

Fishing Guide Advisory Committee

Meeting #14: February 22, 2022, 2:00-4:30 p.m.

Microsoft Teams

Introduction: Raquel led the new group in a brief overview of the meeting agenda. The core WDFW team was introduced by Raquel. Committee members then spent a few minutes each introducing themselves and what they hope to accomplish. This year there are seven returning members and six new members to the committee.

Participants:

DFW Employees: Raquel Crosier, Chris Donley, Leah Snyder, Edward Eleazer, Kit Rosenberger
Advisors: Jeff Brazda, Doug Saint-Denis, Steve Joyce, Patric Gaffney, Jan Patricio, Shane Magnuson, Keith Robbins, Roy Morris, Ryan Bullock

WDFW Advisory Committee Orientation

Advisors support WDFW in numerous ways. Committees help provide recommendations to the agency on operations and communications, help improve communication between the agency and fishing constituents and industry, identify and raise concerns about issues/challenges facing recreational fishers, the industry, and the resource, and to identify partnership opportunities that benefit the resource and agency.

WDFW has the expectations of committee members attend meetings regularly and come fully prepared to participate. Advisors are expected to read and provide comment on committee work products and stay informed of pertinent issues. It is expected that members communicate respectfully, openly, and transparently while remembering to respect diverse opinions, recognizing that compromise may be necessary to reach consensus. As a representative of the committee, advisors are asked to help disseminate information to fellow anglers and behave professionally during committee meeting and in other forums.

WDFW supports the committee in implementing their mission. The agency will facilitate and provide summaries of each meeting. Staff will provide relevant background and other briefing materials, along with timely opportunities for the group to advise the agency and communication on emerging issues in time to influence decisions while respecting all views and perspectives represented by committee members.

Ground Rules:

- **Listen** actively, avoid side conversations and interruptions
- **Communicate** positively, productively, and proactively
- **Respect** each other and our diverse opinions

- **Assume the best** of one another
- **Build trust** by speaking the truth, to the best of our knowledge
- **Build each other up**, don't tear each other down
- **Respect each other's time** by honoring the agenda

The department has many advisory groups that are involved in fishery management decisions, this committee is different in that it is primarily focused on the fishing guide industry. We will be reviewing guiding industry regulations and guide-specific data. If members have an interest in a specific ongoing/emerging topic, let Raquel or Chris know and they will work on getting the correct staff and information at meetings to answer your questions.

Work Plan Development

The role of the Guide Committee is to provide input on implementation of logbook reporting rule. Members are also asked to provide recommendations on guide licensing structure and input on other laws and rules that pertain to the guide industry. This committee will discuss fish management decisions, challenges, and outcomes but we will not be focused on influencing those decisions on this committee.

Since the establishment of this committee two years ago, the group has been extremely dedicated, meeting monthly for the first year, and has made large strides toward helping the state better understand the guide industry. With the committee's help, the state implemented logbook legislation consisting of developing logbook reporting tools, beta testing the new reporting tools, and was able to help create and shape communications around logbook rule and reporting. The Guide Advisory Committee also designed and helped with distribution of the Coast Guard decal. This decal will be for Coast Guard certified guides which will help enforcement more easily determine who those folks are out on the water. Coast Guard certified guides will receive information regarding the decal in their annual renewal packets. Wanting to increase industry professionalism and conduct, the committee developed a Code of Conduct for the guide associations to distribute. We have also reviewed current laws and rules for guides and created a resource on our WDFW webpage that outlines what is necessary to operate as a guide in Washington State, containing laws and rules regulating guides. The agency has reached out to the committee members for input on communication products. The strengthening connections between guides, WDFW local teams and enforcement has been integral and valuable to the department.

In the next two years, we will be focusing on improving logbook data quality and compliance rates. The group will also review current statutes and regulations regarding the logbook legislation, especially if there are changes that logbook data supports. The department is asking advisors to consider the future of the guide industry in Washington and how logbook data might inform different guide licensing models. The committee will test theories using the data to detect trends in the guide industry while also brainstorming possible changes to the licensing structure.

The committee expressed concerns about communication surrounding the Coast Guard decals and suggested better outreach explaining their purpose. The department will review the renewal packet to ensure all the correct information is going out at one time, eliminating the need for

guides to track down information from multiple sources. There were also concerns expressed about logbook emphasis patrols and what efforts enforcement is taking to help with compliance rates. Sergeant Kit Rosenberger spoke to his staff's patrols, explaining the educational conversations that they are having with encountered guides and how they are following up to ensure guides they have had contact with are submitting their logs and cross-referencing the data. There was an idea of gaining the trust of those that are uncomfortable with the logs by promoting the value of the logbook, ensuring that guides and fishermen can see what is in it for them personally and the industry.

Logbook Data Review

At our last meeting, the department was still finalizing the number of licensed guides in the state, and we finally have an official number of 502 licensed guides in 2021, of which 314 are Coast Guard certified. Of those licensed guides only 43% of guides submitted at least one log in 2021, which is down from 2020's participation when 46% of licensed guides submitted at least one log.

Of those who reported in 2021, 74% took 25 trips or less, 23% took between 25 and 100 trips and only 3% took over 100 trips annually. After breaking down trip numbers, staff looked at the data geographically where trends showed the Columbia River with the body of water with the most trips taken and highest number of guides fishing the area. The waterbodies with the highest guide activity included: Yakima River, Columbia River (Hanford Reach, McNary-John Day, Wells-Chief Joseph), Snake River, Lake Chelan, Sol Duc River, Hoh River, Lake Roosevelt, and Cowlitz River.

With better compliancy from guides statewide, there will be much more accurate data and both the department and committee look forward to getting to the point of being able to rely on and trust the data we are collecting.

Committee members are asked to review our final report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and think about other steps that the group would like to recommend taking- now or in the future. Over the upcoming year, the advisors will continue reviewing and improving the reporting tools as they relate compliance and data quality.

Review Guide Regulations

The state law includes various Revised Codes of Washington (RCW) that pertain to guide licensing. Raquel will be following up with an in-depth detail of the RCWs and Washington Administrative Codes (WAC) pertaining to the industry. RCWs are developed by state legislature and guide how the state operates, to change these, we must propose a bill, that is supported by industry and/or public, to do so. WAC are rules that the Fish and Wildlife Commission can shape. Typically, RCWs are focused on licensing structure/availability and high-level policy guidance and WACs generally reflect implementation of policy guidance from legislature and the fishery/game management elements of rulemaking.

In previous meetings, the state has heard that our rules for overseeing the industry are not as comprehensive as members have experienced in other locations. To increase standards and professionalism there have been ideas to require guides to participate in random drug testing, increasing insurance minimums and strengthening rules around insurance policies, and

prohibiting guides from retaining fish while guiding. Other ideas have been limiting the number of guide licenses available (guide is the only license that can target salmon and steelhead and isn't part of a limited license program), requiring proof of reporting to renew annually, and revoking guide licenses for fish and wildlife violations.

Hot Topics

The department now has the technology to send texts out to licensed guides. With the possibility of using this method more regularly for communication, the advisory group may think of sending out a notice to guides to be expecting them.

Questions were raised about a looming closure on the Olympic Peninsula, Chris had heard about a possible early closure if factors didn't improve but hadn't recently discussed it with pertinent staff. If staff receives any updates, they will forward information on to the committee.

Wrap-Up

Raquel will follow up with an email to the group with responses to questions that we weren't able to answer today. Leah will work on getting dates on calendars for future quarterly meetings.
