

February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Dear Members of the Senate Resource Committee,

I am writing support of SB43 and the legislative audit recommendation for the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB) to be reauthorized for an additional 6 years.

I have been a Registered Guide here in Alaska for the last 19 years and worked as an assistant guide 3 years before becoming registered. Over the last 22 years I have both operated a Registered guide as well as continued work in an assistant guide capacity when employed by others, operating mostly under federal concession programs on both US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service lands. I also have permits on both Bureau of Land Management and State of Alaska lands to allow access in areas where these lands adjoin the federal concessions I operate on. My family's guiding business provides the only source of "local" employment in my part of rural Alaska, other than trapping. All my employees are Alaskan residents, as has been the case for the last 19 years.

I was initially licensed during the period when the original "guide board" was sunsetted by the legislature and after the program that delegated specific guiding areas to individual guides statewide was dismantled due to a court ruling. This was both a period of limited oversight of the guiding industry as well as period when relatively simple standards for initial licensing were fixed in statute, resulting in both a proliferation of guides and a lowering of the professional standards of professional guiding in our state to harm of both the public and, in some cases, the resources itself.

The reestablishment of the BGCSB has meaningfully addressed these resulting problems in many ways, including:

1. Providing a continuing process of updating regulations to address how portions of the guiding industry responded to minimized oversight and new areas of concern as they develop.
2. Reestablishing oral exams and updating written exams to better reflect and address the increased standards of professionalism that is expected of a professional hunter in today's world. These higher testing standards have also seemingly increased the quality of individuals and simultaneously reduced the number of applicants seeking licensure.
3. Providing the board and Dept. of Commerce (the state) meaningful industry input regarding the need for and effectiveness of regulatory requirements and ethical standards.
4. Providing a venue for continuing education opportunities for young and old guides alike, especially as regards the interpretation and expectations of the sometimes-complex matrix of regulations that relate to guiding businesses from the BGCSB, the Alaska Board of Game, the Dept. of Commerce, the Dept. of Public Safety, the FAA and Coast Guard, and a variety of land management agencies.
5. Providing a forum for professional guides and transporters to meet with peers and discuss the issues of the day, the expectations and requirements of professional conduct within a peer-to-peer setting, and to develop connections within the industries that encourage better interactions and respectful conduct in the field.

Alaska's guiding industry is one of the most, if not the most, heavily regulated small industries in our state, and for good reason. Alaska's wildlife is held in trust for the Alaskan people as a whole, and any commercial interface with these renewable resources should be held to the highest standards of responsibility and professionalism, whether through active regulatory oversight or the establishment and review of ethical standards. I believe BGCSB provides this important and necessary venue for the benefit of the public, the industry, and our state as a whole.

Sincerely,

Nathan Turner  
Registered Guide #1036

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