

Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides

Wyoming Quality of Life Result:

Wyoming values the unique aspects of its western heritage, providing residents and visitors expanding access to cultural, historical and recreational experiences.

Department/Division/Program:

Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides

Contribution to Wyoming Quality of Life:

- This Board values the unique aspects of its western heritage, providing residents and hunting clients by expanding access to recreational experiences through the regulation of outfitters and professional guides.

Basic Facts:

- We have four full time personnel with a budget total of \$689,678 for FY05 - (Trust and Agency Fund), operating on license fees only.
- The Board licenses and regulates about 365 hunting outfitters and about 1200 professional guides per year to ensure the public (clients) of a quality and safe hunt and are provided the services that were promised. We ensure the licensee is insured and possesses the necessary equipment, vehicles, tack and livestock necessary to run a professional and safe business. In this manner the Board serves and protects the public. Outfitters provided guided hunts to 10,378 clients during the 2005 hunting season.
- Our investigators handle problems of illegal activity of outfitters and guides, licensed and unlicensed, in conjunction with other state and federal agencies. By enforcing these standards there are many return clients who spend millions of dollars when they come to this state.
- First time applicants are tested (outfitters – closed book exam; guides – open book exam). Outfitters must appear before the Board for approval and are constantly monitored by the staff to ensure they are properly permitted in the areas in which they operate and insured. A background check is also conducted if there is probable cause to do so.
- We have two full time investigators/peace officers to cover the entire state. Therefore we also work closely with enforcement officers from other state and federal agencies. We could easily utilize at least two more officers. Our compensation/overtime policy was changed, and approved by the State, to allow

compensation time to be taken off during the summer months so no overtime has to be paid. This allows maximum time “in the field” for investigations and public relations.

- The MOU helps streamline the issuance of outfitters licenses and opens the lines of communication for sharing information in regards to complaints, investigations, and disciplinary actions taken.

Performance:

- Professional guide licenses are issued the same day they are received and mailed the following day. The only exception to this is if the applicant lists a violation of some type that requires the application to be reviewed by an assigned committee.
- Outfitter renewals are usually issued the same day they are received unless an exceptional amount is received in one day. They differ from guide licenses as outfitter renewals must be post-marked no later than December 31 of each year for the next year’s license. The exception to this is the same as shown above for professional guide licenses, and if proof of insurance was not attached.
- Outfitter year-end reports that list all client data are entered into a database as quickly as possible to compare areas used versus areas authorized. Any discrepancy is reported to our investigators, along with the affected state and federal agencies.
- When a client has called over a refund dispute and requested a complaint form, and the outfitter is not following their refund policy that is on file in the office, the office staff may call the outfitter to inform them they may want to take care of the situation before it becomes a formal complaint. We anticipate this saves the Board from opening three to seven complaints a year, which in turn saves time and money all the way around.
- There are two office staff who answer 20-30 calls per day in the “off season” and 50-100 calls per day during the hunting season. This includes time worked and not paid for exempt employees on weekends and holidays. Any voice messages are returned the same day and voice mail is also checked on weekends.
- We believe that due to more intense investigations of illegal activity, particularly on those operating on private lands, the number of licensed outfitters and guides went up in 2005.
- The number of conditional licenses issued, because of violations received, went down in 2005.
- There were no disciplinary hearings in 2005. Ten dockets were opened due to pending disciplinary measures. These resulted in one letter of warning issued,

one voluntary surrender of the outfitting license, four public reprimands issued, three conditional licenses issued, and one advisory letter was issued.

Story Behind the Last Year of Performance:

- 2005 – 355 outfitters and 1189 guides served 10,378 clients, 76% were successful.
- The number of guides fluctuates due the hunting license draw.
- There were 19 complaints filed against outfitters and guides in 2005 (6%). Of these total complaints, 1 was unfounded, 5 were mild in nature, 13 were moderate in nature, and none resulted in disciplinary action.

What has been accomplished?

- The Board has continued to monitor expenses so another fee increase may not have to occur; however 97% of our budget is set by other State agencies (Salaries, benefits, cost allocation, telecommunications, etc).
- The Board intends to begin issuing "cease and desist" orders to those persons believed to be operating illegally and have been working with various outfitters associations to update the Board's statutes, rules and regulations.
- The "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) that has been in effect since 1990, was revised in 2005 and has been extremely helpful in issuing licenses and sharing information in regards to violations and reports of alleged illegal outfitters. The MOU is between this Board, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management – Wyoming State Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service (Grand Teton National Park); the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain and Intermountain Regions; the Wyoming Office and State Lands and Investments; and the Wyoming Game & Fish Commission.
- Due to an Attorney General Opinion regarding landowners operating on their own land, however may have state or other private land intermingled, and who may have been operating illegally, have come forward to obtain a license. This in turn has helped with the Board's budget.