



Division of Legislative Audit

Report Digest #08-20071-11

SUMMARY OF: A Sunset Review of the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Big Game Commercial Services Board, September 13, 2011

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

In accordance with Titles 24 and 44 of the Alaska Statutes (sunset legislation), we have evaluated the activities of the Big Game Commercial Services Board (board) to determine if there is a demonstrated public need for its continued existence and if it has been operating in an efficient and effective manner. As required by AS 44.66.050(a), this report shall be considered by the committee of reference during the legislative oversight process in determining whether the board should be reestablished. Currently, AS 08.03.010(c)(9) states that the board will terminate on June 30, 2012, and will have one year from that date to conclude its administrative operations. Our audit objectives were as follows.

1. Determine if the termination date of the board should be extended.
2. Determine if the board is operating in the public's interest.
3. Determine if the board has exercised appropriate, regulatory oversight of licensed guide-outfitters and transporters.

REPORT CONCLUSIONS

In our opinion, the termination date of the board should be extended. The regulation and licensing of qualified, registered guide-outfitters and transporters benefits the public's safety and welfare as well safeguards the State's wildlife resources. The board has provided reasonable assurance that the individuals licensed to guide and/or outfit hunts as well as transport hunters to and from hunt locations in Alaska are qualified to do so. The board has also successfully developed and adopted regulatory changes to improve the big game commercial services industry in Alaska. In our opinion, the board serves an important public purpose.

We recommend the board's termination date be extended for four years to June 30, 2016. The recommended extension date is half of the eight-year maximum allowed in statute because the department and the board did not fully address the previous sunset audit's findings and because of other operational support issues identified in the findings and recommendations portion of this report. Except for these deficiencies, the board has met the various statutory sunset criteria.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing's (division) director should ensure procedures are developed and that division staff adhere to them in order to provide efficient and effective support to the board's day-to-day operations.
2. The division director should ensure staff adhere to investigative case management procedures and develop additional procedures and reporting tools as necessary.
3. The division, in conjunction with the board, should increase licensing fees and/or reduce expenditures to mitigate the board's current and projected operating deficits.
4. The board should consider modifying regulatory first aid requirements to provide consistency between guide-outfitter licensee types.
5. The board should reconsider the electronic accumulation of information gathered from hunt records and transporter reports.
6. The division director should ensure controls over the database security of hunt records and the physical custody of hunt records and transporter reports are adequate.