



Guide Concession Program (GCP) Workgroup

April 13, 2023, at 9:00 AM via Zoom

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

Absent: Ted Spraker, Public Member

Facilitator: Sara Chambers, Boards and Regulations Advisor; DCCED

The meeting convened at 9:01 a.m. Many members of the public observed via Zoom.

Continued Review of Framework

Jason updated the group on what the group discussed at the last meeting. He reiterated his goal to work through the 2013 framework so guides are focused on specific ideas and offering feedback on them. This meeting will be focused on transporters, transferability, and mapping.

Jason indicated that he was soliciting input from guides on transferability ideas. Sara and Christy are working with LAW to explore transferability ideas. This remains an important topic that is in progress.

Jason asked if we could gather numbers of contracted hunts per person, per GUA. Sara said that she could organize a list of the workgroup's questions for IT to query the hunt record database if the workgroup provided the data points they were seeking. She reassured attendees that the hunt record information would be aggregated and remain confidential. She also said that she could create an online survey for guides to volunteer this information.

Mapping

The group moved to a discussion of mapping. Jason used 20-04 as an example: DNR offers 5 full and 3 limited permits in that area, but there are 16 currently registered by the BGCSB. Christy mentioned that they had asked guides for input for limits into each area. She mentioned that limited permits were designed to be small in number and cater to assistant guides who needed to gain experience.

Coke guides in 20-04 and said he felt the area could handle 4-6 guides but not 8-16. He rarely sees some of the guides he knows actively work in the area. However, he sees "back pocket" guides moving into areas where they know people are successful and then parking on top of them. Jason stated the board's own regulation about "appropriate buffer" was ambiguous. He plans to continue to seek input regarding maps. Reviewing maps might help reveal areas that are more congested than others; data and input can be discussed publicly among GUA users.

Application Process

Jason walked through the full permit application in Appendix B. He listed some questions that may not need to be asked but overall thought the application was useful. Suggested reducing subjectivity in questions about clients, land use, and hunt success. Question 1 in in Sub-factor A was an example of how the application could be subjective and could also require paid professional help in completing the requirement; answering this question could be dozens of pages. Guides would say that they do certain practices to "say the right thing" that they

actually don't do in practice. Some of the questions in sub-factor A were offensive to guides; potential applicants were unclear what the panel was looking for or if they would be penalized for what the law considers generally acceptable use.

Looking at the scoring criteria from the 2009 proposal, it seemed like a simpler process but one that would result in multiple ties. Christy said that with that type of application, tiebreakers ended up being determined by lot or by fee, which has other unintended consequences. Jason suggested that the operating plan could be submitted as a fairly subjective document and limit its size. (Feds limit to 5000 characters.) Jason suggested that experience should be weighted. He felt that the number of clients should also affect the score (more clients might mean a lower score because of potential negative impacts to land and wildlife).

Jason said guides would not be truthful in completing lengthy applications. Christy said that guides would be held accountable for the land management practices they state in the application. In the 2013 proposal, DNR asked for authority to enforce this on the ground, as well as in the permit renewal review period. Jason said that the operating plan should be a contract that is enforced.

Next Steps

Christy asked when the workgroup could discuss the alternative ideas that have been offered, especially those that will require less of a bureaucratic lift. Jason said that he is hearing "unbiased" guides desiring a concession program, but they don't know what a program might look like, so they can't truly say what they support. Sara and Christy offered that the alternatives might provide a fast track to solutions, especially if they are within current BGCSB statutory authority. Jason was concerned they might be band-aid solutions and ultimately not solve the problems.

He would like to see more guide involvement, and Sara indicated that it's unlikely 100% of guides will ever be involved, but more will engage once the workgroup offers a proposal. She cautioned the group that a concession program at this rate, especially if there are changes to maps, will not be ready for 2024 and possibly not 2025. Rick suggested that the 2013 program be tweaked in the few places where guides see the need for changes. Christy reiterated that the current program doesn't address transporters and that the system of awarding concessions and avoiding appeals is unclear. Rick would like to hear from guides regarding whether they want a concession program, especially if it doesn't address full transferability and other areas of concern, such as transporters, resident hunters, and air taxis.

Coke mentioned the "hunt planner" industry is growing and should be regulated along with guides and transporters. He reinforced the need to link guide activity to availability of game. He said if guides don't participate, they will have to live with the outcome that is produced.

Christy, Rick, and Sara will meet on legal transferability parameters and bring back to the group. Jason suggested looking at the federal program as a model; Christy indicated they were reviewed thoroughly in 2013 but US and Alaska laws are very different, so what is allowable in federal programs may not be constitutionally allowable on state land.

Upcoming meeting dates and topics

- Friday, June 9, 9am-12pm: GCP Workgroup will discuss **transferability**, including public comment.
- Public comment on specific topics (9am -11am):
 - Friday, June 23: **Permit terms and fees** (# of applications that can be submitted, length of time, full vs. limited/number of assistant guides, number of concessions that can be awarded per guide, vacancies; application fees, per-client fees)

- Thursday, June 29: **Application and award process; award evaluation panel; ties**
- Thursday, July 6: **Mapping considerations**
- Thursday, July 13: **Transporter considerations**
- Thursday, July 20: **Wildlife considerations**
- Thursday, July 27: **Enforcement considerations**

Sara will organize and send a plan out to the team to review by midweek and publish to the public. If Christy can't attend, she will send a senior member of her team to participate on her behalf.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05am.

Comments, feedback, and ideas may be submitted to BigGameCommercialServicesBoard@Alaska.Gov. They will be forwarded to workgroup members ahead of the next upcoming meeting.