

Guide Logbook Advisory Committee

July 11, 2023, 2:30-5:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Introduction

The WDFW team, including fisheries consultant Kimberly Gordon, was introduced by Raquel. Raquel led the new group in a brief overview of the meeting agenda.

Participants

DFW Employees: Raquel Crosier, Chris Donley, Leah Snyder

Advisors: Blake Merwin, Doug Saint-Denis, Bob Kratzer, Toby Wyatt, Jeff Brazda

Other Attendees: Kimberly Gordon, Jonathan Stumpf

Hot Topics

The status of the potential ESA listing of Olympic Peninsula Steelhead was addressed, letting committee members know where the department is currently with the Federal process. The department has two employees working with NOAA – providing data and supporting analysis.

The permanent salmon closure on the coast was also briefly addressed, explaining how it was amended and didn't go through the approval process. Due to the error not being found before the pamphlet's publication, the regulation was published in the pamphlet; the errata to the pamphlet was updated to include this change.

Angler Preference Survey

We added two guide-related questions to the Angler Preference Survey this year: "In this last season, did you fish with a freshwater fishing guide on a lake or river in Washington?"

And "Have you ever hired a fishing guide to fish on a lake or river in Washington?" 16% of respondents replied that they had been fishing with a guide in the last year, while 30% had been fishing with a guide previously in their lifetime. These results contradict logbook data which implies that only 1% of recreational anglers. There was a follow-up question for those who had used a guide, clarifying where they fished with a guide geographically. This survey showed most anglers (57%) were fishing the Columbia River and tributaries, followed by coastal rivers and tributaries (14%), Puget Sound rivers and tributaries (8%), eastside lakes (8%), and westside lakes (6%)- providing very similar results to the logbook data.

CR Angler Survey Comments

A separate survey went out to Columbia River anglers earlier this year, which had several guide questions on it as well. The survey went out to anglers in Washington and Oregon and solicited input on different management approaches. One of the management approaches that respondents favored was limiting guides and charters by specific area or days of the week; 3,989 (of approximately 7500) respondents favored this action. Given the results, the WDFW team looked closer at the comments to pull any other comments on guiding that might be of interest to the committee. There were a lot of survey comments on guide activity, perspectives shared about

guides dominating recreational fisheries and contributing to overcrowding. Surveyed anglers also observed that guides are essential in providing the public with successful access to the fishery and have specific needs to keep businesses afloat.

The committee noted that a few of the ideas proposed by survey respondents were ones our committee has discussed; limiting multiple trips in a day, limiting guides from fishing, etc. The committee members also noted that some ideas like area restrictions that limit movement of guides will limit their ability to operate year round.

Guide Regulations Research

The department staff introduced Kimberly Gordon a fisheries consultant who is doing some work to help explore regulatory structures are used to regulate guide industries in nearby states. She described her work so far, holding conversations with managers in various NW states to learn about how guide licenses are structured, to explore tools being employed to deal with crowded fisheries and to see if there are lessons we could learn from other states models. Kim led the group through the early stages of her research and was eager to tailor her future research to the guides' priorities and interests.

There were a few reoccurring big-picture themes within the compared states. Other states are also grappling with the same issues (i.e., growing industry, overcrowding) as we are facing in Washington. Similar to Washington, the issue in other state's doesn't seem to stem from a concern with species conservation but with equity between guides and private anglers and perceptions of an uncontrolled, under-regulated industry that is limiting access for private anglers. Like Washington, some states regulate guides similar to other commercial fisheries with licensing requirements. Other states regulate without licenses but attempt to limit crowding by limiting access permits. There are a variety of different management tools being employed to limit/distribute opportunity that we could consider here in Washington but there are tradeoffs between precision and complexity.

In Kim's presentation, Alaska was the first state where guides are required to register with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, but there are no current licensing requirements (their license program ended in 2019). Their regulatory structure may include guide-specific measures (e.g., no guiding days, guide bag limits); otherwise, guides follow the same regulations as private anglers. Alaskan guides and operators are liable for the violations of their clients. There are area/fishery-specific guide regulations, however, which include the Kenai River and charter halibut in 2C and 3A. In those areas, regulations include additional permitting, orientation classes, no fishing while guiding, rod limits, and selective day closures.

Montana is one of two states with a licensing board, the Montana Board of Outfitters. Outfitter requirements include experience, exam, first aid certification, operations plan, and insurance. Nestled under outfitters in this model are guides requiring experience, outfitter endorsement, and first aid certification. The licensing board is only responsible for licensing; the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks are responsible for regulating the industry. Generally, they abide by the same regulations as private anglers with the possibility of the Commission restricting access in certain rivers (e.g., no commercial use seasons, no guiding certain days, limited access on restricted rivers). A guide in Montana will

need a license from the Board of Outfitters. They will also need a commercial use permit, fishing access site permit, and special recreation permits, which limit the number of operators in different river sections.

Idaho follows a limited entry outfitter model overseen by the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board. To be an outfitter in Idaho requires an exam, operations plan, business license, and insurance. Guides are once again settled underneath outfitters; guiding requirements include experience/training and first aid certification. The Licensing Board limits the number of float and power boat outfitters that can be licensed on certain waterways, and there also may be limits on the number of boats that each outfitter can launch, the number of clients per boat, and the number of trips in a day.

In Wyoming, there are no statewide guide-specific licensing requirements with no specific regulations or restrictions for guides. However, they have fishery-specific guide regulations for specific counties and require Federal permitting on many rivers by BLM, USFS, and NPS. Wyoming has a long history of discussion/debate on how to manage outfitter and guides and struggle with many of the same challenges as Washington and the other compared states and are currently conducting a study to propose new legislation this fall.

Outfitters and guides in Oregon are licensed through Oregon Marine Board, unlike many others governed by fish and wildlife agencies, with no limit on the number of licenses issued. Oregon guide license requirements include liability insurance, first aid certification, bond, and Coast Guard certification (if operating in Federally navigable waters). There are no separate regulations for guides versus private anglers, and they require no special permits. Still, guides do need to declare areas they intend to fish on their annual license renewal application.

The idea of the outfitter model was heavily discussed by committee members. Some committee members highlighted the pros of outfitter models in other states; less crowding, more consistency year to year, ability of new guides to apprentice under a professional guide and economic benefits to outfitters by increasing the value of their license. The committee members discussed the challenges in setting up an outfitter model in Washington where guides need to move around and where we already have so many established guide businesses. The committee also talked about the perks of creating a limited entry program since it would make the license and asset that is transferrable.

Next Steps

Kim Gordon will continue exploring remaining questions regarding reporting requirements, structure and responsibilities of licensing boards, Federal licensing and permitting for BLM, USFWS, NPS waterways, allocation formulas and frameworks for Idaho and Montana permits, and Maryland's Chesapeake Bay fishery. Kim will draft a research summary of her findings when her research has been compiled and finalized. We will then focus on the department's management objectives and the industry's values to consider how they translate to these strategies. Kim asked the committee for input on any specific questions they wanted answered through her research.

The Committee's next meeting will be held September 26, 2023, from 2:30–5 PM via Zoom.