

## **Fishing Outfitters and Guides Advisory Board Meeting Minutes June 12, 2025**

**Board Member Attendees:** Christopher Hayes, Gary Korrell, Ian McCreary, Larry Larson, Blake Jackson, John Schwalbe

**WGFD Attendees:** Alan Osterland, Dave Zafft, Kevin Gelwicks, Janet Milek, Amanda Fry, Matt Hahn, Jessica Baker (virtual),

**Other Attendees:** Commission John Masterson, Representative Andrew Byron, and Amanda McKee from the Outfitter Board

Chief of Fisheries Alan Osterland opened the meeting and reviewed Roberts' Rules of Order procedures, explained the per diem and reimbursement process, and informed the attendees of the new website page for the Fishing Outfitters and Guides Advisory Board. Chairman Hayes motioned to bring the meeting to order and it was seconded by Ian McCreary. All members present voted in favor (Owen Miller was absent).

The Fishing Outfitters and Guides Advisory Board (Board) met to discuss the implementation of the Chapter 71 draft regulation and the public comment process, which is open June 13, 2025 through July 31, 2025. The board reviewed the regulatory process and their upcoming task of making recommendations to the Travel, Recreation, and Wildlife Interim Committee (TRW) about their organizational structure by November 1, 2025. The meeting focused on comparing fishing guide and outfitter regulations across different states, with detailed discussions about licensing systems, insurance requirements, and enforcement mechanisms. The Board ultimately agreed to recommend bringing commercial fishing outfitters and guides under a regulatory board structure with further recommendations to follow. The Board wants to incorporate registration numbers, pursuant to passing on Chapter 71 effective January 1, 2026 into their analysis.

### **Other States' Fishing Guide Regulation Comparison**

Alan Osterland and Kevin Gelwicks provided detailed information about licensing systems in Alaska, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Colorado and Wyoming. They explained that while states have varying requirements, common elements include licensing requirements, professional standards, insurance requirements, reporting obligations, examination requirements and most states are operated under an independent board separate from the states wildlife agency. It was noted that Idaho and Montana have the most robust programs that include regulation on the numbers of outfitters or guides that can operate on certain waters. The discussion highlighted that while federal agencies require insurance for permits on federal lands, states have more flexibility in their requirements, and there was a question from Jedidiah Johnson in Gillette about how to handle guides operating across state lines on reservoirs like Flaming Gorge.

Blake noted that the Idaho regulations that reduced the number of outfitters didn't reduce the number of total float fishing trips, because private float trips filled the void. However, overall catch rates did decline. Chris shared his observation that Idaho does a good job of enforcing outfitter/guide regulations on the South Fork. Enforcement personnel work ramps, use sting operations to catch people operating without a permit, and officers run the river on jet sleds.

## **Lunch Break**

Chairman Hayes motioned to re-open the meeting and Ian McCreary seconded the motion.

## **Board of Outfitters**

Amanda McKee presented a detailed overview of Wyoming's statutes governing big game outfitters and guides, explaining key definitions, licensing requirements, and board responsibilities. She clarified that outfitters and guides must be licensed unless providing non-commercial services, and outlined the Board of Outfitters' composition, powers, and enforcement capabilities. The discussion touched on insurance requirements, fee structures, and the distinction between commercial and non-commercial guiding activities. Amanda McKee joined the discussion about the board's operations and explained the current structure, budget, and operational details of the outfitters board, highlighting the need for additional funding and resources if fishing is incorporated. The wildlife outfitter board currently gets about \$415,000 annually in registration revenue from more than 1,200 guides and 292 outfitters. The group discussed the challenges and considerations of merging fishing operations with hunting outfitters, including regulatory frameworks, financial implications, and the need for legislative changes. Amanda McKee emphasized the importance of determining the board's structure and proposed a multi-armed approach under an overarching outfitting board. Amanda McKee and others noted that current legislation would need significant restructuring to merge fishing under the existing board, while creating a separate board would require new legislation. She felt that the existing board would need at least one additional administrator, a few assistants and multiple new fishing outfitters as board members, plus the funding and equipment to go along with the board positions. Amanda later clarified that they would not need to add administrative positions if the fishing outfitters are included. Current expenses for the investigator position include rental of a ½ ton pickup from State Motor Pool, mileage costs when pulling a horse trailer with his personal vehicle, and \$625 per month for home office space and horse rental. Chris shared that he is hearing a lot of hesitancy from the fishing guide community to put the board under the existing outfitter board. There was discussion within the board about waiting for data collection from boat registrations that begin January 1, 2026 before making a final recommendation, as this would help determine the number of fishing guides and outfitters in Wyoming. The group agreed that immediate legislative action might be challenging during the upcoming budget session, a general session in 2027 would provide a better opportunity for meaningful change.

## **Board Motions**

The Board worked on language for their recommendation to TRW. Ian McCreary proposed a motion to recommend that commercial fishing outfitters and guides be brought under a regulatory board structure, but the specific structure (whether a new independent board or integration with the existing outfitter board) will be determined after collecting more data through the 2026 fishing season. The motion was seconded by John Schwalbe and passed with all members present in favor (Owen Miller was absent). The board will make a request to TRW for an extension until November 1, 2026, when they will provide a more detailed proposal based on the collected data. They also acknowledged the need for enforcement mechanisms and industry standards, which may be addressed in future legislation.

Chairman Hayes motioned to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Blake Jackson. All members present voted in favor (Owen Miller was absent) and the meeting was adjourned.