as large as the GCP would be daunting for an already stressed system. If building a new governing entity for the program, where will the funds for it come from?

6. How will the permitting be based on the management of wildlife? Will the number of permits change with the changing of regulations as it pertains to bag limits? If not, how are the GCP "assignments based on wildlife management" (one of the 4 reasons the original GCP was struck down)?

Example: A GMU becomes a 2 brown bear every reg year instead of 1 brown bear every reg year. The liberalization of the regulations implies an overabundance/underutilization of brown bear in the GMU. Will the number of permits reflect the change by increasing. Likewise, will the number of permits decrease if the bag limit is decreased?

Thank you very much for your time,  
Shay Rosser.

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 16, 2023 8:29 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession

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**From:** Jeff Pralle <info@highcountryalaska.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 16, 2023 8:19 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Guide Concession

You don't often get email from [info@highcountryalaska.com](mailto:info@highcountryalaska.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please see my comments below concerning the proposed Guide CONCESSION.

Thanks,  
Jeff Pralle



*"Adventures don't come calling,  
you have to seek them out."*

High Country Alaska  
3060 N Lazy Eight Ct Ste 2  
PMB 176  
Wasilla, AK 99654

907-414-7545

[www.HighCountryAlaska.com](http://www.HighCountryAlaska.com)

I would like to stress this is about **BUSINESS** not emotion. Our ability to provide for our families, stable jobs for our staff, quality service to our customers, compliance with a multi layered system already in place. **Depends upon what we decide to do today.**

I hold Alaska Master Guide License GUIM128. I have been involved in the Big Game guiding industry more than 40 years since starting as a packer. This is my life and my livelihood. I am not a part time outfitter. I am forced to have multiple businesses to make ends meet, do to the current status within the industry, and where I have chosen to make home for my company on State Land. Shortening of the hunting seasons is the primary cause of this. I do not see that as a guide outfitter problem, rather as a total number of users problem, harsh winters, lack of habitat management (eg. controlled burns), and a budget problem for ADFG preventing honest, reliable, accurate, game surveys.

As a newly licensed guide at the time of the Owsichuk decision, loss of the Guide Licensing and Control Board and Exclusive Guide Areas I saw it as very detrimental to the guiding industry. I participated in the round table meetings after Owsichuk. My input helped to form the initial Big Game Commercial Services Board. We failed in our attempt to create a regulating board to protect the industry.

We are now decades past Owsichuk. The replacement Big Game Commercial Services Board has been marginally effective at protecting the interests of the public, resources, or removing known shady/illegal operators licensed or unlicensed. All while adding layers of bureaucracy and fees. Despite this ineffectiveness we have a thriving and viable industry with most Guide/Outfitters functioning together as neighbors quite well. I personally do not wish to see additional layers of bureaucracy unless it is absolutely necessary and effective.

I have many concerns and questions:

- Are we talking about implementing a program that encompasses all commercial users on state land?
- Only those who provide services to the Big Game Hunting public?
- Strictly Big Game Guides and Outfitters?
- Do we wish to give power to a State agency to interfere/limit Free Market Business, allowing DCCED/DNR/??? to control how we scale our businesses? (A blatant transfer of our personal decision making and power to a socialist structure.)
- Is a solution as simple as enforcing what is in place more effectively to reduce conflicts/violations?
- Is there actually a need for concessions? Especially statewide? What problems are will a joint use concession area plan solve?
- Has there been an actual study done on the problems we attempting to solve?
- Is this a problem of perception based on localized issues with vocal participants?
- Transporters MUST be a part of this equation. Can the concession program implement a way to hold Transporters to a localized geographic area, accountable for the actions of their customers, and staff?
- Can this be a tool to control rampant violations, litter, surface impacts, trespassing violations, and conflicts created by clients of high volume transporters?
- Will concessions even affect transporters or are we simply limiting guides even further?
- Do we want to give a government entity power to limit a free market system? (Eg. The formerly proposed limited guide use areas)
- Will this reduce the number of contracting guides in a given geographical area? (The formerly proposed system, where I operate, did not.)
- Can a Right of Survivorship clause be implemented? Most of our industry is operated with advanced bookings. Facilitating a means of transfer, in the event a concessionaire becomes incapacitated/deceased, to protect the hunting public contracted with that concessionaire, as well as the concessionaires family should be considered.

- What will be the impact on the overseeing agencies resources? Do we want to be caught in the middle of this and have it affect our ability to operate legally? Pay fees that will be associated with implementing and administering these complex proposed layers of government oversight? Currently the State has been operating at a deficit and staffing is a major concern. Resulting in delays and stress on DCCED/BGCS for licensing etc. Will adding another layer actually improve the services we require from the State government? I do not believe it will.

Many of the conflicts personally witnessed have been created by Transporters or the result of access point congestion. It is the nature of the business model that Guides and Outfitters typically operate with a smaller customer base. Transporters, due to the nature of lower cost services, must operate at much higher volumes in order to make a living. Transporters, have in my experience, have flooded areas with hunters, resident and nonresident, creating tremendous impacts. Their high volume of people on the surface of state land, fish and game populations, conflicts with private land owners, other licensed and permitted users. Increased competition with other users, local residents, guides and their clients, due to the high volumes are natural consequences of the transporter business model. I have seen examples in Units 7, 8, 15, 16, 17 and 19 (19 near the Farewell Airport which is currently a hot topic with ADFG, FWP, and Board of Game).

We must include all commercial users of State Land Resources or we are simply handcuffing licensed Guide/Outfitters once again. We must be careful what we ask for and implement.

**I will not support any concession area plan that is solely applied to one user group - Guide/Outfitters.**

I do not believe a statewide blanket approach is a viable option. It is the same as implementing a plan for Idaho and extending it all the way to Iowa. Then expecting it to work equally in the entire area it encompasses. Unreasonable. Alaska is a huge land mass with many complexities:

Land ownership

Accessibility

Varied game populations

Regional politics concerning use and access

I personally have issues with granting a government bureaucracy like DNR or DCCED power to limit my business. This is against all my beliefs. We are Americans and we operate in a free market system.



I am afraid we are creating another layer of government and fees to solve localized problems. Focusing on Guides who in many cases are not the problem operators flooding the country with clients, creating the issues.

The proposed Guide Use Area Concession Program will create additional financial stress on our industry. Fees proposed in 2013 were astronomical. Not saying those fees would not be required to implement the program and staff it.

Do we want to see additional financial burdens piled on top of rising costs already associated with maintaining compliance in our industry?

Another layer of state government, during a time of economic stress for the state?

**Points I believe are necessary to make this a viable proposal:**

1. Program should identify the problems, determine if it is actually a statewide problem, or if this is a localized issue. Alaska is too large and diverse to use a blanket approach.
2. Use areas must be large enough to allow for viable businesses.
3. Limited enough to reduce conflicts amongst all user groups within the geographical area?
4. Fees must be cost effective for operators.
5. Longevity, history as a commercial operator in the area, infrastructure deeded or permitted (not just deeded land), violations, compliance, experience, must all be weighted to balance applications.
6. Limits must be in place to prevent Bureaucratic loss of areas due to a change in political climate, or commissioner in charge of the overseeing agency
7. We need to consider "Right of Survivorship". Our industry historically books in advance. If the concession holder were to die or become incapacitated there should be a way for the family to hire a registered or master guide to fulfill the duties for the remainder of the concession term or a reasonable time 1-2 seasons to allow taking care of the customers already booked and alleviate the business stress from the family.
- 8. Transporters MUST be included and I propose ALL Commercial Recreation users of State land be included in any concession based program.**

Sincerely,

Jeff Pralle

Alaska Master Guide/Outfitter #GUIM128

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023 8:39 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession Area

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Tyler Kuhn <alaskanguide2017@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2023 12:35 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Guide Concession Area

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### State Land Concession Proposal

Here are my thoughts on the "Guide Concession Plan", I am both a full time Alaskan Registered Guide – Outfitter that makes 100% of my annual income from guiding clients on state land, both in my operation (A-Team Outfitting, LLC) and working for other operators across the state. As well as a Resident hunter that greatly enjoys my Hunting, Fishing and Trapping privileges on our state's lands. I personally feel this concession plan would be an absolute disaster for the entire guide industry, resident hunting and wildlife management in general. If this plan is put in place it would without a question destroy both the businesses and lives of many, and I mean MANY! of our current licensed Registered & Master guides. Most outfitters I know make their living from this industry, and we all employ assistant guides that work for us full time during the big game hunting seasons and they too will lose their jobs as well because there will be far fewer outfitters to work for, but a lot more assistant guides competing for the limited openings within the few outfits remaining as well as Registered and Master guides also having to be hired for work since their business was taken away. Through talking with current assistant guides, I have learned that some of them feel that they would have to stop guiding all together if this is put in place because it would be both financially infeasible to keep guiding, and it would not provide any incentive to become a registered guide as they will never have a chance at owning their own outfit.

I am commonly hearing from those who support this program that there is to many "guide on guide" conflicts. I cannot speak for everyone in the state when I say this, but those who I have talked with on State Land don't seem to think other guides are the issue. In fact, most of us openly communicate with our local competition and find out where each of us are operating that year so we don't "step on toes" I am outfitting in both units 13 & 14 currently, which is by far some of the most packed hunting land in the state when it comes to both guides and resident hunters. And yet, I don't have problems, And if I have ever stumbled on another camp, I do what I can to allow them to also have a productive hunt I respect my fellow guides, and I respect those residents as well (again, I am a resident hunter too)

Here are some of the questions to ask yourself about the proposal.

#### 1.) Why does RHAK support this proposal?

RHAK leadership wants this to pass as it will greatly reduce the amount guides in Alaska, they know this will "gut" the guide industry and reduce our power at the law making and regulation level. They know it will greatly reduce our contributions to the state in the form of funding the state receives from nonresident tag and license sales. With our loss of power, expect proposals such as high limited draws (probably in the 10% range for tag allocation) for nonresidents on

ALL Dall sheep, Moose, Caribou and Kodiak Bear in the state to pass. RHAK knows us guides flood remote communities with funding via our clientele/overall operation purchasing goods such as food, fuel, supplies and other goods at a very localized level within these communities. They know that we donate literally thousands of pounds of game meat in these communities to the local “needy” populations. If us guides go, so do these benefits. And these benefits residents receive are HUGE talking points for our industry and what it provides.

## 2.) What Are “Bad Operators?”

Another proposed “benefit” of this program by some is that it would somehow remove “bad operators” out of our industry. I struggle to understand how this will be achieved when we don’t even have an agreement on what a bad operator even is? Is that someone with multiple wildlife/guide violations? If so, why not just make offenses more costly to those that commit violations? Is it a guy that harvests “to many animals in their area?” If so, how many animals is too much? And how is this going to be monitored by the state and managed in a way that makes sense along the lines of good wildlife management practices? How do they establish a “per animal” quota when residents could still hunt the way they wish too. You can limit a guide in his concession to let’s say 6 Grizzly and 4 moose for the year. But, what stops a swath of residents from going in and killing dozens of moose and bear in the very area this guide is in? Some areas of the state the department of Fish and Game does not even monitor resident harvests closely. So how do we establish appropriate quotas on a guide when we don’t even know the correct carrying capacity or the total number of animals hunted/harvested? Unless the whole state picked up Kodiak’s system and both residents and nonresidents pulled from the same limited draw of tags towards a pre-determined quota this would never work. I feel a mix of our current capitalistic system, social media/internet reviews and stricter punishments will weed out a lot of the people that shouldn’t be one of us.

## 3.) What About Transporters?

Since usage problems are at the forefront of this proposal, wouldn’t it be smart to impose more restrictions on transporter operations? Between air & water taxis, transporters drop off a lot of hunters both resident and nonresident alike. For example, in unit 8 I see almost on a daily basis water taxis dropping off deer hunters, 6 at a time on every beach that they can with very little restrictions these commercial operators pump the public land system with clients most of which are very inexperienced (especially the non-residents) perhaps a good method for reducing public land crowding would be putting in place “transporter use areas” and make a set number of these areas allowable to be obtained by each operator (probably two or three, just like us outfitters) a new use area map would need to be drawn up for the transporters and a test could be implemented as well for the transporting license. This new regulation would help free up some space and keep large operators from putting clients everywhere they can. We are restricted by this; I feel so should they.

## 4.) What About Lodges Posing as Guides?

A small loophole I have found in the industry is we have a small select group of lodges posing as outfits and selling hunts. They sell hunts, supply clients with gear, house clients, and handle hunt logistics but yet, nothing is done because they have an outfitter on payroll signing the hunt contracts and filling out hunt records. If we can change the law and make it to where these outfits can’t just “hire” an outfitter this will free up more space on public land as well.

## 5.) Moose/Caribou to Guided?

Another option would be making moose and caribou hunts require a guide for nonresident hunters. A far more common approach nonresidents take for hunting Alaska is booking a “self-guided” or “DIY” hunt. If these hunts required a guide it would free up a lot of space in many units. The downfall to this is of course transporters and outfitters will lose out big time on revenue that participate in “self-guided” trips and the state will lose a lot of funding from tag/license sale losses. But again, if we are talking about destroying everything, shouldn’t we try something like this first?

## 6.) Limited Number of Assistant Guides

I have seen it proposed each concession holder can only have a set number of assistant guides under them. This makes no sense as a blanket rule as each GCA will have different hunt-able wildlife populations and densities and each area will be a completely different size from the next. Having 2 assistant guides in an area you can ethically kill 4 Moose a year is

different than an area in the brooks that you can ethically kill 30 caribou a year. But yet, you are still only allowed 2 to 3 assistant guides under that policy no matter the space you have and available game to be hunted. And again, this goes back to what I said earlier about this limiting work opportunity for assistant guides.

I think we have a lot of other problems out there other than fighting amongst ourselves about a concession area, I don't think the monopolization of our public lands is smart and it will certainly be viewed as unconstitutional in Alaska. Destroying our amazing guiding industry and culture just so a few handfuls of guys can make a bunch of money is the worst thing that can happen to us. This proposal will solve nothing but create a more complex problem and will cause and end to guided hunting in Alaska as a whole in time, if passed.

I hope we can work all this out without shooting ourselves in the foot.

Alaskan Guide, Tyler Kuhn  
Registered Guide/Outfitter Of A- Team Outfitting, LLC

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023 8:39 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Implementing Guide Concessions on State Land

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Scott Limmer <hunt\_colorado@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2023 9:00 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Implementing Guide Concessions on State Land

You don't often get email from [hunt\\_colorado@yahoo.com](mailto:hunt_colorado@yahoo.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Chairman Bunch and Workgroup Members,

As a licensed Assistant Guide for seventeen (17) years on the Alaska Peninsula and the ABC Islands for brown bear, I wanted to express my thoughts on the formulation of Guide Concessions on State Land. I also have thirty-one (31) years of experience as an Outfitter-Guide in Colorado and hold several Federal US Forest Service Permits and BLM Permits.

I have guided hunters for Registered Guides and Master Guides with long-standing Federal permits who operate camps/hunts on both Federal and State lands on the AK Peninsula. One of these Registered Guides that I work for, Mel Gillis, and I have experienced several problems with other Registered Guides that do NOT have Federal permits. Not only have we witnessed these RGs and their Assistant Guides on Federal lands, where they are not authorized, but they also put camps on State lands right on the Federal permit borders and will put camps very close to Mel's State land camps, as well. This makes for an overcrowded situation on the State Lands, which sometimes also leads to trespassing on the Federal lands. It also leads to an over-harvest of bears and the harvest of immature bears on State lands on the AK Peninsula.

In the Spring of 2022, we experienced an especially egregious violation when Bear River Outfitters (a lodge near Port Moller owned by someone who doesn't even have a RG license) went shopping around for and found a RG to sign the paperwork for their "hunts" and also put an illegal camp on Federal land in between the Right Head and Left Head of Port Moller and illegally shot a bear on May 9, 2022, the DAY BEFORE the season opened! One of the other Assistant Guides working for Mel Gillis captured this whole illegal hunt on video and the State Troopers were called in. Sadly, this is but one illegal episode that we have witnessed over the years. It makes no sense that a newer lodge owner on State lands, or anyone other than a RG with a Federal permit, should be able to put camps on State lands on the AK Peninsula. The long-standing RGs and MGs with Federal permits on the AK Peninsula should be the only guides permitted to hunt on the State lands that border their Federal permit areas. Allowing any RG without a Federal permit to choose Guide Use Areas in areas with a mixture of Federal lands and State lands is wrong and must be stopped or severely limited. The RGs

with Federal Permits in those Guide Use Areas should, at the very least, have preference for concessions on State lands that border their Federal permits in the same Guide Use Area. This needs to be implemented as soon as possible and will make for a better experience for clients and much better wildlife management.

I have guided enough hunts on the AK Peninsula that I would be able to acquire a RG license if I desired to do so. I would then be able to choose three Guide Use Areas on the AK Peninsula and set up a business on top of the other longstanding RGs on State lands that I have worked for who also have Federal permits in the same Guide Use Areas. Does that sound like something that the BGCSB and the State of Alaska should allow me or anyone else to do? No!

It is high-time for the State of Alaska to limit RGs on State lands and create concessions with a preference given to existing RGs with adjacent Federal Permits in the same Guide Use Area.

Thanks for taking my input.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Limmer  
GUIA #6697  
970.222.2109c

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023 8:39 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Latest Guide Concession Program

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Al Gilliam <al.gilliam@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2023 8:46 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Cc:** office@alaskaprohunter.org  
**Subject:** Latest Guide Concession Program

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Big Game Commercial Services Board.

This is Al Gilliam, retired master guide #185.

I understand that the BGCSB is asking for input on why the first attempt to implement a State Guide Concession Program failed.

I was supportive and active in the previous effort to create a State Guide Concession Program. I am now informing you of the reason it never passed the finance committee after passing the House.

For over 30 years, behind the scene, I championed the slow process that eventually busted the longest-running illegal international guiding operation in Alaska and Canada, code-named "Operation Bruin." It finally ended when Registered Guides Ron Martin and his half-brother, John Katzeek, were charged, in Haines, in the fall of 2011. Then years of court battles ensued, ending in convictions for both guides, and a lot of equipment was confiscated, including an airplane, guns, boats, etc.

It took so long to get those two busted because their relative was a Lt. Col in Wildlife Enforcement (Retired) in Juneau. He was keeping Ron Martin apprised of my efforts to have the State DOPS start an investigation on Ron, who I knew for a fact was illegally baiting Brown Bears for as long as I lived in Haines, starting in 1976. This Lt. Col even provided Ron Martin with copies of the complaints against him that I provided to the DOPS. Ron provided at least one of my complaints to Trooper Don Ottis, who waved it in my face and screamed at me while in the Haines Post Office because I had mentioned him by name in that complaint as someone not interested in enforcing the law.

Some wildlife officers assigned to Haines in those days, and up until Operation Bruin was started, were ***INSTRUCTED by their Juneau bosses to ignore all bear bait stations in the Haines area! One of the local officers even told me that he was told that.***



Also, a local Alaska State Representative championed special legislative laws that negated Assistant Guides Ron or John from taking the written test required to be awarded a registered guide license. Based only on their "Longevity as local hunters," etc., they were handed their commercial guiding licenses without passing a test, and then the State ended the program!

Ron and John were close friends with the same local Alaska State Representative from Klukwan, near Haines. That Representative had already successfully gone to at least one State Attorney General to get pending State investigations on Ron dropped. However, I think it happened at least twice.

That Representative also realized Ron's Checkered past would prevent him from being awarded a Guide Concession near Haines. He was second on the State Finance Committee. Through his determined efforts, the State Finance Committee killed the financial resources that would have moved the State Guide Concession Program to implementation.

The only reason that Operation Bruin ever got started was that once I realized how corrupt the State Wildlife Troopers were, I turned to The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and provided them with several pages of my notes regarding failed efforts to get an investigation started.

Then, the same Representative went to the AG again and tried to get another pending investigation on Ron stopped. However, I heard from my HONEST State Wildlife Trooper contacts that the AG told that Representative that since the Feds were now involved, he could not help him "this time."

If you need to know who my contacts were in the State Wildlife Troopers, I will reach out and ask for corroboration. However, keep in mind that careers were altered, my life was threatened, and families were uprooted in Haines because of the ultimate success of Operation Bruin.

As an afterthought, the fellow championing the last Guide Concession Program on behalf of the Alaska Professional Hunter Association told me that after the first attempt to create a State Guide Concession failed, he spoke with the State Representative Ron had used to his advantage. He said that the Rep admitted his wrongdoing to him.

Good luck with the program. Let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Al Gilliam

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023 8:39 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED); Jason Bunch  
**Subject:** FW: BGCSB: Guide Concessions Workgroup

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Jim Roche <jroche@magnumguideservice.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2023 3:00 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** BGCSB: Guide Concessions Workgroup

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To Jason Bunch,

Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I have been a Registered Guide since around 1999. I remember Clark Cox was pushing for something along these lines 10-15 years ago. I had many a conversation with him. I did not agree with it then and I do not agree with it today. I see way less guides actively guiding today than I did back then. Most of the complaints I hear about are focused with guides hunting bears on the beaches of the Alaska Peninsula. I guide between Iliamna and Koliganek and rarely every see any other guides. I am a firm believer in not trying to fix something that is not broken. Every time I have witnessed a big move by the state it has resulted in a reduction of opportunities for non-resident hunters thus costing the state lots of lost revenue while also chipping away at the guiding industry. The number of bears that are out there in southwestern Alaska is ridiculous and the moose and caribou populations are still trying to recover. Throwing a huge wrench like pushing for state guide concessions in the middle of a questionable future economy is not a wise move. If your looking for a test area then focus where most people are complaining way down the AK peninsula where the tiny strips of state land is. Work your issues out there before trying to involve the entire state guiding industry.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jim Roche  
GUIR 1081  
(512) 517-0871 Cell

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**From:** Bay, Thomas L (CED) <[thomas.bay@alaska.gov](mailto:thomas.bay@alaska.gov)>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2023 1:53 PM  
**To:** BGCSBoard <[BGCSBoard@list.state.ak.us](mailto:BGCSBoard@list.state.ak.us)>

**Cc:** Chambers, Sara C (CED) <[sara.chambers@alaska.gov](mailto:sara.chambers@alaska.gov)>  
**Subject:** [BGCSBoard] BGCSB: Guide Concessions Workgroup

Licensee's,

The BGCSB formed a workgroup to review the need and possible method to implement guide concessions on state land. During the last (2nd) meeting the group began to review the previous 2013 DNR proposal. The first order of business for the workgroup is to flesh out provisions of the DNR proposal that were in essence the reason for unsuccessful implementation. It is important for the work group to understand the value and consequences of each provision and implementation barriers of the overall proposal. At first glance, it would appear the work group is making no productive headway but in order to make sound decisions, understanding their effect of the overall package is important.

Many of you have reached out with a phone call and/or written comment. Your comments are being read and are the basis for workgroup discussion as we continue to review the proposal. Some have shared the need for public comment. Please understand we have limited time allocated to this review and that public comment would extend beyond what we can allocate at this point. In the meantime, I urge you to send your written comments and please be patient. As soon as we can get "out of the weeds" and begin making constructive decisions, public comment will be implemented so that your/our voices can be heard.

Please send your comments to the [biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov](mailto:biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov). These comments are vital to produce a record. If you can attend one of the public meetings PLEASE do so. We need to hear from you regardless of your position.

Our Schedule is as follows;

March 16-Workgroup meeting via Zoom  
March 29-In person public comment in Fairbanks  
April 10-In person public comment in Anchorage  
April 13-Work group meeting via Zoom

Please keep informed of the meeting schedule and agenda via the Big Game Commercial Services Board [website](#). Specifically the "Meetings" page.

Thank you,

Jason Bunch  
Chairman, BGCSB

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## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 16, 2023 3:54 PM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession program

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

-----Original Message-----

From: Treasure Hunter Lodge Alaska <treasurehunterlodge@gmail.com>  
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2023 3:46 PM  
To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
Cc: Jason Bunch Guide <jkbunch@acsalaska.net>; Guide Sam Rohrer <sam@kodiakbearcamp.com>; Guide Thor Stacey <thorstacey@gmail.com>  
Subject: Guide Concession program

[You don't often get email from treasurehunterlodge@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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BGCSB,

It's great news that the state is considering a guide concession program on state lands.

Many of us in the guide/outfitter business operate under permits issued by federal managers. Each land manager is different but they are all much better than the current "management" of guides on state lands which could best be described as a free for all/mess.

I stated guiding in AK in 1996. In 1999 I sat for my guide test which wasn't any harder than an entry level college exam. It was a very low bar. Hundreds of guides a year flooded the industry and enforcement had its hands full. I conducted my first guided hunt as an outfitter in Aug/Sept of 2002 on state land for one month on Big River in unit 19 S of McGrath.

The best description of it would be: a gong show.

The hills were crawling with guides.

We were dropped on a remote strip on the upper N Fork of Big River by an McGrath air taxi and the next day another more tenured guide walked into our camp, cussed us out then camped 300yds from us.

Turns out he had been hunting here for the last 5 yrs or so but he was no where to be found the day before when we flew in, which was 2 days prior to the sheep opener.

I assure you he was not around and by now our air taxi had long since departed to McGrath. Even he didn't know about the other operator b/c they had come from ANC and us from McGrath.

Later that hunt we saw air traffic ever day flying for sheep. Years later, I found out there were at least 6 guides who were all licensed for that same or the neighboring GUA. One strip we flew over had two competing guides camped at opposite ends and were going after the same sheep.

State land hunts leave a bad taste in everyone's mouth but the real losers are our clients.

Fast forward to the fall 2021 brown bear season on the AK Peninsula and essentially the same thing happened as above and continues to happen every fall.

Bears are concentrated on fish creeks in early September and you've got guide wars all up and down the AK Peninsula on state land.

Some of the more reputable outfitters have verbal agreements to prevent conflicts but there are still guides making poor decisions that ruin hunts.

It's a broken system that sets many guides up for failure because it is allowing too many guides in too small of an area.

The guide concession program seeks to limit the number of guides in GUA's to prevent the above results.

The state will benefit by saving money on enforcement and investigations.

The end users (hunters), both guided and unguided, resident and non-resident will all benefit by having a dramatically improved hunting experience. The wildlife will benefit. The habitat will benefit. The State of AK will benefit.

On federal lands, guides compete for Land Use Authorization/Permits using a prospectus in which the best applicant for the job wins.

This has been proven to work very well on Kodiak and on other USFW/NPS administered lands.

The Forest Service is in the beginning stages of using a prospectus.

Private lands don't use prospectus's to my knowledge but they certainly limit the number of guides in a given GUA.

State lands have the most conflicts in the field, by far, of guide vs. guide, guide vs. resident, resident vs. resident as well as non-res vs res or any combination thereof.

It desperately needs to change and I am excited that it is finally happening.

It is much needed for our resources, our hunters and our pocketbooks.

Thank you.

Kurt Whitehead

Treasure Hunter Lodge LLC-Alaska

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907.738.5000

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 9, 2023 9:39 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Use Area Concession Working Group comments

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Jeff Pralle <info@highcountryalaska.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 8, 2023 7:23 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: Guide Use Area Concession Working Group comments

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**Big Game Commercial Services board**

**RE: Guide Use Area Concession Working Group**

**Points I see as necessary:**

### 1. Petition Yay or Nay:

I want to ask that we petition all guides in the state to answer a questionnaire yes or no and why they support/oppose a guide use area concession program.

This is the first step before any additional funds are spent on this project. We have already spent many hour that have been wasted to no end on this subject. It is necessary to ask the stakeholders if this is actually what our industry wants or is this being driven by a vocal minority. I simple questionnaire could save the State valuable time and money. Also gaining insight to the industry I feel is lacking. At the last APHA zoom meeting it was near a 50/50 split for vs. opposed. This was from a small cross section 37 individuals.

### 2. Transporters: Unregulated - high volume - roving

I have witnessed Transporters abuse of the game regulations, BGCSB regulations (blatantly guiding without a license), trespassing, litter, all have been rampant. The Boat transporters around Homer have a complete disdain for private land and Afognak and Kodiak have become a foot race quite often for deer and bears. It was the same around Iliamna during the heyday of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd. The transporters were flooding the country and a complete disregard for the land, private property, the local residents and community, it was sad and discouraging to behold. Yes, I have reported violations when observed to local FWP and to BGCSB. FWP will not enforce civil complaints eg. trespassing.

As I see it, by nature of the business model, Transporters, Air and Water taxis sell services cheaper, and must run higher volume than a guide to make a living. Hence we see the high volume transporters flooding areas then moving on in a couple years to more fertile areas. Typically coming back around in several years when the game has recovered. Many times the transporter is creating a conflict as they are making the decision where the clients they book are placed. Often in my experience the transported clients had no idea they were being dropped on an existing camp, a tiny piece of state land surrounded by private land for instance. Then the transported clients complain about the guide. When the guide may have been there for decades with a permitted camp. These are circumstances I have witnessed.

Also when ADF&G closes or shortens a season in a specific area the guide holding the concession in that area is just done. Out of business or severely limited. Transporters under current regulations just move to the next area. This is a problem and a contributing factor to management of the game resources, land management, and resources in general.

I believe this concession program must have elements to control all commercial users of State Land or it is not viable.

### **3. Enforcement: Lacking**

What can we do to improve the enforcement of existing regulation and statutes?

This is the another step ahead of a concession program. I feel the BGCSB and our industry as a peer group has done a poor job of actually policing our ranks. Creating more regulations that are not enforced/unenforceable, regulated by an agencies with no enforcement arm/funding/capability, (DNR), and also in a limited respect (BGCSB), repeating the current trend and then expecting a different result? This is a waste of effort and money. New regulations and Statutes must be enforceable and actually enforced. This takes money. Where does it come from? Guides? All Commercial users? I do not think the legislature wants to spend a nickel on the "minority" guiding industry. So once again where does the funding come from?

### **4. Blanket solution: Impractical and unreasonable**

I view this as impractical at best and disastrous at worst depending upon where you operate. Imagine game regs for the hardwood forest and cornfields in Eastern Nebraska implemented all the way to Wyoming, Colorado, & Arizona. Crazy. This is actually a smaller geographic area than we have in Alaska. What works in SE Alaska will likely be a disaster in SW Alaska or the North Slope. A single blanket approach is likely to fail do to court challenges.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeff Pralle,  
Alaska Master Guide Outfitter GUIM128



March 13, 2023

IN OPPOSITION TO THE GUIDE CONCESSION PROPOSAL

In the last zoom meeting with the APHA, they stated they would endorse a plan to poll the registered outfitters in Alaska to determine support for the proposed Guide Concession Program. To my knowledge they have not done this, and I believe they have no intention of doing so. In response, this is my formal protest to this proposal, and I ask for your comments and suggestions.

As Alaska outfitters we've fulfilled the requirements to obtain our licenses. The regulations already restrict us to 3 units. The guide concession proposal will all but eliminate for most of us the possibility of a future in this endeavor. But perhaps that is the real purpose for this proposal.

It is common to hear complaints about federal government overreach in land use issues. For example, Unit 8 has been dubbed the "Kodiak Mafia" with refuge permits awarded consistently to a select few. This proposal will establish the same system on a state level. It will endo the DNR, a land resource management entity, with the power to also manage game and award permits. We cannot expect the vetting process to be unbiased. The permits can be expected to be awarded arbitrarily, to those of influence – elitists who benefit from favoritism and will be the only ones sanctioned by the government to profit from the use of public lands. The 2013 proposal acknowledged exclusive use permits to be unconstitutional, and yet it is still being used as a template for this proposal.

One justification for this change is alleged conflicts of interest in the field. Yet there has been no attempt to provide evidence of these claims. Were they officially filed and how many? Who are the conflicts between? Outfitters? Transporters? Hunter? Residents?

Perhaps the true motivation of those pushing this agenda is eliminating competition, because conflicts in the field can be addressed in less drastic ways than proposed. It appears that a good number of these supposed conflicts are occurring ins sheep units. Alaska is the only state in the US with an OTC sheep tag. Replace it with a draw system for both residents and nonresidents.

If concern were truly about areas being overrun, more focus would be on the transporters. Unlike Outfitters, transporters are not restricted to 3 areas. Their license allows them to drop hunters anywhere, randomly and indifferently. They are allowed to skirt the laws by identifying themselves as a mere taxi service, even when the intent is to take game. License transporters with the same restrictions as outfitters and not only will it reduce conflicts, but it will also protect the land and the game, and increase state revenue.

Another area that needs to be addressed is subsistence. Those who show up for a "meat hunt" in a \$50K truck or a \$100K boat or plane are clearly not in the need of meat for survival.

There are more vital issues that need to be addressed before putting more restrictions on the guide industry with the exclusive use permits. Alaska is big enough for all to enjoy the hunting lifestyle - guides, residents, and nonresidents alike.

In defense of our freedom & livelihood,

Aaron Carter

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2023 11:37 AM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: State Land Guide Concession

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**From:** Chris Zwolinski <rikadog9@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2023 9:40 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** State Land Guide Concession

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Chairman Bunch,

Implementing guide concessions on state land is long overdue. I have held a registered guide license since 1989 and have been guiding on state land in the same GMU ever since. Although I had a few seamless seasons with few or no issues in the beginning, this did not last long. For the past 20 years, conflicts with other guides have grown steadily, with the most recent half dozen seasons getting out of control being over run with commercial use. The worst part of it is that the state or the guide board seemingly has no control over disputes. Certainly, there are no teeth in their rulings.

I applaud the effort to bring this ridiculous unlimited guide use under control.

My simple solution would be an absolute individual appointed guide use area given to one guide with exclusive use. This "solution" has been argued against for many reasons, one of them being that there would not be enough GUA's to go around for all of the guides.

I disagree.

For one thing, I think that being given three Guide Use Areas to one individual is excessive. Many, not all but many guides are driven by greed. Income is one thing. Greed is another.

Three GUA's for an individual is excessive. Reduce the maximum GUA that one person can hold to two. Also, many of these GUA's are ridiculously huge, and a registered guide holding three of the largest areas can conceivably guide in a million acres. Some of these GUA's can sensibly be cut in half to increase the total number of areas.

The idea of individuals paying a fee for the exclusive guide use of an area has been floated. I would not be opposed to this idea at all. Guides are notorious for complaining about fees. Maybe this fee will weed those people out of the the business. And to be fair, I have no idea what kind of amount this fee should be. This is an idea that is open to discussion.

Something else that I have always advocated for, even before I held a guide license, and that is to limit the number of animals that a contracting guide is allowed to harvest. This is important. The animals are a public resource. Public. It belongs to everybody. We, as guides, we don't plant it. We don't fertilize it. We don't grow or raise it. And certainly we don't manage it. We simply take a client out into the field after accepting an obscene amount of money.....and kill it. This resource needs to be managed by a governing body because the individual contracting guide won't. Pure and simple.

Also, in the original proposals back in 2010-2013, if I remember correctly, the idea was that the DNR wanted to implement GUA's that were shared. I am strongly against this and am living proof that this will definitely not work. I have spoken with my adversary who decided to take up occupation in the same GUA that I was using for over a decade before he appeared, and he gave me "his word" that he would confine himself to specific drainages so that we could avoid conflict. Time and time again he went back on this word.

Shared areas will not work and will only lead to further conflicts.

Without new rules and new assigned individual concessions, there will be further degradation of the wilderness experience that the client came here for in the first place. The other biggest loser is the game population itself.

I am anxious to see how this work group progresses with this task. I am open to ideas and am willing to help discuss and help develop this program and am hoping it gets fast tracked into actual law.

Thank you for your time.

Chris J Zwolinski, M145

PO Box 83218  
Fairbanks, AK 99708

## **Guide Concession Program Public Forum**

Fairbanks, Alaska

March 29, 2023

Chair Jason Bunch opened the forum at 6pm and stated this would be a listening session, not a discussion or workgroup. The board requested the GCP Workgroup convene due to a perceived need for greater restraints/restriction on guides in the field based on observed potential violations. Jason has learned along the way that DNR had taken a lot of public comment and worked to protect the industry in their previous proposal. There are a couple of areas that guides would like to change/augment, but the framework is solid. The GCP Workgroup has been meeting with the prior DNR program documents as a starting place. He recognized that DNR and DCCED are under resourced.

During the board meeting earlier in the day, there was some public testimony on the GCP that is not captured here. Bunch alerted everyone that the meeting is being recorded and that additional public comment opportunities will be available in the future.

### **Chris Zwolinski, Master Guide 145**

- Doesn't want to have to battle other guides where he is working
- Has seen encroachment grow over time
- Transporters always a problem
- Realizes this is not a problem in every area
- Overcrowding is very hard on the resource
- Clients came for the wilderness experience and are not getting it, even though they may not realize that other guides are in the area
- Sometimes you can have two guides hunting the same animal
- Doesn't know why the state can't implement a program like federal government has done
- Why is there no teeth in existing BGCSB laws. Thinks they are too lax. BGCSB seems to have no spine.
- Screw up on federal land and you're done
- GCP program will be hard to implement, people won't be happy, might get sued, but it has to be done
- Why not cut some areas in half if targeted species are available to make a business out of it
- Shared areas (in DNR proposal) won't work; people lie and are greedy. People don't play nice.
- Three GUAs is ridiculous; go down to two.
- Potential bidding process could work. Not sure how but worth a look. Not sure of impact on conservation.
- Coke Wallace spoke up and suggested that guides work it out among themselves. Gave an example of that kind of solution happening today. Realizes that may not always be possible.

### **Don "Smokey" Duncan**

- There will always be complaints.
- Sheep and brown bear areas are the focus. Localized problem doesn't need a statewide solution.
- Why should an established guide have to let a new person take over the area?
- How to get around the common use law?

- What about when guides go out of business because of this? He needed all three areas this year.
- What happens when the Board of Game regulates you out of business in that area? You lose your business.
- Why is this even necessary? Just because you don't like other people around?
- How will guides afford a bidding process?
- Had proposed before 1990 that we identify the problem areas and let people have turns at them—once every 5 years.
- No one asked rank and file guides—non APHA members—the last time. APHA meets separately off the record with DNR to serve their members.
- Owsichek, McDonald/Kenai Sportfishing Assn all indicate this won't work. Supreme Court said you won't get a GCP unless the constitution is changed.
- He has a four-page letter that he will send to the board email.

#### **Phil Berger, Registered Guide (not sure if this is the correct name)**

- Was adamantly opposed to the last GCP proposal
- Something needs to be done; maybe DNR limit existing permits
- Most operations used to be run out of camps and cabins, so people took care of their investments; more likely to be a good steward of the land, generally speaking
- If we don't do something, there will be allocation issues; no way to plan a season on an annual draw system—he is already booked through 2027
- How will GUAs being split up impact concession areas?
- He managed to find areas without conflicts with other guides. Thinks it should be statewide to be fair, but that will make the areas that are currently okay become overcrowded.
- What about seasonal allocations: boat vs airplane vs snowmachine
- How to transfer a concession while still a competitive process? Need to be able to hand off a successful business to a new owner.
- Proposals shouldn't favor good writers or people who can afford to hire a writer. Will overshadow business viability.
- Problems with areas in Africa because the winner is the richest bidder.

#### **Mel Gillis, Registered Guide**

- All three GUAs needed to make a living. He spread his across three different species.
- GUAs need to be viable, not too small/cut in half.
- Need to be good stewards of game.
- Do the same thing the commercial fisherman did.
- Bidding will jeopardize people who currently have significant investments.
- No significant transporter activity but it's growing, especially with air taxis.
- Two new guides there want to kill everything they can. He also has two federal areas.
- Doesn't think DNR listened to guides the last time. They don't know the industry and went about it willy-nilly last time. A good profession regulates itself.
- Young guys may not get a premiere area.

### **Steve Perrins, Master Guide**

- Third-generation guide business; built up a valuable business and wants to be able to sell to his son, so transferability is important.
- If he can't transfer, he doesn't want to do it. He doesn't want to lose his business.
- Put Dept of Law to work to think outside the box. Find a way to make it work and do it right.
- Need politicians to get behind this.
- Put all the guides in a GUA in a room and have them figure it out.
- Many guides don't want to set up a location--they want to be gypsies, so they don't invest in the resources and just move on when the game is depleted.
- If it all goes to drawing hunts, they won't be able to plan, and there won't be clients. Everyone will lose their businesses.
- Can't rely on DNR; needs a board made up of guides to run this. They can trust their peers but not a state agency.
- Cannot be "back door" like APHA is doing. Can't be secret. Needs to be collaborative and transparent.
- May need guides to travel to Juneau to lobby.
- Where is the money and staff going to come from?
- Previous funds for DNR proposal (\$1 million BLM funds) were vetoed in the budget

### **Taj Shoemaker, Registered Guide**

- Exclusive use is better for clients, guides, resident hunters, conservation
- GCP is overdue
- Questions DNR managing GCP. Nothing against DNR but they aren't guides. Will give guides very little say in it. Would prefer to see a board like BGCSB run it so people will have input. Board can best evaluate guides.
- Doesn't have to be statewide, can be rolled out as needed.
- Model on current GUA system which already limits locations.
- Transporters are problematic in many areas, not all.
- Implementing TUAs would really help. Board already has authority to do that.

### **Jeffrey Callison, Transporter**

- What happens under a GCP if there's catastrophic failure of animals in the area? Do you just lose your business?
- How do new guides get a chance to break in when well-established/wealthy guides have advantages?
- How will the number of areas be determined? Sometimes three isn't enough already when animals aren't available.
- How will transporters be restricted?
- What about abandoned locations?
- Generally in favor of GCP but unsure how it will work.
- Down South, private land is predominant. Highest bidder wins.
- When federal lands close, they all move to state lands within their unit.
- Very crowded near Anchorage since it's a hub.
- Who will truly regulate it? BGCSB? DNR? Multiple agencies?

### **Nate Turner, Registered Guide**

- DNR revealed that they did not understand the industry and were fed misinformation by people who didn't want it to succeed
- If under DNR, it needs to have a board that includes guides, troopers, Board of Game representative--people who understand the industry
- BGCSB or a sub-board under BCGSB could run it
- Hear appeals, make hard decisions, allow public comment, reprimand—all needs to be buffered by knowledge
- DNR can weigh in on land issues with stipulations
- Inevitable that the process will get complicated. Needs to be fair and objective.
- People are more conscious of what they are doing when it's multigenerational. Need to find ways to be creative yet legal.
- Needs to be public-led and board members replaceable to maintain accountability.

### **John Martinez**

- There are problems, how to solve them?
- Everyone complains and is infighting, but no one acts
- This will hurt some people, but that's what happens with progress
- These problems don't exist in areas where people are professional and can work together
- What happens to the guides who lose? There isn't enough land for everyone. Some areas don't have desirable game.
- People have different ways to hunt—horses, backpacking, etc. People will lie just to get their permit and not follow through on their business plan. We see that on federal land—how to enforce it?

### **Luke Tyrrell**

- Doesn't need to be in all areas
- Can be a dynamic process if we keep working through it.
- People are nervous about this because they fear it being rammed down their throat.
- Need to collaborate

### **McKenzie Mitchell, Registered Guide**

- Newer guide
- Works in a challenging, populated area
- Background is in resource economics; these programs are well-documented
- GCP will make it harder for new guides and many guides will lose their businesses; has happened across the country
- Look at failures of previous programs to avoid those issues
- Will absolutely reduce economic opportunities, especially with transferability
- Lots of ways to care for resources without a GCP



March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To:

Thomas Bay

Big Game Commercial Services Board

Regarding Guide Concessions:

I'm Wayne Kubat, I'm a Master Guide and Pilot and have run my own big game guide business since 1987.

There is a saying in Aviation, that there are 2 kinds of pilots, those who have wrecked and those who are going to. I've been involved in the guide concession discussion since the Osweichek decision threw out the old guide areas in 1988. I've come up with my own saying – there are 2 kinds of guides, those who are trying to get their foot in the door, and those who are already in and are trying to close the door. I would be curious the percentages of each and would guess it might be about 50-50, but that is only a very wild guess.

Those that are in and are trying to close the door, seem to prefer a prospectus heavily weighted towards experience and investment, and who was there first. I'm not saying that is wrong, and personally, I would benefit from that scenario, but I have my doubts whether it will fly or not. I started buying a business in 1987 and spent far less than others, but saw what I had invested, flushed down the drain with the Osweichek decision. That certainly didn't give me a warm fuzzy feeling about investing a lot in property on state land that was unregulated and open to anyone. Investing heavily on state land after the Osweichek decision seems to me to be bad business and not something that necessarily warrants Preference points in a prospectus.

I arrived in Alaska in 1976, about the time that the state was trying to divide up the permanent fund. The state initially decided that on the first go around, residents would get \$50.00 for every year of residency up to 20 years. That made sense to me. I didn't begrudge those who were here longer getting a little more. However, a lawyer named Ron Zobel sued the state, and it ended up that anyone with a year of residency, would all get the same. I can see something similar happening with guiding – everyone with a registered guide license is considered equal.

One of the last presenters last night, mentioned something to the effect, and I hope I'm not misquoting her, that there would be losers in a GCP plan and that new comers would most likely be disproportionately disadvantaged. I was encouraged when I heard chairman Bunch say "unless we can be creative and think outside the box". Bravo Chairman Bunch for having that mindset.

One thing that bothers me though, is that many that strongly want guide concessions on state land, seem to be mighty convinced that they are going to keep what they have or get what they want. That makes me suspicious about what might be going on behind the scenes, that they know and that I don't. What if they don't get what they want? How will they feel about concessions then?

There has been testimony that traditionally guides had lodges and provided better service and accommodations to clients. When guides had areas that they thought were theirs, certainly that made sense. Many of the old timers, Dick Gunlogson, Keith Johnson, Jim Harrower and others, had lodges and

did a lot of their own flying. Now many of the new guides who operate in areas that require air support, but have to rely on others to provide it, begrudge those who do their own flying and call them unethical. People pound their chest because they are a “ground pounder” or use horses, rather than being an “air jockey”. We don’t need that. They both have their place, and if we ever get a guide area system in place, your mode of operation will matter less.

I disagree with doing away with DNR over the counter permits. Interior regions accessible only by bush aircraft, often have small pockets of game spread across wide areas and outfitters have to be flexible. We don’t have the option of taking multiple hunters from the same camp year after year.

I personally would prefer BGCSB limit everyone to 2 GUAs or make them smaller, than going through a burdensome GCP plan and maybe ending up with nothing. I think we should also go back to 5-year GUA registrations with darn few exemptions. GCPs on state land will be a limiting process. Certainly, going to 2 GUAs or smaller areas will cause financial pain too, but I see down-sizing as less painful than being completely put out of business by not getting a concession. I see going to 2 GUA as a way to spread the pain out across the industry a bit instead of just hammering state land guides. I say that as someone who operates proportionately on both state and federal land.

Wayne Kubat dba Alaska Remote Guide Service

PO Box 874867

Wasilla, Alaska 99687

907-376-9568

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Bay, Thomas L (CED)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 31, 2023 9:59 AM  
**To:** Jason Bunch; Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Alternative that has the best of both worlds

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Hi Jason,

AS requested, please see Mike Zweng's suggestion regarding the GCP.

Thanks,

Thomas Bay  
Marine Pilot Coordinator – Board of Marine Pilots  
Executive Administrator – Big Game Commercial Services Board  
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing  
(907)465-2543

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**From:** Mike Zweng <alaskaadventure@live.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 10:07 AM  
**To:** Bay, Thomas L (CED) <thomas.bay@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Fw: Alternative that has the best of both worlds

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**From:** Mike Zweng  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 10:20 AM  
**To:** Jason Bunch ([jkbunch@acsalaska.net](mailto:jkbunch@acsalaska.net)) <[jkbunch@acsalaska.net](mailto:jkbunch@acsalaska.net)>  
**Subject:** Alternative that has the best of both worlds

I thought of this last night:

### **Problems with the current ideas on the table:**

The 2 guide use area idea is a broad brush and does not scale well to guides that are not hunting on state land and not contributing to congestion. For example, there are guides that hunt entirely on federal or private land that are not contributing to state land congestion. Kodiak. They should not be forced to reduce to 2 GUA's because it does no good for any user group.

The GCP may take some time to deploy, there will be an expense associated with it, and if deployed there will be some current registered and master guides that will not have an area when it is implemented and will not be able to outfit. There will be significant effort to deploy and maintain. A prospectus does not always select the most qualified guide to hunt in an area.

### **Idea:**

Have the BGCSB assign a cost to each guide use area to register.

Registered and master guides get points allocated to them yearly.

Each guide gets 3 points to spend on GUA's they choose.

If a GUA does not have state land on it, the board assigns a cost of 1 to register it. (guides that have 3 federal refuge permits could still register all 3)

If there is state land on it, increase the cost to register it to something more, say 1.5 points. This way if a guide does not have federal or private land, and only hunts on state land, they will not be able to register 3 areas since they will not have enough points to register (1.5 X 3 GUA's) since they only have 3 points total. This will reduce the number of guides on state land without impacting other guides that do not hunt on state land.

If there is a highly congested area, the board could increase the registration cost even higher. For example, 19C. Increase the registration cost to 3 points. This way if a guide wants to register it they would have to spend all their points on it. This will drastically reduce the numbers of guides that would want to register it, but not eliminate them entirely.

The board could increase or decrease the number of points in other state land areas based on congestion, complaints, and the number of guides that did register it. This would be a direct way to limit or increase the number of guides in a GUA without a GCP. It would also be a good way to bring guides to underutilized areas because you could assign a lower cost to these types of areas.

If there is state land and federal land (or private) in a GUA, it would only cost 1 point for the guide that has the federal land but he could not hunt on the state land too unless he paid the state land cost.

### **Added benefit:**

I heard that it is very expensive and difficult to take a guides license. You mentioned over \$100K in one case. And to me the small fines paid for a violation and being put on probation is really not a big deterrent in my opinion.

If you commit a violation, the board can take away points from you for the next year. This will give the board a direct tool to influence guiding behavior.

For example:

If you commit a "paperwork" violation you lose 1 point for the next year. For most people that would mean they lose one GUA. That would get the point across.

If you make a mistake like shooting an illegal moose, sheep, or sow with cubs, you lose more points. Maybe you lose 2 points.

If you knowingly commit a violation like wanton waste or same day airborne. You lose 3 points for one or more years depending.

**Implementation:**

This would be simple to implement and reduce the burden on the BGCSB. Simply stand up a web site that allows you to shop like we do for licenses or drawing applications. Like an amazon shopping web site. Once a year the site opens up and the guides go in there and shop for areas that they want, and are qualified for. At the end you check out and can only spend the number of points you have on the price of the GUA's you want. Most guys will have 3 points to shop with and some will have less if they had committed a violation.

**Summary**

This could be done quickly and relatively inexpensively

I believe it would be in scope of the boards power

It would reduce the possibility of the BOG having to take 19C like actions

It would not reduce the number of outfitters overall like a GCP would so I think there would be more support for it

It would reduce the numbers of outfitters per area

It will likely increase the quality of experience and guides may be able to charge more for their hunts

Resident hunters could attend BGCSB meetings and have a voice and request the board to increase the cost of registration in an area where there is guide congestion

It would reduce the burden on the BGCSB because it would be an automated on line registration system.

It would give the board a mechanism to easily penalize violations

No DNR involvement which I think everybody will like

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Monday, April 3, 2023 2:52 PM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Guide Concession Program

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

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**From:** Michael Sciotti <bigakoutdoors@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 9:56 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Guide Concession Program

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Hello,

I am a Registered guide as of 2020. I make nearly all of my income from guiding. I would like to add to my other comments concerning the concession program and respond to a lot of what I have been hearing about in meetings concerning the GCP. First off let me say that I am largely against this program.

The idea of the "jumper" going from one area where they lost their right to hunt to another area as being a problem for guides in Units of nonissue in the way I hear those talking, as a sort of overnight plague, is not legitimate considering all the barriers to entry that are already in place in order to get a unit. Including building time within that unit, testing - which only takes place 2x a year, getting land permission through DNR or another entity which has an application process, getting a GUA which takes an application process and waiting period, plus that person has to book the hunters, learn the area, and then invest properly to make it viable. And it has been shown that there are some areas that could easily accommodate more people.

In regard to using retired guides or other registered or master guides for judging the applications for an area. I see serious issues with a conflict-of-interest scenario using other guides to score another guides application. Being that if a friend of mine or a person that I don't like application comes across me, I could potentially have influence one way or the other on the outcome of that person.

Regarding listening to those on the board and other guides making light of the comments on the opportunity for "young guides" to make a living in areas. Being for now, one of those young new guides. Back when a lot of these people who are making these comments were the "young guide" a super cub cost between \$5k - \$10k, a unit was just given to you without a test, an assistant guide license was basically given to you by your registered guide, and costs were so much lower that they were able to charge a fraction of what we need to now days to simply cover costs. I worry about the availability of opportunity to those who are not Registered guides yet. As an industry there needs to be an obvious structure of growth and advancement for any person to feel that their investment of time and other sacrifices are able to be in achievement of something. If we make guiding unattractive as a career opportunity, we will not be able to retain long term help, that is driven, competent, professional, and has a strong work ethic. Those skills could be better applied to another profession. What happens if this person is hired by a guide in a "busy" unit and he/she jumps through all the hoops of getting registered and becoming legal. Are they to be put in the back of the line and wait until there is an

opening? The largest generation of guides and hunters are the baby boomers and largely they are beginning to retire. Could this mean a lot of these overcrowding spots are going to solve themselves? There is already a shortage as far as I can tell of assistant guides, and I think that continuing to make it more difficult can only hurt our industry in the long run. Being there will be less and less good help to take over our businesses from us when we want to retire ourselves.

These units of issue are units that there is a clear demand on a supply of animals that cannot be sustained. I am reminded of a story from my former employer, Tony Lee, a master guide, of when he used to make the majority of his business selling caribou hunts from the Mulchatna caribou herd. There was massive use and harvest of this herd, and many guides and transporters alike derived the majority of their income from these hunts. This herd then went through a rapid decline for a variety of reasons. To include weather, disease, and over hunting. (Much like those in the sheep areas today). There was no added GCP back then in that case, and the guides in the area were made to adapt and adjust their business models in order to continue to be viable. Adaptation is essential to success in hunting and business, especially in certain parts of Alaska where game can be spread out over far more vast areas. But not all guides and transporters chose to make the change and there were less operators. As those who were more interested in guiding as a "side hustle" or the "easy money" than they were the resource, went back to their respective alternate career. If a GCP was in place before this, the guides who remained from this would not have been able to move and adapt and they might have lost their businesses.

If this board decides to continue with coming up with a plan. It should be added within the plan for heavy preference to go to RESIDENT Registered/Master Guides who apply for their areas. And more so to those Registered/Master guides who hire Alaskan resident assistant guides. One of my largest concerns is when this system goes into place, there are going to be certain people who are going to lose their businesses in their current area. If Alaskan's lose their jobs on Alaskan owned land, in leu of an operator who does not reside in the state, then the state and this board has absolutely failed to uphold the Alaskan constitution. Residents are vital to the economy and the state for a litany of obvious reasons. But industries like tourism that Resident guides are involved in even more so, as we take in money from outside Alaska and that money is then kept and spent here in state. This is how wealth is built in a community, otherwise it is just wealth transferred. Nonresident operators use Alaska to make their money and then take that money back to their home state. I personally work for an outfitter on the peninsula that shows up to the state about 2 weeks before season, then operates his hunts, and leaves as soon as possible. How much money and wealth were really gained by Alaska as compared to the resident guide? This would encourage people who want to guide here to move to the state! This would be good for Alaska and could solve a level of the barrier to entry that some young guides would have to overcome. And people who move here and get involved locally with their communities and politics would be better to manage their areas due to the fact that they would far better understand the local and greater Alaskan perspective of the animals and land use and their decisions of use would be influenced by this gained perspective. Without this, this system would quickly turn to look like Canada or the commercial fishing industry here in Alaska itself, of a system where nonresidents or nonresident aliens have all the areas, power, and influence. Guides already have a serious image issue with residents, and this would exacerbate that problem.

Another thing that needs to happen is to be able to make these permits transferable in some sort of way. As a guide and business owner I am extremely troubled by what could potentially be a scenario where I invest thousands to millions of dollars into a business. Through my skill and talent, make that business viable and hire a great team. Then when the time comes to "groom" an assistant to take over my business for me and sell that business to that person, I cannot. What other industry are you not able to sell your business when you are ready to retire? Again, in order for this industry to remain attractive to the correct kind of individuals, we need to show that there is room for advancement. What is the point of being registered and working for a guide if there is no hope of owning your own business? I am proud to say that the very first camp I ever packed in, I now operate out of as my main camp. To deprive someone of this opportunity is not only wrong but it would be terrible for the area. From my experience I already knew the pulse of my area and what the areas harvest would allow for. There was no learning curve and we have been very successful in managing what we have. The other side of this coin is it turns into a system of whoever has the "deepest pockets." I am reminded again of the commercial fishing industry or Canadian and African outfits who sometimes spend millions of dollars in order to achieve their areas/permits. I am not entirely sure of the way to solve this hurdle, while keeping it competitive. Perhaps a system where the applicants who are scored the highest and approved to operate in that unit (hopefully one

of the assistants of the retiring guide) are able to then go and work out a sale price with the current outfitter. Then the current permit holder can choose from one of the candidates.

Transporters must also be limited if there is to be support to move forward with this. Not because in my area I have a transporter issue. But me as a Guide/Pilot who loses his business could then turn transporter/air taxi and take people in all the same spots. Or worse for the problem areas, even more so, to make up the difference in the loss of income or simply for spite. The guides would be restricted to their units and could not get away or adapt as needed to the challenge of a "bad" transporter.

In closing I would also like to say these problems are in localized areas of Alaska, namely unit 9 and in sheep areas of 19 & 13. As well as some conflicts in 14 & 20 which have more than half the population of Alaska in them. We need to be careful to not apply the problems of very local, popular areas of interest, to affect the areas of the state that clearly do not have these issues, nor the want of this program. Out in Unit 17 us guides have a great working relationship with each other, this unit historically has been a problem Unit. I think this shows that when it comes to the inter problems guide to guide, it can and will be solved with time. If the board takes notice, most of the people who testify in support of this program are those with Federal exclusive areas whom this doesn't affect, or would affect very little, or those in the local problem areas. I say if the state land guides want a system of GCP let them implement it in the local areas or keep it species specific. Like for sheep or bears in 8/9 only.

Thank you,  
Michael Sciotti  
Big Alaska Outdoors LLC  
State land guide



## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2023 3:13 PM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: GCP Comment

**Follow Up Flag:** FollowUp  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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**From:** Tim Nelson <tim@timsalaskanguideservice.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2023 1:36 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** GCP Comment

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To Whom it may concern,

My name is Tim Nelson, I have been working out of the same camp in GUA 24-03 for over 20 years. First working for another outfitter and later when he was ready to retire, I purchased his equipment and took over the camp. Over the years I have spent countless hours surveying the game in GUA 24-03 and GUA 25-02. In recent years I have seen hunting pressure from other outfitters increase and at the same time I have seen the trophy quality diminish as well as a decrease in overall game population. At this point, it has become impossible to manage the game populations the way we used to which was by spreading out our kills and harvesting the oldest animals. Currently when I try to let an area rest someone else will be there attempting to kill every legal animal they can find.

I believe that a guide concession program is a good idea and a reasonable way to protect the game. Of course, I also have the same fear as everyone else: that I may not end up with a concession, which would be detrimental to my business and livelihood. However, if there are no trophy animals left to hunt there will be no more trophy hunting and my business is doomed anyway.

Unfortunately, a concession program will also put many outfitters out of work which will cause a major upset in the industry. My only suggestion at this time would be to find a way to ease into the GCP initially in order to soften the blow by allowing outfitters who do not receive a concession to have time to plan accordingly and possibly still be able to conduct hunts for clients who were booked in advance.

Best regards,  
Tim Nelson  
Registered AK Guide/Outfitter # 1347

Tim's Alaskan Guide Service  
PO Box 110  
Chitina, AK, 99566  
1(907)823-4076  
[timsalaskanguideservice.com](http://timsalaskanguideservice.com)

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2023 2:25 PM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Comment on guide concessions on state land

**Categories:** GCP - BGCSB

-----Original Message-----

From: Drew <brownbear10ft@hotmail.com>  
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 10:50 AM  
To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
Subject: Comment on guide concessions on state land

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I am writing in reference to the Alaska DNR proposed guide concession program.

I am not necessarily opposed to the idea of a concession program on state land in some form, however I have a number of concerns that such a program could be manipulated for the profit of a few and severely limit opportunity for others that do not have a lengthy history in this industry or deep pockets as a means to "buy their way in".

Personally as a registered guide for the last 10yrs I have always been careful to avoid conflict with other outfitters previously established businesses, and use of state land ,by researching an area and operating in such a way to avoid stepping on anyone's toes. My goal has always been to provide a quality experience for my clients and a good experience can't be had when there is conflict with user groups.

I am opposed to any of these concessions being transferable as I believe it would only promote greed and limit the ability of many to start up their own outfit.

In the 2013 outline of the DNR concession program it is mentioned that part of the goal is to encourage guides to practice good stewardship of their guide use areas. Absolutely conservation and stewardship of our resources should be a primary consideration when choosing what areas to operate in or the number of hunters booked for a given area. However, suggesting that guides can effectively practice good stewardship in a given area when transporters are basically given free reign to operate anywhere and on an unlimited scale is preposterous. Most of the overcrowding, user conflict, and over hunting that I have been aware of has largely been due to multiple transporters using well known areas, bringing in as many hunters as they can manage and then when the area becomes overrun and over hunted moving into a new area.

Regards,  
Drew Hilterbrand  
Registered guide #1330

Sent from my iPhone

## **Guide Concession Program Public Forum**

Fairbanks, Alaska

March 29, 2023

Chair Jason Bunch opened the forum at 6pm and stated this would be a listening session, not a discussion or workgroup. The board requested the GCP Workgroup convene due to a perceived need for greater restraints/restriction on guides in the field based on observed potential violations. Jason has learned along the way that DNR had taken a lot of public comment and worked to protect the industry in their previous proposal. There are a couple of areas that guides would like to change/augment, but the framework is solid. The GCP Workgroup has been meeting with the prior DNR program documents as a starting place. He recognized that DNR and DCCED are under resourced.

During the board meeting earlier in the day, there was some public testimony on the GCP that is not captured here. Bunch alerted everyone that the meeting is being recorded and that additional public comment opportunities will be available in the future.

### **Chris Zwolinski, Master Guide 145**

- Doesn't want to have to battle other guides where he is working
- Has seen encroachment grow over time
- Transporters always a problem
- Realizes this is not a problem in every area
- Overcrowding is very hard on the resource
- Clients came for the wilderness experience and are not getting it, even though they may not realize that other guides are in the area
- Sometimes you can have two guides hunting the same animal
- Doesn't know why the state can't implement a program like federal government has done
- Why is there no teeth in existing BGCSB laws. Thinks they are too lax. BGCSB seems to have no spine.
- Screw up on federal land and you're done
- GCP program will be hard to implement, people won't be happy, might get sued, but it has to be done
- Why not cut some areas in half if targeted species are available to make a business out of it
- Shared areas (in DNR proposal) won't work; people lie and are greedy. People don't play nice.
- Three GUAs is ridiculous; go down to two.
- Potential bidding process could work. Not sure how but worth a look. Not sure of impact on conservation.
- Coke Wallace spoke up and suggested that guides work it out among themselves. Gave an example of that kind of solution happening today. Realizes that may not always be possible.

### **Don "Smokey" Duncan**

- There will always be complaints.
- Sheep and brown bear areas are the focus. Localized problem doesn't need a statewide solution.
- Why should an established guide have to let a new person take over the area?
- How to get around the common use law?

- What about when guides go out of business because of this? He needed all three areas this year.
- What happens when the Board of Game regulates you out of business in that area? You lose your business.
- Why is this even necessary? Just because you don't like other people around?
- How will guides afford a bidding process?
- Had proposed before 1990 that we identify the problem areas and let people have turns at them—once every 5 years.
- No one asked rank and file guides—non APHA members—the last time. APHA meets separately off the record with DNR to serve their members.
- Owsichek, McDonald/Kenai Sportfishing Assn all indicate this won't work. Supreme Court said you won't get a GCP unless the constitution is changed.
- He has a four-page letter that he will send to the board email.

#### **Phil Berger, Registered Guide (not sure if this is the correct name)**

- Was adamantly opposed to the last GCP proposal
- Something needs to be done; maybe DNR limit existing permits
- Most operations used to be run out of camps and cabins, so people took care of their investments; more likely to be a good steward of the land, generally speaking
- If we don't do something, there will be allocation issues; no way to plan a season on an annual draw system—he is already booked through 2027
- How will GUAs being split up impact concession areas?
- He managed to find areas without conflicts with other guides. Thinks it should be statewide to be fair, but that will make the areas that are currently okay become overcrowded.
- What about seasonal allocations: boat vs airplane vs snowmachine
- How to transfer a concession while still a competitive process? Need to be able to hand off a successful business to a new owner.
- Proposals shouldn't favor good writers or people who can afford to hire a writer. Will overshadow business viability.
- Problems with areas in Africa because the winner is the richest bidder.

#### **Mel Gillis, Registered Guide**

- All three GUAs needed to make a living. He spread his across three different species.
- GUAs need to be viable, not too small/cut in half.
- Need to be good stewards of game.
- Do the same thing the commercial fisherman did.
- Bidding will jeopardize people who currently have significant investments.
- No significant transporter activity but it's growing, especially with air taxis.
- Two new guides there want to kill everything they can. He also has two federal areas.
- Doesn't think DNR listened to guides the last time. They don't know the industry and went about it willy-nilly last time. A good profession regulates itself.
- Young guys may not get a premiere area.

### **Steve Perrins, Master Guide**

- Third-generation guide business; built up a valuable business and wants to be able to sell to his son, so transferability is important.
- If he can't transfer, he doesn't want to do it. He doesn't want to lose his business.
- Put Dept of Law to work to think outside the box. Find a way to make it work and do it right.
- Need politicians to get behind this.
- Put all the guides in a GUA in a room and have them figure it out.
- Many guides don't want to set up a location--they want to be gypsies, so they don't invest in the resources and just move on when the game is depleted.
- If it all goes to drawing hunts, they won't be able to plan, and there won't be clients. Everyone will lose their businesses.
- Can't rely on DNR; needs a board made up of guides to run this. They can trust their peers but not a state agency.
- Cannot be "back door" like APHA is doing. Can't be secret. Needs to be collaborative and transparent.
- May need guides to travel to Juneau to lobby.
- Where is the money and staff going to come from?
- Previous funds for DNR proposal (\$1 million BLM funds) were vetoed in the budget

### **Taj Shoemaker, Registered Guide**

- Exclusive use is better for clients, guides, resident hunters, conservation
- GCP is overdue
- Questions DNR managing GCP. Nothing against DNR but they aren't guides. Will give guides very little say in it. Would prefer to see a board like BGCSB run it so people will have input. Board can best evaluate guides.
- Doesn't have to be statewide, can be rolled out as needed.
- Model on current GUA system which already limits locations.
- Transporters are problematic in many areas, not all.
- Implementing TUAs would really help. Board already has authority to do that.

### **Jeffrey Callison, Transporter**

- What happens under a GCP if there's catastrophic failure of animals in the area? Do you just lose your business?
- How do new guides get a chance to break in when well-established/wealthy guides have advantages?
- How will the number of areas be determined? Sometimes three isn't enough already when animals aren't available.
- How will transporters be restricted?
- What about abandoned locations?
- Generally in favor of GCP but unsure how it will work.
- Down South, private land is predominant. Highest bidder wins.
- When federal lands close, they all move to state lands within their unit.
- Very crowded near Anchorage since it's a hub.
- Who will truly regulate it? BGCSB? DNR? Multiple agencies?

### **Nate Turner, Registered Guide**

- DNR revealed that they did not understand the industry and were fed misinformation by people who didn't want it to succeed
- If under DNR, it needs to have a board that includes guides, troopers, Board of Game representative--people who understand the industry
- BGCSB or a sub-board under BCGSB could run it
- Hear appeals, make hard decisions, allow public comment, reprimand—all needs to be buffered by knowledge
- DNR can weigh in on land issues with stipulations
- Inevitable that the process will get complicated. Needs to be fair and objective.
- People are more conscious of what they are doing when it's multigenerational. Need to find ways to be creative yet legal.
- Needs to be public-led and board members replaceable to maintain accountability.

### **John Martinez**

- There are problems, how to solve them?
- Everyone complains and is infighting, but no one acts
- This will hurt some people, but that's what happens with progress
- These problems don't exist in areas where people are professional and can work together
- What happens to the guides who lose? There isn't enough land for everyone. Some areas don't have desirable game.
- People have different ways to hunt—horses, backpacking, etc. People will lie just to get their permit and not follow through on their business plan. We see that on federal land—how to enforce it?

### **Luke Tyrrell**

- Doesn't need to be in all areas
- Can be a dynamic process if we keep working through it.
- People are nervous about this because they fear it being rammed down their throat.
- Need to collaborate

### **McKenzie Mitchell, Registered Guide**

- Newer guide
- Works in a challenging, populated area
- Background is in resource economics; these programs are well-documented
- GCP will make it harder for new guides and many guides will lose their businesses; has happened across the country
- Look at failures of previous programs to avoid those issues
- Will absolutely reduce economic opportunities, especially with transferability
- Lots of ways to care for resources without a GCP

## **Guide Concession Program Workgroup**

Listening Session 4/10/23

Atwood Building, Anchorage

Jason Bunch, MGO, BGCSB chair and GCP Workgroup chair, opened with an overview of the GCP Workgroup's mission, the problems it is hoping to resolve, and where the workgroup is in the process of reviewing options.

### **Tyler Kuhn, RGO**

Newer guide in Unit 13/14. A lot of guided and resident hunting in the area. Has worked with others to make it work for everyone. Some guides in the area have been there for decades. He calls ahead of time and talks through his plan with the guides in his area. Usually works well. Only one bad incident in the last few years; said it was his fault due to poor communication with his Assistant and got it worked out with everyone. Doesn't feel DNR is doing a great job managing land; guide in his area sets up tents/camp on the airstrip, tries to avoid daily use fees. Tyler and others complain to DNR and AWT but nothing is done. He puts camps in areas where there have never been game just to block others. DNR/AWT/BGCSB should have some teeth to take action. Guide/Guide conflict should have an existing solution using their current authority. DFG has hunter harassment laws now; can these apply to guided hunters? Has seen guides acting like armed thugs. Always seems to be the same problem guides. Can the board progressively discipline their license? Doesn't agree with a blanket GCP; should be more surgical solution. Moving to 2 GUAs would push guides into a smaller area with a detrimental effect on game (over hunting).

### **Steve Perrins II, RGO**

Has historically been supportive of GCP. Alaska should be the greatest place in the world to hunt but isn't currently. GCP could help or hurt. Viability of businesses is the key. Over hunting could occur just before permit ends, especially if not able to be transferred. Transferability is important. Need to accommodate new guides, opening businesses. Viability of business and conservation of wildlife are most important. Good operators who have established locations have incentive to manage the game in the area well. Criteria for transferability: Automatic renewal unless there are problems; ability to sell to an approved outfitter. Don't want to sell to just anyone, no bad apples. Said that reducing the size of GUAs would impact them dependent on where the boundaries were drawn. Not a lot of conflict in his areas. Calling up the guide and talking to him, working out locations, generally works to resolve conflicts.

### **Mel Gillis, RGO**

Reducing size of guide areas just depends on where the critters are. Transporters in Unit 9 and some others are the problem. Hasn't been a count down there in 20 years. DNR needs guides to help if they are planning to build something. Likes the idea of a GCP. ADFG should make moose require a guide. Probably would solve the problem with transporters. Not a problem across the state, just in some areas.

### **Jeremy Davis, MGO**

Two GUA would create more overcrowding the way they operate. Rarely have conflict. Usually the same guy who ruins it for everyone (overhunting and taking up too many areas). Need to communicate with each other. Honest and ethical guides who want their clients to be successful will manage well. Caring

for wildlife and not overhunting is good for committed businesspeople, more caring, don't overbook when wildlife numbers are down.

**Aaron Carter, RGO**

Hunts in Kodiak, which is pretty much all draw. Two GUAs as a blanket policy is not a good idea. Won't work for his business. What does a guide with a cabin on private property do when pitted against a guide with a cabin on state property? TUAs wouldn't work because it would impact guides. Maybe loosen restrictions if the transporter is associated with a guide. Jeff said that they need high volume to make a living. Habitat in Iliamna, amount of trash, wasted meat—all transporter problems. Tutka Lake had 40 camps one year, looked like a landfill, no one was cited. No accountability. Transporter hunting below tide line without land use permission is a big problem. Kodiak, Afognak, etc. Has seen transporters acting as guide-outfitters: Selling hunts and providing tents.

**Rick Green, ADFG**

ADFG and responsible hunters co-manage game.

**Jeff Pralle, MGO**

Explained WY example; survivorship is important. Need to poll all registered and master guides to determine whether GCP moves forward—don't waste time and money if guides don't want it; invest if they do. In the old days, exclusive use areas were managed well; incentivized good business practices. GUA 19-10 had four strong businesses. With Owsichek, this won't happen. Doesn't want yet another layer of government. The buzzword "conflict" is too weighted and used too often. Seeing someone in the field is not a "conflict." We are damaging ourselves if we keep talking like this. Congested areas need a more civil solution, no additional government, maintain viable businesses. Concept of GUAs smaller is worth exploring. Nobody wants to be the rat; but if we don't file a complaint, the BGCSB can't investigate. Don't complain if you're not willing to file a complaint. Be open and reasonable with your neighbors, like Steve said. Communicate. Concerned about use of private land under a GCP. Has had a state lease since 1991 and is concerned. If we have a GCP, we need large enough concessions to run a viable business. Guiding is viable industry; we need to temper some of this doom and gloom so we don't harm it ourselves. Biggest threat is from unregulated transporters who flood certain areas. Blanket solution isn't needed. Need an area-type approach. Need common solutions for all hunter types: Guides have to have 5000 upland from tidelands, yet transporters don't have these rules and are on native lands. Creates havoc for everyone. Transporters dumping hunters in areas have no incentive to manage game in that area. Heavy impact on the guides in the area. Transporters selling hunts should be held accountable. Explore smaller GUAs. Lots of ways to carve up into smaller GUAs—could impact businesses with multiple investments. Recommends looking at natural geographic boundaries, including GMU and subunit boundaries. Lat-Long lines are hard to discern, even with GPS. Use rivers or ridgelines. Are we just complaining because we want it to be 1950 again? Those days are long gone, different era. We now have to be polite, courteous, policing our own ranks, make an honest complaint. Maybe we don't need guide concessions or more government to manage our own issues. 2013 proposal would have cost his business \$30k at the time. Would be \$100k now. Very rarely sees legitimate conflict in 19C. Resident hunter tied up his airplane in the middle of the runway that he had paid to clean up and use.

**Aaron Bloomquist, RGO**



Envisioned guides looking at the maps and providing input regarding what works. Invite them to participate. When they did this before, guides felt heard and satisfied that the process worked. Jason and Jeff suggested using a digital process that could be done on everyone's own time and layered in the software. There is a proposal before the board to address upland hunting. Also seeing problems with "experiences" being advertised instead of using the word "hunt" and getting around punishment. Air taxi/pilot license (Part 135) is federally regulated. Looking for a way for the state to have a hand in air taxi regulation. Boat transporters are not as problematic. 330 contracting registered guides 10-15 years ago. Two years ago, it was about 270. Recently, it was 20 lower. Numbers keep getting lower—both registered and assistant guides. This problem is slowly fixing itself: Actual conflicts in the field among guides is a small problem. Most guides work it out. Resident perception of guides in high density areas is problematic. (See sheep closure this year.) Currently, there are dozens of GUAs and federal concessions with no one registered. Can we find a simple way to make a few of the desirable areas less congested? He explained some laws regarding transferability: Parks Service is easiest to just buy and sell; Forest Service sells an opportunity by the animal. State is different. Jason Bunch explained that DNR/feds will explain more about transferability. DNR has asked for ideas, so please send them. Looking for a creative way to get there. Possibly look at Wyoming. Structured permits are transferable. Maybe use that concept instead of land. That is how trapping works in Canada.

**Jason Bunch, MGO**

Suggested talking to the transporter on the board to provide insight and input.

**Jeff Callison, Transporter**

He has seen a 300% increase in his boat-based business. Concerned about putting limits on hunters when the game limits are never met in those areas. One-size-fits-all policy doesn't work. Maybe 64<sup>th</sup> parallel? How will Kitfox aircraft be managed--\$40k per plane and no regulation. How about registered management hunt? Anyone can do it but have to register. If a solution isn't found, it's likely to end up with a draw as a solution.

April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To: Big Game Commercial Services Board / Regarding Guide Concessions

I'm Wayne Kubat, I'm a Master Guide and Pilot and have run my own big game guide business since 1987. These comments are in addition to the ones I previously submitted to the BGCSB on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

The Preserve I hold a concession in, took 14 years to develop and implement their concession plan and it costs them multiple tens of thousands of dollars more to implement and manage than they will ever receive in revenue.

Any gcp will most likely have some losers and newcomers are likely be disproportionately disadvantaged. And guides that already have federal and/or private concessions, have a lot less to lose than those who operate on just state land.

During his testimony to the BGCSB on Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, Mike Zweng introduced the concept of a point system. I think his suggestion makes a lot more sense and is more reasonable, achievable and affordable, than another complicated and expensive concession plan. I had some different but somewhat similar ideas of my own, on how this might be accomplished.

**Proposal:** Consider all like land status in a GUA as a separate concession. In other words; any NPS land inside the same GUA would be considered a separate concession; any state land inside the same GUA would be a separate concession; any private land owned by the same entity inside the same GUA would be a separate concession; any refuge land inside the same GUA would be a separate concession, etc. Each guide would have to comply with the necessary requirements of each land owner.

Keep the current limit of 3 GUAs per guide in place but further modify the statutes to limit guides to a total of 4 public land concessions (state or federal). I.E. - a guide could have a private, state, NPS and BLM concession in one GUA, or a state land and NPS concession in 2 different GUAs, or 1 federal concession in 3 different GUAs + a state or private concession in one of those same 3 GUAs, etc. *(We can probably keep the 4<sup>th</sup> GUA exemption for a minor portion of a Federal Area that would otherwise be unutilized).*

Additionally, make GUA registration a minimum of 5 years, with few exemptions. If you are a farmer and your crops flood, you don't go harvest your neighbor's crops. Certainly, some exceptions are necessary like if you lose or get a new concession.

The above strategy seems like it would still allow for new entries and shouldn't put anyone out of business. And I think it would be a lot cheaper, easier and fairer than a complicated and controversial state land GCP. A few guides might have to downsize a bit, but that seems a much better choice for most than to risk losing an area altogether.

We should be able to use the GUA maps that we have now and keep the number designation for the GUAs the same, but maybe just add a letter designation for each individual concession. I.E. – If GUA 19-10 had state, NPS, Private and BLM land, you would designate the different concessions as 19-10 A, B, C or D.

**Other Suggestions:** Some feel strongly that state land Guide concessions should be sole-use and not joint-use. For those, this strategy might not be restrictive enough, and for others it might be more limiting than they want. This seems like a reasonable middle ground. If they want sole use, compete for federal concessions.

Place limits that prevent guides from holding more than 3 state or 3 federal concessions. There has been discussion on limiting just state guide concessions to two, but that seems like a fairness issue. If you limit guides to two state concessions, it seems like you should have the same limit for federal concessions.

Maybe GUA's with large areas of state land could be divided to provide more concessions and opportunity.

I think private land concessions should be considered separately, but you would still be subject to the 3 GUA limit. Or maybe private concessions should be included in the limit of 4 too? I'm still undecided.

Additionally consider some type of status quo or limitations on new GUA registrations. Maybe new entries in competitive GUAs could be counted as 1.5 or 2 concessions, to discourage entry?

You could penalize violations by taking away a guide concession for a period of time.

Some DNR modifications and/or buffer zones might still be needed, but I strongly oppose doing away with DNR over the counter permits. Interior regions accessible only by bush aircraft, often have small pockets of game spread across wide areas and outfitters have to be flexible. We don't have the option of taking multiple hunters from the same camp year after year.

**Other options:** 2 GUAs instead of 3 if there is still too much crowding, but this is most likely a bigger hammer than is needed at this time.

3 concession limit total per guide instead of 4 if competition needs to be further limited.

Could limit guides to a maximum of 2 each, state and/or federal land concessions.

Wayne Kubat / PO Box 874867 / Wasilla, AK 99687 / [wayne@alaskaremote.com](mailto:wayne@alaskaremote.com)



**SCI Alaska Chapter**  
**Eagle River, Alaska 99577**  
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Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
Big Game Commercial Services Board  
550 W 7th AVE, STE 1500  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3567

Re: Safari Club Alaska Chapter comments on guide concessions and a guide area system on state lands.

May 4, 2023

Dear Members of the Big Game Commercial Services Board,

The Safari Club International Alaska Chapter supports the creation of a guide area system on state lands.

Founded in 1971, Safari Club International is the country's leading hunter rights advocate and additionally promotes worldwide wildlife conservation. SCI's approximately 50,000 members and 200 Chapters represent all 50 of the United States as well as 106 countries. The Safari Club International Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK) is a 501c4 conservation non-profit established in Alaska in 1977. We currently have 750 members. Our mission statement is "First for Hunters - First for Wildlife."

Land owners across the country, and indeed the world, have various systems in place to manage commercial hunting. It is rare for landowners to allow an unlimited number of hunting guides, outfitters, or professional hunters onto any landscape. We are unaware of any private landowners allowing unlimited commercial use on their land. Commercial hunting activities are limited and usually involve terms that allow for revocation of access to ensure that wildlife manager and landowner goals are achieved—and to incentivize hunting guides to be good stewards of the land. Market hunting in the United States was outlawed over a century ago due to wildlife depletions attributed to profit motivated hunting. Professional hunting guides have a similar profit motive and, in uncontrolled environments, commercial guiding results in a "race for game" that can be hard to manage and negatively impact all users. In a well-managed environment, the benefits brought by visiting hunters are significant to wildlife conservation and rural communities. In order to balance the potential downside of guiding with the positive benefits hunting brings communities, it is necessary to select qualified and responsible guides who have proven themselves to be good stewards of the land. SCI-AK supports this approach to managing commercial hunting.

Alaska has vast public lands that are both federal and state owned. These lands comprise a largely undeveloped wilderness, with challenging weather, difficult terrain, and dangerous animals. Alaska's hunting guides are some of the best qualified wilderness hunters in the world. Their job is to safely accompany hunters in the wilderness in pursuit of sometimes dangerous game. Alaska is a state where the hunting tradition is strongly supported and—in many areas of the state—essential to resident's livelihoods. It is SCI-AK's position that guiding is too critical of an activity to not manage in a way modeled after successful programs not only in Alaska but globally. Limiting guide numbers, through conveyance of a limited lease to the permitted guides, has benefitted hunters who hold guide areas. Guide areas provide a structure where individual guides are rewarded for stewardship that ultimately reflects well on hunting and hunters.

The majority of state opened public lands are open to unlimited commercial use. In juxtaposition, Alaska's federal refuges, park preserves, and national forests all have some form of administered guide limitation. Federal guide area systems set terms for commercial operators and can be revoked for cause. These programs offer security for tenure and commercial viability for the guides while also expressing the will of the hunting and non-hunting public through the terms, conditions, and fees housed within the lease or concession contract. We request the state institute a form of guide area system on state lands, especially areas where subsistence or sport and commercial hunting are in frequent contact. In areas where guides are limited, the quality of hunting is better, the quality of the animals is better, and the likelihood of a conflict with

a commercial operation in the field is much lower.

SCI members who travel to Alaska to hunt with a guide with a concession on federal land enjoy a high rate of success. Sadly there are conflicts across the state right now in rural areas over hunting on public lands. We are certain that these conflicts would be worse if guiding was unlimited on federal lands and we are also aware that rural frustrations with the free-for-all on state lands is part of the motivation for proposing federal land closures.

SCI-AK is not party to the legal challenges that surround implementing a guide area system on state lands. The old, exclusive guide area system was found to be unconstitutional. However we understand the state can limit the number of guides on state land as long as these leases or concessions do not run afoul of the *Owseichick* decision. The Alaska Supreme Court was clear that limiting the number of guides on state land is not unconstitutional so long as the future program incorporates key provisions, as defined in the *Owseichick* decision. Because limiting guide numbers works—not just on federal lands in Alaska but globally—we urge the state to limit guide numbers in areas and set terms and criteria for revocation that promote wildlife conservation and land stewardship.

If a plan is not developed, and we see no change to commercial hunting regulations on state land, the hunting guide community will continue to lose its social license. SCI-AK's members are hunters, both resident and non-resident. We have subsistence, sport, and commercial hunters within our ranks. We commonly own Alaska's wildlife, land, and water along with the rest of our state's citizens. We support hunting guide leases/concessions that allow guide areas to be stewarded—but not owned—and that can be revoked for cause as outlined in a lease/concession agreement. As common owners we do not support divesting our resources to commercial hunting. We do, however, support a regulatory structure that provides commercial opportunity while conserving the resource in an effort to promote and protect our great hunting tradition.

Best regards:

*John Sturgeon*

**SCI Alaska Chapter President**

E-mail: [frontiertradellc@aol.com](mailto:frontiertradellc@aol.com)

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*Safari Club International Alaska Chapter  
First for Hunters - First for Wildlife*



P.O. Box 2988 • Soldotna, Alaska 99669

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
Big Game Commercial Services Board  
550 W 7th AVE, STE 1500  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3567

Re: Alaska Kenai Peninsula Chapter Safari Club Alaska, comments on guide concessions program and a guide area system within the State of Alaska

May 4, 2023

Dear Sirs,

On behalf of Kenai Peninsula Chapter of Safari Club International, we would like to express our full support for the completion of a guide concession program on state lands. The need, and request, for a guide concession program has been in place since 1988 shortly after the Owseichick case was handed down. The Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB) started this process in 2013 and although there was strong support, the process was never completed. This renewed effort, led by Mr. Jason Bunch (BGCSB president), is combining all the history and recent events to make this program successful, and we support it.

It's disappointing to understand that Federal land managers have had a successful guide concession program on federal lands for years but the state has not developed a similar process. It is also known that guided hunting in Federal concession areas is far less crowded, provides for a higher quality hunt and results in fewer guide vs. residents' complaints. As a result of this inaction by the state, state lands are heavily hunted by guided non-residents simply because their numbers are not limited on state lands. Comments are frequently heard about guides establishing in an area and hunting there until most of the big game is depleted, subsequently moving to a new area. BGCSB also reported an increase in guide-on-guide and guide-on-resident hunter complaints due to overcrowding on state lands.

It is our understanding, there will be an initial cost to develop and initiate the concession program. Thereafter, fees will be charged to the guiding industry to sustain the program. There will be some guides that will have to select a new area since they were not successful in ranking high enough to be awarded their top choice. That is unfortunate, however, the proposed prospectus process will award areas to the more experienced guides that have a history of ethical practices and land and wildlife stewardship.

Without a well-structured plan and changes to commercial hunting regulations on state land, the hunting guide community faces the risk of losing their community support. SCI club membership in Alaska consists of resident and non-resident hunters engaging in subsistence, sport, and



commercial hunting. We acknowledge that Alaska's wildlife, land, and water are a public resource, and we firmly oppose the privatization of these resources for the purpose of commercial hunting. Our support for hunting guide concessions is based on the condition that the guides act as stewards, and these leases can be revoked if the agreement set forth is breached. We are in favor of a regulatory framework that balances commercial opportunity with conservation of our state's resources. This sustainable approach ensures that our hunting culture retains its legacy and thrives for generations to come.

Ted Spraker

President

Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Chapter Safari Club Alaska

Phone: 907-262-9592

email: [kenasci@gmail.com](mailto:kenasci@gmail.com)

**From:** [Big Game Commercial Services Board \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C \(CED\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Concessions  
**Date:** Monday, June 5, 2023 12:12:16 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Robert Jewett <topguntreks@yahoo.com>  
Sent: Monday, June 5, 2023 11:41 AM  
To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
Subject: Concessions

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I would like to express my thoughts briefly on concessions. I understand having been involved in the guiding industry from 19 YO to currently 62YO.

Starting out working for Ken Bunch George Palmer Chuck Moe, and others . I have invested all of my adult life and carried a license all these years . The idea that larger Guide outfitters who take more hunters may get concessions. And small outfits are put out of business who have been active for years not right.

Last year I had a part 135 operator drop 5 hunters on a gravel bar where I had a camp and guided hunter. Nothing stopping him!

I believe that if the ability to guide is taken away from one guide and given to another the guide with the concession will simply book more hunters.

This will not diminish the pressure on animal numbers.

I think one solution would be to make guide licenses permits , like fishing permits that can be purchased and sold. Potentially bought by the state and shelved until concession areas or animal numbers allowed for its use.

I understand this is complex, I hope we can find a way that does not destroy 40 year career's like mine with the stroke of a pen.

Sincerely  
Robert Jewett



## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 6, 2023 2:43 PM  
**To:** Chambers, Sara C (CED)  
**Subject:** FW: Regarding the Guide Concession Proposal

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**From:** Jim Roche <jroche@magnumguideservice.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 6, 2023 11:02 AM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored) <biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Cc:** jroche@magnumguideservice.com  
**Subject:** Regarding the Guide Concession Proposal

You don't often get email from [jroche@magnumguideservice.com](mailto:jroche@magnumguideservice.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Big Game Commercial Services Board,

I have responded in past years to your requests for public comments as I have with DNR requests. Unfortunately I have not yet seen the evidence of it making any difference. I hope that my comments today will not fall on deaf ears or made up minds but on truly open hearts of people in positions of power and authority who truly seek the wisdom of the public around them.

Each year the board seeks public input in the way of proposals. Part of the process requires the person initiating the proposal to list all of the possible consequence of their proposal and who will be affected. I have not yet witnessed you doing that. That is the focus of my input. I understand that from time to time there is a conflict upon state lands by one commercial operator and another licensee. I listened to one BGCSB meeting online about such an interaction in central Alaska whereby the paying customers were upset because there were other hunters using the same glassing knob. Personally I am a licensed guide and have been since early 2000's. Rarely has that been my experience nor with any of my staff or my hunters. The only complaints I would routinely hear about through the grapevine was on the lower Alaska Peninsula during spring bear hunts when guides would squeeze into narrow strips of state land sandwiched between Federal lands and the ocean. Where I hunt in Unit 9, & 17 I rarely see anyone especially since caribou populations have crashed and moose populations are slow to rebound. The cost of brown bear hunts are so high due in part to the requirement of non-residents having to hunt with licensed guides and shear inflationary costs the number of annual non-resident hunters are much fewer. I truly question the need to revamp the entire guiding industry upon state lands through Guide Concessions.

I firmly believe implementing guide concessions upon state lands will have far reaching negative impacts that will outweigh any positive. The financial impact to the state of Alaska will be severe. Many guides will no longer have need to maintain their expensive professional licenses nor will their assistant guides. The financial loss to the state will be high but even higher will be the loss of all their clients dollars that funneled through their guide services into the state of Alaska. Most clients hunt with a particular guide because of a relationship they have forged together, not by the need of having to kill a sheep, moose or bear. The decrease in guide competition will only lead to higher prices for hunters and impact local economies dependent upon non-resident dollars. Taxidermist, hotels, airlines, state license fees, big game tags, expediting, aircraft maintenance, air taxi

services, local villages, native corporations, DNR and local Burroughs taxes will all will take a financial hit with a drastic change such as this. It is naive to think this is the answer to guide/hunter conflicts in the bush. Some competition is healthy and keeps prices down to consumers and provides valuable tax dollars and other revenue to the state of Alaska.

Someone upset with the outcome of a particular hunt will always bark loudly from the highest rooftop but it has been my experience that those hunters whom had a great hunt only whisper to their friends. It has been said that the squeakiest wheel get's the most oil. I am saying that the number of guide conflict complaints are small in comparison to the entire guide industry. We are living at a time when government officials all across our great nation are making decisions with catastrophic consequences that we are seeing almost daily in real time. I am cautioning the board to slow down and truly consider the ramifications of such a proposal and who all will be affected. Will the consequences of such actions far outweigh the cure? For me and my family it will be severe. I worked hard to obtain and maintain my professional guide license. I love hunting in Alaska and providing services to the public. The loss of income will greatly affect many people within and close to our guide service. What will keep air taxis from bringing in dropoff hunters? How will a guide concession limit the number of resident hunters and their encroachment conflicts with guided hunters? What about all of the subsistence hunters and their interaction with a guides clientele? The answer is it will not! A guide concession is not the answer. I had numerous conversations with Clark Cox of the DNR years ago when he was pushing for the same changes. That was what maybe 12-15 years ago? I wonder how much has really changed in the number of conflicts per year since then? What I told Clark is what I share with you today, if you want to limit the conflicts in the field you implement a draw system for big game tags. Another words, through a draw system based upon State biologists recommendations for each game management unit the State could better manage game populations. This would limit the number of tags being issued. Thus only the most successful guides and air taxis would have the client base. This would only work however if the draw system applied evenly to resident hunters as well.

In closing, would you be considering such serious regulation changes if game populations were higher? Another words if guides and hunters were not complaining would you need to be do anything? Will your proposals really make a difference in game populations? I believe you know the answer.

Thank you,

Jim Roche  
GUIR 1081  
(325) 853-1555



unapologetically **FOR ALASKAN RESIDENTS**

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email [info@residenthuntersofalaska.org](mailto:info@residenthuntersofalaska.org) web [www.residenthuntersofalaska.org](http://www.residenthuntersofalaska.org)

June 20, 2023

To: Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB)

Re: Proposed Guide Concession Program (2023)

Dear Chairman Bunch and members of the BGCSB,

Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK) **opposes** renewed efforts to implement a Guide Concession Program (GCP) on state lands. The BGCSB always had the authority to limit guides if that is the intention of a GCP. Renewed efforts on a GCP are solely about opposition by the guide industry to draw hunts for nonresident guided hunters that would solve the known problems addressed below.

### **What is the need and purpose of a Guide Concession Program?**

The Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA) proposed a GCP in 2008 with the ostensible intent to limit big game guides, saying: "Currently, overcrowding of guides on State lands combined with decreasing wildlife populations is stimulating social disorder between hunter user groups and biological harm to our wildlife, which leads to establishment of the restrictive drawing permit hunts." (*Reference: APHA letter to Palin Administration requesting state funding for proposed GCP in 2008*)

### **What has the board that regulates guides done to fix this problem since 2008?**

The BGCSB has done little to address and fix this known problem for the past 15 years, other than continue to push for a GCP, even though they have the authority to limit guides.

### **Are too many guides really the problem?**

The problem of "too many guides" in an area is really one of too many nonresident hunters who are required to hire a guide being given unlimited hunting opportunity by the Board of Game (BOG).

Unlimited nonresident hunting opportunity for must-be-guided species like sheep and brown bear = unlimited guides.

This has been a continuing problem in areas where the BOG allows unlimited nonresident sheep and brown bear hunting opportunities and the BGCSB allows unlimited guides.

### **Guide and Regulatory Boards Opposition to Draw Hunts**

Since 2008, the guide industry, the BGCSB, and the BOG have continued to oppose any limits (via draw hunts) on nonresident hunters for must-be-guided species in areas with known problems that would also have the effect of limiting guides and protecting our wildlife resources.

The entire reason a GCP has been pushed by the boards and the guide industry as the only option to deal with known problems is because the guide industry is vehemently opposed to draw-only hunts for nonresident sheep and brown bear hunters in areas where guides do not have exclusive concessions. Essentially, unless a guide has a monopoly to an area and any draw permits that would be awarded there, limiting nonresident hunters via a draw permit system is to be opposed, even if such limits would conserve our wildlife and prevent future draw hunts.

So instead of either board using their authority to fix these known problems, both boards have continued to align with the guide industry and advocate for a GCP while kicking the can down the road.

Even after the state spent years and hundreds of thousands of dollars drafting plans and holding public meetings for a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Guide Concession Program that was not approved by the legislature, and it was clear any future GCP would also likely not pass muster with the legislature, the BOG and BGCSB continued to push for a GCP as the only option to fix the known problems addressed by APHA in 2008.

Kicking the can down the road has led to the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) closing all sheep hunting on federal lands in a portion of the Brooks Range due to sheep conservation concerns, and to a drastic decision by the BOG in March 2023 to close all nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C for five years based on sheep conservation concerns. It also led to brown bear conservation concerns in Unit 9 and a shortening of the season.

Continuing to push for a GCP as the only viable means to fix the known problems will only lead to more closures or restrictions in other areas if unlimited nonresident hunting opportunity for must-be-guided species along with unlimited guides is allowed to continue.

The alternatives the BGCSB and the BOG have to a GCP to fix the known problems were addressed by DNR in their "*Alternatives to a Guide Concession Program*" that is Addendum #1 attached at the end of this letter. It was always known that the Board of Game can limit nonresident hunters and the BGCSB can limit guides to address and fix these known issues.

### **Newly Proposed Guide Concession Program Unanswered Questions**

- **What agency will administer a Guide Concession Program?**

There is no mention of just what agency or entity would manage a GCP, however the BGCSB is on record in 2023 contradicting their support of the formerly proposed DNR

GCP, saying that they do *not* believe that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is capable of overseeing and administering such a program. Quite the turnaround from just a few years ago when the BGCSB supported spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a DNR administered GCP.

- **What is the cost of a Guide Concession Program?**

There have been no cost statements for this newly proposed GCP, and not knowing what agency would administer the program and what other agencies would also be involved makes it impossible to determine what the cost would be, and what staff would be required from these agencies.

- **Who will decide which guides get concession permits?**

There is no mention yet within this newly proposed GCP what kind of voting board or entity would judge prospectus applications to determine which guides receive a concession. This was also an unanswered question in the formerly proposed DNR GCP.

- **Any Guide Concession Program would need legislative approval**

The formerly proposed DNR GCP did not pass muster with the legislature and never even got out of committee hearings. It had a one-million-dollar fiscal note, but that fiscal note was not the only reason the legislature rejected the plan. There were also several legal issues with a GCP and the likely lawsuits that would follow if it was ever approved. There is no reason to believe the legislature will think any differently now and authorize a GCP.

- **Where does overcrowding of guides and related problems occur?**

It's important to recognize that overcrowding of guides and the problems associated with that as described by the APHA does *not* occur on all state lands. In fact, it is just certain areas where these problems occur, primarily related to must-be-guided species like Dall sheep and brown bear. The proposed GCP, however, would apply to all state lands, attempting a one-size-fits-all fix that will include areas that don't need fixing.

- **Why is the BGCSB including transferability as part of a new GCP?**

It was clear in the last iteration of the proposed DNR GCP that transferability or the selling of any guide concessions was not legal, but the board is now including transferability as one of the options they may include.

### **In Closing**

In areas where we know there are problems, the BGCSB has the authority to limit guides. The BOG has the authority to limit nonresident hunters for guide-required species, which in turn limits guides.

If this really is about limiting guides (rather than granting guides exclusive concessions and a monopoly on an area), then the board should stop kicking the can down the road and do what they are supposed to: **Regulate guides.**

Sincerely,  
Mark Richards  
Executive Director Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK)

Addendum #1

## **DNR Alternatives to the Proposed Guide Concession Program**

The DNR plan for the proposed GCP offered several alternatives to solve the known problems of too many guided nonresident hunters that could be accomplished by the BOG and/or the BGCSB. Below are potential alternatives to consider, quoted from the [DNR planning documents](#):

*“The first BOG [Board of Game] alternative to the GCP is for the board to further restrict non-resident hunting opportunity. This could be accomplished by expanding the drawing and/or registration permit systems for non-residents, while simultaneously reducing or eliminating non-resident general harvest seasons and bag limits. This alternative would help to address the issues of quality of experience and conflicts between users by decreasing the number of non-resident hunters in the field. It may also address wildlife conservation concerns in cases where overharvest is an issue.”*

*“The second BOG alternative to the GCP is for the board to establish a specific harvest level for non-resident hunters. The BOG would allocate a percentage of the harvestable surplus, such as 10%, to non-residents, potentially statewide and for all species, and the vehicle for this system would likely be drawing permits. This is different than the first alternative in that the allocation to non-residents would be fixed at a percentage of surplus rather than just reducing opportunity as needed.”*

*“The first BGCSB alternative to the GCP is for the board to reduce the number of GUAs [guide use areas] a guide could register for. Currently a guide in the state of Alaska can register in three GUAs per year (not including Predator Control Areas). Reducing the number of GUAs a guide can register for could reduce the number of guides in a GUA, which would address the issues of quality of experience and user conflicts.”*

*“The second BGCSB alternative to the GCP would be to increase the overall number of GUAs by subdividing or reducing the size of existing GUAs. Guides would still be able to register for three areas but would have to choose between more, albeit smaller areas. This alternative could result in fewer conflicts among users by spreading out hunting pressure.”*

# ALASKA

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June 7th, 2023

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The APHA will be offering written comments to the BGCSB subcommittee charged with making a recommendation on how to institute a DNR guide area system. Our comments will be specific to the items on the agenda. The APHA may draft summary comments leading up to the subcommittee's final recommendations.

**Transferability of State of Alaska DNR Hunting Guide Leases**



**Background:**

Hunting guide businesses require significant investment in gear, equipment and facilities to operate in remote portions of Alaska where guiding occurs. Incumbent guide business owners would benefit from guaranteed leases mirroring a limited-entry type system where business assets and land use permit are linked and transferable/salable. In essence, some kind of private property right to the guide lease where revocation could only occur in extreme scenarios. New entrants to hunting guiding might also benefit from such a system because they could “buy” a business and area. New entrants to hunting guiding may also be harmed by such a system as areas and businesses grow in value over time thus creating a significant barrier to entry by elevating financial consideration as the primary factor deciding who will guide on state lands.

Alaska lands are subject to title VIII of the Alaska constitution. This means Alaska’s lands are commonly owned, must be equally available to access and subject to management that results in the maximum benefit to the public. Conferring private ownership of guide areas to hunting guides and allowing sale between private parties of these public land areas violates common ownership, equal access and maximum benefits to the public. If there is any question or a desire to debate this conclusion one only need to read the *Owsich vs. State of Alaska* decision that grappled with a guide area system that had the effect of turning public resources into a private asset. The Alaska supreme court ruled the statutes and regulations creating the old Exclusive Guide Area system contravened Article VIII, section 3 and were unconstitutional. The ability for private persons to transfer future guide leases between themselves is off the table and unsupported. Therefore, any transferability of guide areas on DNR land must be administered in such a way as to avoid the pitfall of creating a private property right to a publicly owned resource.

The APHA is unwilling to support any proposed guide area system that will have a high to even moderate likelihood of being struck down in court. Disallowing any form of transferability beyond short-term, emergency situations mitigates most legal risks to a guide area lease program. However, the APHA is hopeful decision makers will consider a framework where a guide area lease can be assumed by a qualified guide who purchases a guides business from a guide who is retiring or downsizing their DNR footprint. It is important to note and communicate that APHA’s membership is broadly supportive of transferability of guide area leases but we also have members who are concerned about the legal implications of transferability and oppose any form of transfer of guide leases as part of the sale of a business. Members who oppose

transferability are a minority of APHA membership as are members who will only support concession IF salability of areas is a feature of the program. As a group we see emergency short-term transfer, or assumption of lease rights resulting from an unforeseen tragedy or health issue (personal/family) as being critical to any system. On balance, a system that allows for emergency transfer will result in APHA supporting a proposed program as long we are satisfied transfer at time of sale of business as been fully explored and granted to the legal extent allowed.

***Discussion:***

For discussion purposes let's put ourselves in the role of a private owner with all of Alaska's lands under our domain to do as we choose with. Given the vast topography of our lands and abundant wildlife we decide to allow hunting guide/outfitters to offer hunts on our lands. Of course we try to find the "right guides" who we can trust to behave as they promise and honor the conditions of leases we grant with minimal oversight. We would work to balance competing uses of our vast domain and then set terms for our guide contracts resulting in valuable multiple uses of our lands. In remote areas that are economically marginal or short on infrastructure, we might allow open access for a trespass fee (similar to DNR current approach). In areas that are more valuable either because of the native big game species or their proximity to infrastructure we would realize we need a more structured program where we can be more selective of who we lease to, charge a higher rate and set strict timelines for reevaluation of lessee. If the animal resource is limited and harvest opportunities may be limited or closed we would work with biologists to make sure our permitted guide harvest is sustainable. We would develop lease criteria will be developed to ensure permitted guides will not conflict with other uses and if so the conflict between other uses will be resolved to achieve our holistic land management goals. Transferability of lease rights from one permittee to another would be an issue we would likely deal with case-by-case basis let's assume we decide to develop a boiler plate policy to apply evenly to all hunting guide leases.

First, it makes sense to allow our permitted guides to continue their operations under the existing terms if they get hurt, seriously ill or legitimately cannot be in the field supervising their hunts. This emergency transfer or short-term assumption of the lease area will be necessary to attract high-quality guides and be a good partner ensuring economic operations and hence the use we are hoping to see on our lands.

As the landowner we have decided on a proposed use intensity and limits to the number of guides in a given area, we have offered guides territories to develop and steward, created a competitive process to select we want as tenants and set financial terms and criteria for legally terminating leases. Now we need to decide if we want to allow our permitted guides the right to sublet or transfer their lease to a secondary party. The main benefit to us as the landowner to working on such a transfer protocol is to encourage our guides to invest in their businesses and run high quality, modern businesses that are competitive with other landowners who permit guides. As our permitted guides businesses' gain value so do our leases. In fact, some transfer provisions that protect our power and oversight is viewed as a competitive advantage we offer in our effort to foster high quality guide businesses on our lands.

***Permitted Entity- "Natural Person"***

In Alaska only natural persons can possess or hold a guide license. Corporate entities cannot be licenses nor are corporate entities subject to professional guide regulations or sanctions. Because you must be licensed as a guide to conduct guide activities, including advertising and selling guided hunts, we would confine leases to being issued to a natural person(s) who are legally licensed. This lease condition protects us from liability with the state, shielding us from illegal guiding activities, and it also opens the discussion on oversight of transferability. If we choose to issue leases to corporate persons oversight of transfer provisions are symbolic in nature because ownership transition of corporate entities can occur behind the veil of apportionment of ownership share. So our first step in developing transfer provisions with oversight is to issue guide areas only to "natural persons."

***Benefits of Transferability to the Landowner:***

As landowners the principle benefit of allowing transfers of the lease center on promoting success of our guides. If we have a program where a guide operates responsibly and successfully over many years of tenancy, but they cannot sell their assets with a corresponding lease transfer we will see less investment. Because we have ruled out carrying capital costs for our guides, they take the business risks, a situation where our guides are transient but must invest to successfully operate disincentivizes guide investment. The downside to us as landowners is without some option for our guides to recoup investments we are left with poor, underfunded operations that have little ability to endure financial shocks and may be so marginally operated we are left with land impacts caused by cost cutting operating strategies. It is in our benefit to promote successful and adequately capitalized businesses. We can anticipate low or

non-existent interest in our leases if we do not allow for emergency transfer provisions if a guide is hurt, sick or incapacitated.

***Risk of Transferability:***

A key feature of our successful guide lease program is competitive awarding of the areas. This means we garner interests from highly qualified, experienced guides who use and update best operating practices. If we allow sale or sub-lease of our guide areas we could lose oversight of who is permitted and has legal right to occupy our land. We may also risk creating an economic interest, reinforced by sale of areas, that usurps other opportunities we have for our lands. So the risk of transferability to us is the potential loss of oversight and foregoing of other land use opportunities as legal rights grow for our guide lessees.

***Example Transfer Criteria:***

Here are some example criteria that is designed to mitigate landowner risk while promoting guide business investment and financial viability:

- Lease issued to natural person - transfer to natural person
  - Mitigates risk of unlicensed entity
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- Probationary period required (example: upon completion and reissue lease and new lease)
  - Accomplishes goal of promoting investment
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- Transfer does not extend term of lease
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- Transfer does not guarantee issuance of lease extension, the area will be competed for on the regular schedule of offering
  - Promotes competition, minimizes risk of erosion of landowner right and authority
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- Specify lease value not be given consideration or value in business sale
  - Protects landowner from lease encumbrance in dispute between private parties
  - Ensures maximum flexibility of landowner to set new terms or conditions in future leases
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**APHA Position:**

The APHA is taking an unusual tact by considering transfers from the landowner perspective. The reason we are taking this approach is “the APHA members” are also public landowners who have an interest in working towards legal transferability as common owners and eventual lease holders. The APHA would like consideration of our discussion and criteria with the hope that transfer of guide leases at time of sale of business is achievable. We think that USFWS’s criteria for transfer of concessions at sale of business are legal by state law. If state leases allowed for transfers in the same fashion as USFWS we think this conservative approach would garner industry support.

***USFWS Transfer Criteria:***

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***Summary:***

The APHA supports limiting the number of hunting guides on state land so long as emergency transfers are a feature of the lease program. The APHA believes an avenue exists to develop strict criteria for transfer of a guide lease with the sale or downsizing of a guide business on state land. If legal review concludes transfer of a limited hunting guide lease as part of a business sale is clearly unconstitutional, we still see the benefits of a limited guide lease system and will support a program so long as emergency situations can be addressed to allow a business to survive.

Sincerely,



Thor Stacey- *Director of Government Affairs*

# ALASKA

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Sincerely,



Thor Stacey- *Director of Government Affairs*

## Chambers, Sara C (CED)

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**From:** Thor Stacey <thor@thorstaceyassociates.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 23, 2023 10:51 AM  
**To:** Colles, Christianna D (DNR); Green, Rick E (DFG); Chambers, Sara C (CED); Scott, Ryan (DFG)  
**Cc:** Jason Bunch; Ted Spraker; Joann Wallace  
**Subject:** AGAIN- Thank You!

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Team:

I just want to send along a note to thank you all for your time, effort and brain power as we work to formalize a recommendation for hunting guide concessions/leases. This is really exciting stuff, especially when you think about how we can “get it right” by considering the legislative approach vs. cobbling together existing authorities.

As this discussion is evolving I’m noticing and perceiving “buy in” in ways we have not achieved in the past... This is a wonderful wonderful development as we all know how contentious and kind of sad it is to see guides turning inward and fighting with one another- admittedly for legitimate reasons in some cases...

I don’t want to do more than express my thanks and appreciation here. Know that this work will be followed up on and APHA, myself and many guides are committed to not only looking at a program that helps solve problems for wildlife conservation, guiding viability but that we are extremely sensitive to how this affects our partners in the agencies who must regulate us ultimately.

Thank you so, so much!

Best,

Thor Stacey

(907) 723 1494

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**From:** [Big Game Commercial Services Board \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**To:** [Chambers, Sara C \(CED\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public comment.  
**Date:** Friday, July 7, 2023 3:22:51 PM  
**Attachments:** [Limited Individual Operator Concession.docx](#)

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Public comment for the GCP.

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**From:** Shay Rosser <shay.rosser@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 6, 2023 3:07 PM  
**To:** Big Game Commercial Services Board (CED sponsored)  
<biggamecommercialservicesboard@alaska.gov>  
**Subject:** Public comment.

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I've taken the liberty to attach a new permit type that I've drafted that could be considered in addition to two tired permits offered in the 2013 program. The permit I've drafted would add a larger gate of entry. The proposed option to award the limited GUA permit seems haphazard. The stabilization of small business isn't achieved through randomly giving a person who meets the minimum qualifications the permit. It's stabilized through vetting and review in order to allow the strongest candidate to obtain the permit. One of the reasons for forming the GCP was to avoid a guiding industry based on a draw in the first place. There are ways to avoid this and these options need to be fleshed out more thoroughly in public form. The administrative burden is a real issue but is a scapegoat due to a lack of a real solution. I feel that having a three tier permit system would be the best form. The current system proposed with two types of permits does not allow for any new entry into the industry. The addition of a third permit type would add further entry into the industry and would be more appealing to a new applicant.