

Fishing Outfitters and Guides Advisory Board Meeting Minutes August 12, 2025

Board Member Attendees: Christopher Hayes, Gary Korrell, Ian McCreary, Larry Larson, John Schwalbe, Owen Miller

WGFD Attendees: Alan Osterland, Dave Zafft, Kevin Gelwicks, Amanda Fry, Jessica Baker, Eric Wiltanger, Aaron Kerr

Other Attendees: Representative Andrew Byron, Representative Marilyn Connolly, members of the public

Chapter 71 Regulation Feedback Review

The Advisory Board reviewed public comments received on Chapter 71 proposed regulations, with Dave presenting a summary of feedback from meetings held across the state. Key concerns by commenters included high fees for smaller operators, the need for temporary registration options, and issues with the July reporting deadline. Dave proposed several changes, including making stickers transferable between watercraft, creating a dashboard slip for commercial trips, and potentially reducing fees. The board also discussed the possibility of implementing online reporting to address the July deadline concern.

Guiding Fee and Registration Review

The board discussed feedback on proposed regulations for guiding fees and registration. They discussed allowing non-boat owners to register boats for guiding purposes, with Chris and Ian agreeing this could work while ensuring compliance with state registration laws. Dave explained that transferable boat registrations would simplify operations for guides but might reduce data on individual boat usage. The group discussed a proposal for boat and trailer registration stickers, focusing on transferability and enforcement. Dave explained the current proposal includes both a trailer sticker and a dashboard identification tag for commercial trips, addressing concerns about trailer borrowing and personal use. The board expressed support for this dual-sticker approach, with some suggesting improvements like a mirror-mounted dashboard tag to address visibility issues. Representative Byron emphasized the need to comply with the statutory requirement of displaying stickers on both boats and trailers, while Ian proposed simplifying the system by using dashboard slips only when borrowing trailers or boats.

Commercial Fishing Trip Reporting Proposal

The group discussed a proposal for commercial fishing trip reporting, with Representative Byron suggesting a simple solution of using a dropdown menu in the reporting software to classify trips as private rather than modifying stickers or boat markings. Chris proposed a compromise where trailers would have stickers and dashboard tags could be used when borrowing trailers, while Aaron Kerr from law enforcement supported this approach for future data collection needs. The group agreed this system would better serve as a data collection tool rather than a strict enforcement mechanism, and Dave raised concerns about potential public opposition if all trips had to be reported, suggesting any major changes should be based on public comments. Chairman Hayes motioned to adopt changes Dave had reviewed up to that point and Larry seconded. All voted in favor. Those changes included:

- The registrant would not have to be owner
- Include a number on the stickers and make them transferable
- Eliminate the separate commercially guided fishing boat registration number
- Include a dashboard slip for commercial trips

Registration Fee Discussion

Chairman Hayes emphasized the need to keep costs low to ensure compliance and data accuracy. Alan explained that while the fiscal note includes projections for the entire program, including personnel and public meeting costs, the exact costs are difficult to determine for a new program. The Department will work to estimate total costs before setting the final price. Chairman Hayes made a motion for an official recommendation for WGFD to set the regulation fee as low as possible while still covering their costs. Ian McCreary seconded. All voted in favor.

Chairman Hayes opened the meeting to public comment, after which the board discussed the timeline for the next meeting. The next meeting date will depend on the availability of a revised regulation for the September 9, 2025 Commission meeting in Lander.