

Department of Commerce, Community
and Economic Development

Division of Corporations, Business
and Professional Licensing

Big Game Commercial Services Board

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2025



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: 7/18/2025

Aaron Bloomquist, Keegan McCarthy, Martin Boniek, Michael Flores, David Loring, Larry Kunder, Clay Nordlum

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Accomplishments

- The board's sunset date was reapproved by the legislature until June 30, 2032:
 - o As mentioned in last year's annual report, 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 completed the regulatory process to change several Guide Use Area boundaries to better suit a viable business in the areas.
- 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 repassed through the Legislature in 2025 with the help of various agencies. The program will be hosted by DNR. The bill also added a fiscal note, which will allow for deployment of the program.
- Work with the department to finish an automated hunt record filing system. This system will be rolled out in July 2025.
 - o This project has been in the works for several years. Hunt records and transporter activity reports take up a lot of staff time to manually enter the data. It seems the IT department is now working to make it a reality.
- Continue to monitor trends in violations and make adjustments as required:
 - o 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:
 - o 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:
 - o 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 updated their GMU exams.
- 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 workgroup. We anticipate a workgroup to deal with the GCP.
- Continue to strengthen public trust and participation through communication, education and efficiency:
 - o 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:

1st Project:

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 75.405, MARKING OF AIRCRAFT AND VESSELS USED BY TRANSPORTERS
12 AAC 75.440, PROFESSIONAL ETHICS STANDARDS FOR PROVIDERS OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES.
12 AAC 75.455, HELICOPTER USE
12 AAC 75.655, BOAT-BASED TRANSPORTERS WITH LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS ON SALTWATER

2nd Project:

12 AAC 75.100, APPLICATION FOR REGISTERED GUIDE-OUTFITTER EXAMINATION
12 AAC 75.110, REGISTERED GUIDE-OUTFITTER EXAMINATIONS
12 AAC 75.260, REGISTERED GUIDE-OUTFITTER CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

- 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, the Governor's administrative order to pause all regulation projects until further notice has put all of the board's current regulation projects on hold.
- In addition to current regulatory projects, the board will continue work on the following:
 - o Complete the process to help DNR implement the Guide Concession Program as authorized by statute.
 - o Construct a workgroup for transporter concessions.
 - o Start a new regulations project to simply repeal the unneeded regulations.
 - o 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 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 amounts that triggers license suspensions.
 - o 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

- 3rd party proctor service to provide examinations outside of the current two times a year process. This will also allow examinations to be administered remotely.
- Lifting of the administrative order regarding pausing of regulation projects, to successfully and safely conduct business.
- Allowing board travel to conduct business in-person at important problem areas around the state.