

Date: June 25, 2018

Attendees: Sam Frankel (President), Maria Jenness (Vice-President), Nate Hanson, Chris Strout

- Not all of our discussions with the Guide Board have been productive, particularly our Fall 2017 meeting.
- We'd like to be in better touch with the Board to advocate for the interests of the industry and the membership with regard to guide testing.
- The Board makes recommendations on how test is structured and other things. So issues with lack of examiners or test curriculum relate to the Guide Board, even if they may be decided by IF&W or other State regulators.
- There seems to be a problem finding examiners, and that is causing issues for at least one outfitter who couldn't get test dates to staff his business.
 - Finding examiners is a real issue, they asked us in November to help find applicants, but the rules seemed strict enough to rule out all potential candidates.
 - They are concerned about ethical conflicts for examiners who are also working in the industry.
 - Are these rules in statute or just decided by the Board or IF&W?
 - We feel that as long as examiners aren't testing their students or employees that would be sufficient protection.
 - Some outfitters started working on this back in February since the application process is now longer due to the background checks.
 - It's possible the Guide Board could say: "We tell you the regulations, and it's up to you to prepare."
 - We feel like the Board would be more responsive if we were making a case that it is a State body not meeting our industry's needs.
 - For example by getting a State representative or Senator from Bar Harbor where there is a center of the industry involved.
 - This depends on outfitters being advocates.
 - The point of leverage with the Board will be whether it is meeting the industry's needs or raising too many obstacles.
 - We don't currently have a champion on the Board, no one has a sea kayaking background.
 - Raising an official complaint (as one outfitter was in the process of doing) got the Commissioner to reach out and communicate with him.
 - The Board also seems to realize there are problems, so they may be more receptive.
 - We'd be interested to learn what is the proportion of sea kayak guides out of the population of active Maine Guides.
 - We think the Board is mainly made up of hunting & fishing and recreational Guides
 - But what proportion of active Guides are Sea Kayak or Whitewater Guides?

- There may be a mismatch between proportion and representation.
 - We could lobby the Board or the Commissioner to include a Sea Kayak Guide on the Board.
 - We're not clear who is currently on the Guide Board, when their terms elapse, how people are appointed, etc.
 - Jim Fahey has been our contact in the past, but we're not sure if he is the right person to talk with about this.
- What are the issues we're hearing about from MASKGI members?
 - Lack of examiners
 - Difficulty getting test dates
 - Background check process
 - Long, and logistically difficult.
 - Can't even send in renewal / application until background check is completed / received.
 - So folks were sending in applications, having them returned, then trying to keep track of paperwork and return it after background checks completed.
 - Forwarding and re-forwarding paperwork in the mail.
 - Experienced outfitters with full-time managers are struggling to meet this requirement.
 - Trouble getting test dates
 - Hearing less certainty about test dates, kind of a "we'll get back to you" feeling.
 - Seems to be issues with lack of examiners, and also logistics around background check process
 - Exam content
 - Unfamiliarity with recent updates to techniques, so test takers are penalized.
 - E.g. Proper way to do a T-rescue (whether swimmer should go to stern or stay with cockpit)
 - Little movement toward a practical curriculum.
 - Contradiction where candidates need to give the "correct" answer but also get penalized if their answer sounds too standard (e.g. like they've been taught to the test)
 - Perhaps due to ethical concerns that teachers shouldn't know exam content, when exams are rewritten the community doesn't feel involved.
 - Perennial issue of the unsuitability of lumping paddleboarding in with sea kayaking
- How do we think it will be helpful to communicate and move forward?
 - Explore sea kayak representation on the board.
 - Look for ways to get past individual requests / fixes
 - Rather getting representation on the guide board

- Paddlesports are more and more popular economically
 - But fewer long-term professionals
 - Barriers to entry too high
- Reaching out to board
 - Asking Jim as our previous contact
 - Ask about when they appoint members
 - Are there terms?
 - Is it when someone retires?
- Following up asking about examiner shortages
 - Acknowledging there are reasonable restrictions, but how can we help?
 - From the members' conversation with the Commissioner, seems like there's an opening to changing those rules
 - See if this is the case, and if there's a compromise
- Fact finding and establishing working relationship
 - Then if there are people who want to join they can
 - Advocate for membership

NEXT STEPS

- **Maria** looks into the question of what proportion of active guides are sea kayak and/or whitewater as opposed to inland.
- **Sam** reaches out first to Jim Fahey, but also asks the member who explored making a complaint about his conversations with the Commissioner, etc to see if we could offer to help advise on relaxing examiner restrictions, logistics around background checks, etc.
- **Sam** shares notes to general MASKGI membership, and invites interested people to join a next working group / committee meeting in a month or two depending on conversations above.