

Meeting Minutes: Boat Registration & Outfitters Board Advisory Meeting

Date: April 3, 2026

Location: Wyoming Game and Fish-Casper Regional Office and Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Board Members: Chris Hayes (Chair), Ian McCreary, Gary Korell, Owen Miller, Larry Larson, Blake Jackson, John Schwalbe.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD): Alan Osterland, Dave Zafft, Kevin Gelwicks, Darren Rhea, Valerie Taro.

Public/Others: Representative Andrew Byron, TRW Committee Chairman, Ryan Hudson-member of the public

Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides Board Members: Teal Wyckoff, Jeff Smith, Ted Jenkins, Jim Schell, Lee Livingston

Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides staff: Amanda McKee, Brandy Durante

The meeting was called to order by Chris Hayes.

A Boat Registration Update was given by Alan Osterland, Chief of Fisheries WGFD and Dave Zafft, Assistant Chief of Fisheries. The Department has registered 276 boats as of April 2, 2026. Of those, 243 are individuals and the revenue from those registrations is \$90,000. Multiple individuals have purchased multiple registrations; one person with seven registrations, two with six registrations, and one with five registrations, etc. The majority of registrants (n=221 of 276) have purchased a single registration. Commercial guides are required to register their boats annually the cost is \$350.00 per boat and they must report trips twice a year through the online system created for Fishing Outfitters and Guides. This went into effect January 1, 2026. As of March 30, a total of 34 trips had been reported in the online reporting system. As with any new regulation, the department will work on education to increase compliance. Department law enforcement personnel will be part of that education component.

Representative Byron talked about putting the legislation together. The primary goal of the current registration program is to gather data to understand the number of people conducting commercial fishing activities which was previously unknown. Representative Byron noted there are a lot of single boat operators across the state. As the data continues to be collected it will help the board determine if a separate outfitting board for fishing is practical or if joining with Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides would be the right fit for this group.

Ryan Hudson reported that some federal permitting agencies were not fully familiar with the new state laws concerning fishing guides. Representative Byron clarified federal permits do not supersede state law and outfitters and guides operating in the state must meet all Wyoming requirements. He also suggested signage at the busy boat ramps. Alan Osterland stated the Department could look into signage in regions; however, the Department does not have an in-house sign department and would need to purchase them. The suggestion was also made to remind federal agencies to familiarize themselves with requirements of the new WGFD regulations and Wyoming state statute.

Representative Byron reminded the board of the Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resource Committee meeting scheduled for September 8-9 in Jackson and suggested the board have their recommendations prepared to present at the meeting, including suggested changes to the statute.

Members and staff of the Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides were present to field questions on how their board operates structurally and financially.

Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides currently registers 300 outfitters and approximately 1,300 guides each year. This board is a self-funded board and does not receive any general fund money. There is an application process for outfitters and guides. There is also a fee structure for outfitters (\$600 per year), guides (\$145 per year), and a short-term guide license for (\$70). There is also an application fee of \$1,600.00 for new outfitters and must undergo a lengthy review process including interviews and equipment inspections. These fees were last raised in 2008.

To become an outfitter, applicants must be 18 years of age, have 70 days of acceptable guide experience, and provide a full operating plan covering hunting locations, lodging, equipment, and necessary commercial use permits from Forest Service and BLM. Guides only need to complete an application and an open-book exam and operate under the outfitter's responsibility. Outfitters are required to carry insurance and this policy covers the guide. Guides are considered employees of the outfitters and guides cannot operate as a contractor for the outfitter.

The Wyoming State Board of Outfitter and Professional Guides currently operates on an antiquated paper system for applications and reporting. Due to budget constraints, they have not implemented an online software system. The existing budget for the current board is \$800,000. They have three full-time employees. The current board borrowed money from the state for their startup costs which was later repaid.

The fishing outfitting industry has a complex permitting structure, mixing federal permits that are often issued to large outfitters who then sublet use days to single boat operators (guides). The industry needs regulation especially concerning single operators and out of state guides. The advisory board will need to determine if walkway (wade) fishing activities should be regulated with boats. It is estimated that less than 10% of professional fishing guide activities are strictly walkway guides. There are also concerns of overcrowding in public access areas. The overcrowding issue extends to land-use conflict, where property owners are frustrated by people anchoring, existing boats, or leaving refuse on private riverbanks.

If this Board makes the recommendation to create a stand-alone Fishing Outfitter Board the estimated start up revenue would be \$380,000. Chris Hayes stated the board will need to do an in-depth review of the budget of the State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides to determine if a new Fishing Outfitter Board would need a similar annual budget to operate effectively.

There was discussion about the need for an investigator like the one that is employed by the Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides. Their investigator handles

customer complaints and fraud, not just criminal investigations. It was agreed that enforcement would need to be clarified and would take coordination with federal agencies, Game and Fish and other permitting agencies to establish jurisdictional roles. Currently, BLM requires a permit if an outfitter uses a BLM boat ramp, anchors on BLM lands, or allows clients to wade fish on BLM lands.

It was proposed that the next meeting should be scheduled after the board has received the information from The Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides and also the information from WGFD on the number of boats registered. The goal of the next meeting should be to develop a hypothetical recommendation based on potential registration numbers so a quick decision can be made once final numbers are established. Chris Hayes emphasized the need for a clear, data-driven, and justifiable document that outlines the reasonings behind the recommendations that will be provided to TRW in September.

Meeting Adjourned: Chris Hayes moved to close; Ian McCreary seconded.

Action Items:

- Request for WGFD to send a clear bullet point email/1 page handout summarizing the requirements for sticker placement and reporting procedures.
- Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Guides will share their current operating plan, application packet, reporting procedures and any available financial information for FOGO to review
- Chris Hayes will prepare a draft of 2 proposals:
 1. Recommending FOGO join Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides
 2. Recommending Legislation to create an independent FOGO Board.

Next meeting will be the end of May. Chris asked the board members to check their calendar for availability.