

Steve Handy

From: Rep. Louise Stutes
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2016 9:21 AM
To: Steve Handy
Subject: FW: HB254 support

From: Loren Karro [mailto:lorenk@mtaonline.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2016 8:10 PM
To: Rep. Louise Stutes <Rep.Louise.Stutes@akleg.gov>
Cc: thorstacey@gmail.com
Subject: HB254 support

ALASKA TROPHY ADVENTURES

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February 11, 2016

Dear Representative Stutes;

We want to thank you for sponsoring HB254, in support of reauthorizing the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB).

We have lived in Alaska for 35 years, and during that time have resided in Auk Bay, Kotzebue and now the Mat Su Valley. We have been in the guiding industry for over 22 years, and since the re-inception of the BGCSB have been involved in many facets of it, for the betterment of our industry and of our impact on the state as a whole.

The 2014 McDowell Report on the Economic Impacts of Guided Hunting in Alaska pointed out that in 2012, guided hunting accounted for a total of 2,210 jobs in Alaska, with a total labor income of over \$35 million. Guided hunting generated a total of \$78 million in economic activity in Alaska during that same year. What is most important is that much of these jobs and economic impacts are felt within the small, rural communities throughout our state. We spend part of every year in Port Heiden, where we conduct much of our

business. Besides having wonderful friends and relationships within the community, we hire local people to oversee our property, to provide food and baked goods for our clients, and to do various jobs as they come up. We buy as much of our food and supplies as possible at the local store. We buy thousands of dollars in gas and aviation gas locally, and worked with the City to be sure that av gas prices were set at an advantageous level for the local government. We showed them what our avoided costs were by buying local, and recommended that they charge this price when they were looking at a much lower rate. We have been asked to speak at the local school, and we give all of our excess food to local people.

We also operate out of the Meadow Lakes area and up along the Glenn Highway to near Glennallen. We utilize the local cafes and roadhouses along this route. We buy most of the food and supplies needed for this part of our business at local grocery stores and shops, choosing to shop first locally and then, as needed, within urban Alaska.

Maintaining a high level of professional standards is of the utmost importance to keep guided Alaskan hunts desirous amongst the hunting community worldwide. Alaskan guides are known as some of the most professional and most regulated guides in North America. If this was not so, much of our business would go to Canada or other states. The BGCSB sees to maintaining these standards in a variety of ways. The investigative arm checks into complaints and allegations of illegal or unethical activity and holds the guides accountable to a very high ethical standard. The Board has the power to suspend or revoke a professional guide's license. Unfortunately, when the BGCSB was temporarily sunsetted in the nineties, these investigative activities resulted in a very high and uncontrolled debt. Although no BGCSB had any part in these investigations and their costs, we have been left holding the bag for the accrued debt of over \$600,000. The BGCSB has taken steps to increase our licensing and testing costs to pay off the accrued debt as soon as possible.

Another route to maintaining a high professional standard is by making sure that anyone applying for a guide license is experienced, knowledgeable and holds the professional skills necessary to guide hunters and take care of the meat and the priceless trophies. To this end, the Board is constantly reevaluating the requirements to apply for an Assistant Guide or a Registered Guide license, as well as the testing necessary to become a guide once the other requirements are met. For the past few years Loren has chaired a committee that has almost finished rewriting the practical portions of the exam and is beginning on the written portion. We also manage the proctors for the practical portions of the exam, and am proud of the Registered Guides who give of their time and knowledge to administer the exams. We are all volunteers. Without a BGCSB, the Division of Occupational Licensing would not have a knowledgeable, experienced pool of people to be sure that the exams remain pertinent, thorough and up to the highest standards.

The guides who participate in the BGCSB meetings have the best of the guiding industry at heart. As such, we are respectful of our fellow guides as well as of local hunters, and are concerned with maintaining viable and healthy game populations. We work to weed out the "bad" amongst us and have input to keep regulations such that our industry is held to a high standard, while recognizing the individual differences amongst the wide variety of independent guide businesses. The members of the BGCSB are the key in keeping the professional standards of the Guide Industry. We have personally witnessed new board members from outside the industry, who may come to the Board without a favorable view of guides, embrace our industry as they learn of the economic benefits we bring and the high level of professional standards that we hold ourselves to.

If there were not a BGCSB, there would be no knowledgeable base to review the new licensees, to write and administer the exams, and to continually review the regulations to be sure they work with current laws and needs. There would not be a professional group to authorize and direct investigators to keep the standards high and nitpicking to a minimum.

We are proud to be a professional guides in Alaska, and Loren is working to obtain her Master Guide License. These titles mean something to us in that we are part of a highly professional industry, whose members are held to a higher standard than are the general public, and who make a positive impact within our region and state. We have great respect for our Board, and know without a doubt that if the BGCSB were to be sunsetted, the standards we have set would be at stake, and with that, the reputation of the guiding industry in Alaska would also be in peril.

Thank you for your sponsorship of HB254. We know many respected and dedicated guides in Kodiak, and know that they too work to keep our industry professional, accountable and ethical.

Sincerely,

Loren J Karro

Daniel G. Montgomery

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