

Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development

Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing

Big Game Commercial Services Board
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2024



Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

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This report is required under Alaska Statute 08.01.070(10).

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Board Membership (as of the Date This Report was Approved)

Date of Final Board Approval: 12/11/2024

Aaron Bloomquist, Martin Boniek, Michael Flores, David Lorrington, Pete Buist, Larry Kunder, Clay Nordlum

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Accomplishments

- The board was reauthorized by the legislature for eight years.
The board passed the sunset audit with flying colors, largely due to former Chairman Jason Bunch, with just a few small suggestions to the Board and division from the Auditors. The only suggestion to the Board was to find a private landholder to fill the vacant seat. This has not happened, although we have reached out to numerous individuals.
- A Bill was introduced during the Legislative Session to create an Executive Administrator position dedicated to the BGCSB. This bill ran out of time but was widely supported. In the interim, the Department has placed Tom Bay in this position so we are no longer sharing him with the Board of Marine Pilots.
- The board has nearly completed the regulatory process to change several Guide Use Area boundaries to better suit a viable business in these areas. This project should be complete and in regulation before the 2025 fall hunting season.
- Continue to build and strengthen partnerships between the various agencies involved in the guide profession including ADF&G, Alaska Wildlife Troopers and the various land managers.
- A Guide Concession Program (GCP) bill was successfully passed through the Legislature in 2024 with the help of various agencies. The program will be hosted by DNR. The bill did not have a fiscal note attached so funding is in question.
- Work with the department to finish an automated hunt record filing system.
This project has been in the works for several years. Hunt records and transporter activity reports take up to 50% of staff time to manually enter the data. It seems the IT department is now working to make it a reality. The Director has committed to it being finished by our March meeting.
- Continue to monitor trends in violations and make adjustments as required.
The board continually monitors trends in violations and makes adjustments as needed. Violations have continued to be stable and mostly minor. The few major Violations are frustratingly slow to make it to the Board. The worst violators continue operating for years while their criminal violations work through the system. We are working with OSP and our investigative staff to try to expedite these cases.
- Add sublegal animal violations to the board's disciplinary matrix.
This needs to be officially added to the matrix but it has been used in several cases. Our goal is competence and compliance in licensees. In the case of a sublegal animal take, the reviewing board members have been suggesting a certain number of hunts for that species where the licensee must act as a packer before they are allowed to guide a hunter on their own. This is usually 1-3 hunts, depending on severity of the violation or if it is a first offense or more.
- Promptly adjudicate consent agreements for minor violations.
This has become a priority for the board. Minor violations usually happen unintentionally and are very stressful for licensees. Individual board members and the board's investigator have done a great job getting these issues cleared up promptly.
- The board has been updating GUA exams. Many of these have been updated but more discussion is needed as to the efficacy of these exams and the practicality of updating them every few years.
- The board is constantly updating RGO testing and the Department is constantly updating study material. This is an ongoing task.
- The board establishes subcommittees/workgroups as needed. Currently there is a Transporter workgroup and a Legislative subcommittee. We anticipate a subcommittee/workgroup to deal with the GCP.
- Continue to strengthen public trust and participation through communication, education and efficiency.
Public comment is provided at most meetings and everybody's voice that wants to be heard is.

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Activities

- The board will continue to work on regulation projects and make efforts to streamline processes where possible. Current regulation projects include amendments to the following regulations:
 - 12 AAC 75.200, REGISTERED GUIDE-OUTFITTER PROVIDING SERVICES
 - 12 AAC 75.230, GUIDE USE AREA REGISTRATION
 - 12 AAC 75.240, SUPERVISION
 - 12 AAC 75.250, PARTICIPATION IN A HUNT
 - 12 AAC 75.400, TRANSPORTER ACTIVITY REPORT
 - 12 AAC 75.440, PROFESSIONAL ETHICS STANDARDS FOR PROVIDERS OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES.Other current regulation projects include creating new regulations for the defining of boat-based transporters with living accommodations on saltwater, marking of aircraft and boats used by guides and transporters, and helicopter use.
- The board is behind on getting regulation projects out for public comment. This is primarily due to the complication of the regulations process at the department over the last five or more years, and the overburden of tasks to staff being shared between multiple Boards. The board has also experienced some turnover in members and the chairman.
- In addition to current regulatory projects, the board will continue work on the following:
 - Complete the process to help DNR implement the Guide Concession Program as authorized by statute.
 - Construct a workgroup for transporter concessions.
- Start a new regulations project to simply repeal unneeded regulations. There are regulations that are duplicates, outdated and simply unneeded. A repeal project should be simple with no delays for in-house legal review because the board has sole authority to repeal regulations.
- Seek Legislative support to
 - Provide for emergency situations by relaxing some regulations for a contracting guide-outfitter in some situations.
 - Add survivorship for emergency transfers.
 - Remove some former regulations from statute so the board may make changes.
 - Allow for hunt planner and booking agent licenses.
 - Add (two?) guide seats to the board to ease the workload of board members.
 - Provide Commissioner emergency authority to deal with unforeseen situations (covid, licensee illness, deaths, etc.)
 - Authorize the Board to implement continuing education for licensees.
 - Change the fine amount that triggers license suspension.
- Continue to strengthen the ethics standards. We continue to incorporate ethical violations into sanction actions. Moving forward, ethics violations may need to be incorporated into the disciplinary guidelines and precedence matrix. These violations are very difficult to maneuver and often times are without enough proof to justify board action. The board recognizes these barriers and plans to move forward with procedures to aid in the decision process of ethics violations once current projects are complete.

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Needs

- \$2,000 for member travel to represent the BGCSB at Board of Game meetings.
- Funding to have 3rd party proctors proctor practical exams (4 days per year).
- Funding for IT project.
- Funding to have board meetings in hot topic areas.