

Minutes from the fall 2017 MASKGI membership meeting: November 4, 2017, 10 a.m.

Held at the Bryant Moore Community Center of the Downeast YMCA

In attendance: Maria Jenness, Carino Higgins, Fletcher, Nate Hansen, Rob Shaw, Gordon Wissinger, Laura Carter, Chris Strout

By zoom: Liz Johnson, Alice Bean-Andrenyak, Zack Anchors, Craig Shipp, Sam Frankel, Al Johnson, Thornton Ring, Tom Carr, Peter Johnson

Guests: Matt Capon & Mike Miller from USCG, Gary Corson & Steve Corson from Maine Guide Advisory Board, Don Kleiner from Maine Professional Guides Association

Election of officers: unanimous approval of slate

- President: Sam Frankel
- Vice-President: Maria Jenness
- Treasurer: Joe Guglielmetti
- Secretary: Craig Shipp

Treasurer's report (presented by Liz on behalf of Joe)

- Membership: 56 members currently, up from 48 in 2016
- Bank acct balance \$7,200 (increase of ~\$700)

Background check law discussion

- There was conversation around the law and process, in preparation for the arrival of representatives from the Guide Advisory Board and Maine Professional Guides Association who would be joining the meeting at 11 am.
- Dialog focused on questions around the process, and members frustration of a lack of opportunity for MASKGI to provide input. Concerns raised about the law included the increased burden to becoming a guide, in time and cost.
- The PDF that Humphrey shared on MASKGI Facebook page has a helpful FAQ guide on last few pages. Prior to the meeting Maria also spoke with Virginia, Major Secretary with the Warden Service, to ask questions that had been raised. Helpful information that was discussed includes:
 - State advises begin fingerprinting process month before plan to submit application- they won't process your application until you clear background check (they send you letter when clear that you attach to guide app).
 - State contacts with Ident-o-go to conduct checks. Testing centers are on their [website](#); for guides living out of state, there are instructions on how to download fingerprint card and take to local law enforcement station. Guides living in state who are unable to travel to the centers may also be able to use this option. (Testing centers are Springvale, Portland, Lisbon, Augusta, Winslow, Farmington, Brewer, Machias, Presque Isle)
 - You have to go through this process even if you have been fingerprinted for another reason (e.g. teachers). Federal law prohibits exchange of information between agencies, so need to do specifically for guide application, and every time you renew.
 - There were concerns voiced that contents of background check may introduce bias on oral exams, but background check simply gives thumbs up or down to whether you are eligible to become a guide- no info goes with application or to testers. Investigator &

Warden Service Major Secretary are only ones have access to info from background check

- In preparation for the meeting Maria also spoke with Nick Leadley, President of Maine Wilderness Guides Association (MWGA); they had similar response to the law as MASKGI, that it came without warning and would have liked the opportunity to weigh in.

Wilderness medical certifications:

- Maria reported that in conversation with Nick from MWGA he noted that they had discussed idea of whether guides should be required to provide copies of first aid certifications when renewing (members found it odd that background check will be required, but proof of medical certifications is not). They are examining question of whether Wilderness First Aid (WFA) should be the minimum requirement for getting your guide license instead of basic first aid. MWGA plans to poll their members to see if there is consensus on that question. It was discussed at the meeting that MASKGI should conduct a similar poll among our members. Poll results will be presented at the spring meeting for further discussion on the subject.

Coast Guard (CG) updates & concerns

(Discussion with Matt Capon from Sector NNE & Mike Miller from STA SWH)

Education & Outreach

- CG is continuing to promote the “If Found” contact stickers to be placed on boats, in an effort to cut down on unnecessary searches. Matt Capon coordinates with person from each station for outreach and education initiatives, and is good contact for MASKGI.
- There has been talk of possible legislation for requiring contact information on boats, discussed how MASKGI could support education as alternative to legislation. Suggestion that MITA get involved to educate members on putting contact information on paddlecraft.
- CG hosted a paddle craft safety press conference in the spring at Sector in South Portland , with assistance of MASKGI member Humphrey Johnson doing in-water demonstrations.
- CH hosts waterways workshops up and down coast
- According to CG data, paddlecraft fatalities did go up this year compared to 2016, but they can't break down data between inland lakes/rivers and sea kayaking.

Coast Guard/Guide Interactions:

- Coast Guard has started performing “boardings” of kayak groups as part of their paddle safety initiative. MASKGI shared feedback from guides who were stopped by CG this summer (several groups in Casco Bay and around Acadia). Some feedback included room for improvement with their tone, noting that people on tour often novice paddlers and from away, and the way the officers talked about kayaking emphasized the dangers and might scare customers. They noted that many of the CG folks working on the water are pretty new. Mike encouraged anyone who gets stopped to contact him or Matt or their local station afterward to share feedback. They would like to receive feedback from guides in order to improve the process and experience.
- Question was raised of whether there is a checklist of what the CG is looking for on paddle craft boardings, and if that list can be shared so folks know what to expect and can be

prepared to help make the process go smoother and faster. The CG Auxiliary has a paddle craft checklist, Mike & Matt noted that they would look into sharing that with MASKGI.

- They noted that if approached by CG, should identify yourself as guide. Some guides had expressed concern that CG was asking for personal information of their clients. Guides felt this was inappropriate, but technically each kayak is its own craft, so boarding officers may have been trying to establish contact info for each paddler, rather than asking for personal information as it appeared to the guide. Important to note that because each kayak is own craft, it must meet requirements for whistles, lights, etc.

Conversations with Gary Corson & Steve Corson from Guide Advisory Board & Don Kleiner from Maine Professional Guides Association (MPGA):

Background check law:

- Gary provided background on the law: initiated because a law enforcement officer from out of state did background check on a guide his family had booked a trip with. The guide had a criminal background (not specified), so he called Warden service to express concerns that state allowed people like that to have guide license.
- Gary chaired working group to examine series of guide issues. Working group was comprised of 7 members including representatives from IF&W & DMR. There was one spot for a tidewater or kayak guide, which was filled by a tidewater guide. Final report from that working group noted two most important issues to pursue which were felon guides and individuals guiding without a license. MASKGI asked if that report can be shared, they stated that it is a public document but did not specify how one could obtain a copy.
- Issue of felons guiding came up 10 years ago, and came via rule instead of legislation. It was rejected in large part because of lack of appeals process. Process this time focused on ensuring strong appeals process. This went through the legislative process, so came out of committee unanimous
- Question was raised of what kind of conversation was there about how this process raises barriers to entering the profession, in terms of cost. Other concerns voiced about making it harder for outfitters to hire new seasonal guides 2-3 months ahead of a seasonal professional
- Guide advisory board is considering recommendation of making license good for 5 years to spread out cost
- Discussion of how we can streamline background check process- can we work with MPGA to push on 2-4 week turnaround rather than 12 weeks
- Question raised of how do we ensure that MASKGI is apprised of legislative issues.. Don suggested membership in MPGA- members receive weekly email updates. They also noted that MASKGI should have a relationship with DMR, and not only depend on Guides advisory board & IF&W
- Discussing guide advisory board structure: noted that Parts of the guide board meetings are confidential due to working through complaints or investigations. Commissioner appoints members of the guide board, currently no sea kayak representatives. 3 guides on the board, others are law enforcement and a public member

Guide test discussion:

- Discussed issues with written test issues- they acknowledged there are issues with written tests across all disciplines; most of the focus tends to be on the oral exams, but they need to take a look at written
- Didn't really get an answer on how to submit feedback on tests, but in general contact Jim Fahey about guide exam stuff (chair of guide advisory board)
- Acknowledgement of lack of sea kayak guides/experts on panel of testers. Challenge is finding experienced guides who aren't affiliated with a guide school. They would like kayak guides to apply to be testers though- applications are being accepted until December 15.
- Discussion of licensing of SUP guides- frustration that SUPs need two licenses if operating on salt and fresh water, and no representation of SUPs in exam. It was noted that there are other types of guides who need two licenses in regular course of what they do, so SUP not unique in that respect (hunting or fishing guides on multi-day trips also need rec license)
- Guide advisory board is still pursuing goal of moving to a practical exam instead of oral, for all disciplines. They had an approved plan in place, but liability/insurance issues meant they needed to find a property owned by IF&W on which to hold the exams. They are looking at the possibility of using Swan island in Richmond for all practical exams. It would be a full day event, and applicants would move between various stations. They could test 5-6 people per day, the same as the current oral exams. Associated discussion of whether they could accept a 3rd party certification for the practical component (e.g. ACA for sea kayaking), but this does not seem like something the board is willing to consider.

Report from Wilderness Risk Management Conference (Maria & Liz)

- Maria and Liz attended the Wilderness Risk Management Conference (Maria on behalf of MASKGI, for Thursday only of the conference). They reported that the presentation by Coast Guard about search & rescue's was one of most interesting and informative workshops. Maria's notes from the workshops are attached at the end of the minutes. Anyone who would like to learn more about it can contact her directly.

Professional development opportunities

- Rough water/incident management courses held by Nate Hansen & Kevin Beckwith were very well received. Nate is willing to do more courses offered at steep discounts for MASKGI members, and would like to focus on getting newer guides involved.
- Pool sessions have been well received and can/should continue as long as there is a point person to coordinate.
- John Huth is willing to do weather presentation in Ellsworth area in the spring if there is sufficient interest; Maria will follow up and be point person with John to plan.
- Suggestion of MASKGI sponsoring a WFA course for members at a discount, similar to the ACA trainings. MASKGI will poll members to determine the interest level, and if there is enough interest pursue something for the spring.

Meeting adjourned 12:00 pm

NEXT MEETING: *April 28, 2018*