

**From:** Willie Dvorak  
**Sent:** Friday, March 21, 2014 11:26 AM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel  
**Subject:** Guide Concession Program SB160

Dear Madam Giessel, Senate Resources Committee Chair,

I watched the Senate Resource Committee meeting this morning on my computer. I wish to comment on this issue and hope you will pass on my brief comments to the others on the Committee. Thanks for taking the time to read these few comments...

I am a Registered Big Game guide in Alaska for about 10 years and also run a guiding business in South Dakota. In fact I was recently voted the Number One Guide/Outfitter in South Dakota and can assure you that my conduct and business model in my Alaska business is identical. Because of my experience and track record, I am confident that I would be awarded a concession under the current criteria. However, I feel the Guide Concession Program (GCS) lacks the teeth needed to accomplish the goals of limiting over-harvest of animals/resources because it (1) does not provide even a single line to limit the number of clients/animals a guide/outfitter can take and (2) it doesn't take into account the number of animals that will be harvested by resident hunters or those non resident hunters brought into an area by air-taxi. The guides that back the program are naive to the fact that if they manage the area well, they will be inundated by air taxis causing a nearly immediate overhunting scenario. Since the popularity and advent of the internet and sport hunting shows, there is a new dimension in the sport hunting business that many people can't wrap their head around. Simply put, it has become a lot easier to research, set up, conduct and participate in an Alaskan adventure in the last 5-10-15 years.

The GCP was developed by a very small percentage of guides (not the guide industry like I've heard too many times) as a way of eliminating competition and at the same time setting the ground work for future passing of transferability. Most of guides who back this are old time guides who are finding it hard to stay competitive in a business that requires much hands on work and their family members who hope to benefit by association. Many of the guides who have testified in favor of the GCP are currently not actively guiding clients but hiring assistants/offspring to do it for them while they support the operation as a glorified booking agent. The term "land-grab" is as good of synopsis as there is and it is fueled by greed. The guiding business should be run by a person physically capable of guiding for the best client experience.

The APHA has pushed the GCP along with lobbyists and committees who spread partial truths and ignoring facts in a spin-effort to prevent people from getting a clear picture of the industry. I too have quit being a member of the APHA because I saw too many acts of poor ethics within their organization and by their representatives and a refusal to thoroughly reprimand their members' immoral conduct. The APHA does not represent the guide industry despite their insistence that it does.

I spoke out against this proposal several years ago, while it was in it's infancy. I was specifically addressed by a members of the APHA and a member of the BGCSB to stand down when it came to speaking up against the GCP. "If I ever wanted to guide in Alaska, get behind this. You don't deserve to be a guide. I'll give you some advice, if you come out against this you will not ever be able to work for anybody guiding hunters in Alaska again." were statements told to me specifically designed to intimidate me and keep me quite. I am very successful as a full time guide in Alaska and South Dakota so that kind of talk doesn't phase me. However, I saw first hand many guides who were intimidated by these guys and were afraid to speak up. This dynamic gave the proposal a clear runway to take off. I mention this because I think it is important for everyone to understand the foundation of how the GCP started. Granted, there are some good parts of the proposal but it lacks the teeth to do anything except put 1/2 to 2/3 of the guides out of business and leave the guys in business with the most seniority to conduct business unchecked as they have since the beginning of Alaska hunting.

There are few, if any conflicts in most areas of Alaska. If the abnormal outlaw guides were removed from the equation, there would be none. It is these immoral guides/outfitters who have blatantly violated major game laws who cause or run into the most conflicts. Very few other guides have overcrowding problems. The state could eliminate these problems by calling on the BGCSB to go back and revoke the guiding licenses of any and all outfitter/guides who have committed immoral acts such as same day airborne, overbagging, hunting in a closed area and any type of poaching under their contracted hunts in the last 15-20 years. If the outlaw pleaded out to avoid a citation, they should still be held accountable for their actions and be removed from the industry. By removing these abnormal guide/outfitters, it will reduce the

number of overcrowding conflicts to nearly zero and improve the State of Alaska's reputation as the best place to go hunting. THIS STEP IS ESSENTIAL. I call on you to mandate it immediately.

I am an expert on several variations of the Limited Tag Drawing System (LTDS). I've been running a successful business in that arena for 14 years. In Alaska there is a cultural fear of the LTDS due to lack of understanding. Many people see it as a first-step in outlawing hunting and others feel it limits the number of hunting licenses to the point that a guide/outfitter cannot make a living. Both of these notions are false. Let me be clear, this is not the way it works. The LTDS works by actively adjusting the number of tags available to manage the resource. If there are not enough animals to warrant a certain number of hunters, then the tags are limited to a target number. If the number of animals is enough to allow for unlimited hunting, under the LTDS the tags would not be limited. There is a subtle difference in the two ways of looking at it. The right way is accurate and the paranoid way is just that, the paranoid way. It is important to remember and worth repeating that if the game numbers allow unlimited hunting, under the LTDS, the tags would not be limited. It is also important to note that if the caribou in Unit 19 and 17 would have been put on the LTDS 10-15-20 years ago when their numbers were strong, we would be able to be selling hunts for them and their population would be excellent today. Due to overhunting and no management, nonresident hunting for caribou was eliminated. In hindsight, the LTDS would have helped a lot of guides/hunters alike. The LTDS is not perfect, but it is the proven best way to manage a renewable resource.

I keep hearing that you cannot run a guide business under the shroud of a LTDS and that is simply not true. I am proof that a guide/outfitting business can not only operate but thrive under a LTDS. If your guide business cannot operate under the LTDS, perhaps you should fire your business manager. Some guide/outfitters don't want to be held accountable by admitting their business has other issues that are not allowing them to stay profitable. They've digressed to begging for legislation to put half or 2/3 of their competitors out of business by a proposal of smoke and mirrors.

I would like to call on you to not pass the bill on the Guide Concession Program. Instead, research the request the LTDS to manage the resources. And to manage the lion's share of in-field-conflicts, write a letter insisting that the BGCSB revoke all guiding/outfitting licenses of those immoral guides who have contracted hunts where (not just received a citation for) same day airborne hunting, hunting in a closed area, over-bagging, and any type of poaching has taken place (not just received a citation for). Flagrant immoral conduct deems a big game guide/outfitter license holder immoral, abnormal and irresponsible. Remove them from the industry.

This will immediately reestablish Alaska's reputation for guided hunting, remove the outlaws who are part of an industry that deserves to be better represented and provide a better experience for all sportsmen.

Thank you for your efforts. I am always available to visit about conservation.

Sincerely,

Willie Dvorak

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