



The *FOAMLINE*

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FISHING OUTFITTERS ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA
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SPRING 2008

4 FOAM DIRECTORS RE-ELECTED; 1 NEWBIE

Retirement Takes Director; Region 7 Votes in a New Man

Even though with several director's terms up and a retirement, FOAM's Board of Directors remained mostly the same. Jim Voeller was re-elected for Region 1 (Kootenai, Flathead), Tim Tollett remained in Region 4 (Big Hole, Beaverhead), Steve Summerhill will continue for Region 6 (Gallatin), and Chris Fleck stays the Guide-at-large director. Newcomer, but long-time outfitter Dennis Alverson of Livingston replaced Lee Kinsey, who retired to serve on the Board of Outfitters.

Dennis ran a hunting outfit for years, but recently retired from 'all that hard work,' as he says, and concentrates on fishing operations now. He's already made his innovative and forward-thinking style know as a public member at a few board meetings. The FOAM Board welcomes Dennis and the returning directors.

MBO RAISES OUTFITTER, GUIDE FEES

Personnel Payscale Increased Slightly, Expenses Rise

After ten years of a fixed fee schedule, the Board of Outfitters, under the guidance of Executive Director Wayne Johnston, reviewed their budget and voted to raise license and application fees beginning in the fall of 2008.

Outfitters will pay \$375 a year, up from \$300, guides, \$150 annually instead of \$100; Outfitter license application fees went from \$1,000 to \$1,300 while the Inactive Outfitter renewal fee increased from \$150 to \$200. Several proposals were studied and discussed by board members, and the dominant theme was setting fees that will pay increasing expenses for another ten years.

State employees have had steady but small annual increases in pay with a cumulative effect of raising the MBO budget to the point where higher income had to match higher expenses. Plus, the cost of regular supplies, materials, autos, gas, and the like is steadily increasing.

Members may remember the concept of department 'recharges' - basically charging all boards for Dept. of Labor & Industry service expenses like administration salaries, legal costs, and office space. In the past, these recharges have been as high as 35% of the board budget. A new method of tracking exact personnel hours worked for individual boards may reduce this 'overhead' charge on a board-by-board basis and allow the newly proposed MBO fee schedule to hold for more than 10 years.

At the end of the discussion, MBO members agreed that raising fees a little more once every decade was better than charging less more frequently, such as fee increases every 3 years.

MADISON PROPOSAL OUT FOR COMMENT

Recreation Permits, Shuttle Permits Required for 2008

The Madison river cooperative planning efforts of the Bureau of Land Management and the Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks have created a permit proposal that was sent out on January 14. Public meetings are scheduled for Bozeman on Thursday, January 24 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Region 3 HQ, 1400 S. 19th Ave., and for Ennis on Tuesday, January 29 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Ennis High School library, 223 Charles Street. Comments will be taken at both meetings and via the FWP Region HQ until February 15, 2008. Comments should be sent to:

Region 3 FWP
Madison River SRP
1400 S. 19th Avenue
Bozeman MT 59718

or by email to : mblevins@mt.gov

Called an 'operations manual,' the draft joint proposal covers "implementation policies and procedures and provides guidance to agency staff responsible for administering the SRP program," according to the newly-hired FWP Madison River Manager, Maria Blevins, headquartered in the FWP Region 3 in Bozeman.

FOAM has spent many hours working with the BLM and FWP representatives working out details of this permit process and directly influenced several key aspects of the permit administration, including fees and shuttle driver operations.

Outfitter fees are set at "3% of gross income derived from use authorized under the SRP (Special Recreation Permit) or the minimum fee of \$90, whichever is greater." Originally, the agencies wanted outfitters to 'guesstimate' their use level, then pay 50% of the calculated fee based on that guesstimate. FOAM pointed out that few outfitters could pay that amount before they made any income from the permit, so the current proposal asks commercial operators for the minimum \$90 upfront, with the balance calculated and due by December 31 of any permit year.

How will permittees show they've got a permit? A tag, of course, even though the agencies received comments like, "I don't want my boat to look like a NASCAR racer!" Tags will be issued to permittees (outfitters) who then distribute them to their guides. Tags will have the permittee's permit number on it. Outfitters and guides will need to display the tags "in a conspicuous location" on both sides of a boat. If someone's walk-wading, they need to carry a copy of their SRP permit.

Use reporting will be via an official 'post-use report' form asking the # of trips, gross revenue, the 3%-times-gross calculation, the amount paid on deposit (upfront), and the balance due. Checks will be payable to FWP.

As for logging river use, outfitters and guides will carry agency-provided bound trip logbooks; guides will have a logbook for each permittee they work for. Logs must be filled out in ink prior to conducting commercial activity and show date, outfitter (permittee), guide, permit #, client, and location information. The outfitter or guide must produce the logbook if asked by a warden or BLM law enforcement officer. It's up to the permittee to make sure their guides fill out the logbook. Of course, failure to follow these rules may cost a permittee or a guide their river privileges.

Copies of this document and other information are on our website, www.foam-montana.org/news.htm, the FWP website fwp.mt.gov (look for 'outdoor recreation') and the BLM site www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/dillon_field_office.html. Or, you can call Maria Blevins (406-994-6359) for a copy. Make comments as appropriate and/or come to the public meetings.

BLACKFOOT RIVER MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Moving Into Second Year of Planning Process

The Regional River Advisory For Tomorrow (RRAFT) group has been meeting since early 2007 and is currently focused

on specific reaches, suggesting, for instance, that the stretch from Roundup to Whitaker Bridge doesn't have the use the area from Whitaker Bridge to Johnsrud does and should be managed for lower intensity use. The lower stretch of this 'Reach Five,' however, should be managed for high use to "protect river resources from being degraded."

The group discussed group sizes, but FWP's Charlie Sperry noted that the SRP process had spent a lot of time working out the appropriate group sizes, and that the RRAFT folks should concentrate on reviewing group size "for consideration when the BLM updates its resource plan in 2008."

Two sub-groups are working on possible overcrowding issues in areas from Harry Morgan/River Junction to Russell Gates and from Roundup to Whitaker Bridge. Using the Statewide River Rec Rules' terms like 'restrict, ration, and allocation,' the RRAFT is considering a range of alternatives should conditions reach a point where restrictions are warranted. No consensus was reached, so discussions will continue at the Feb. 4 meeting in Missoula. Jack Mauer, outfitter representative on the group, has been keeping FOAM updated on these issues.

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Region 1 (Kootenai, Flathead)
Jim Voeller
862-3448

Region 2 (Bitterroot, Clark Fork)
Casey Hackathorn
546-5680

Region 3 (Missouri)
Pat Straub
495-0487

Region 4 (Big Hole, B'head)
Tim Tollett
683-5276

Region 5 (Madison)
Joe Dilschneider
682-5356

Region 6 (Gallatin)
Steve Summerhill
586-5373

Region 7 (Yellowstone)
Dennis Alverson
222-0755

Region 8 (Bighorn, Ft. Peck)
Matt McMeans
666-2326

Guide-at-Large Director Chris Fleck 322-0202

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