



**Executive Board Meeting Minutes
3-27-2020
Emergency Meeting**

Executive Board Members and Advisors

President - Doug Saint-Denis - Present
Vice President - Bob Kratzer - Present
Secretary - Ryan Gausman - Present
Treasurer – Randy Lato - Present
Member at Large A - Marc Bush - Present
Advisory Member - Greg Kain - Present
Advisory Member - Cameron Black – Present

Doug invited Cary Hoffman to the meeting to provide information on SBA loans and financial relief.

Emergency Meeting began 1300 hrs

Doug sent out a commentary of questions and concerns he’s heard from members in advance which was discussed at length by the board. It is copied below as follows:

Over the past days I have received many calls and emails. The number one question has been “When can we get back to fishing?” There is no answer for this. I think it is ridiculous that our Governor has issued a stay at home order for two weeks. No one, not even the smartest scientists in the world can tell us this will be over in two weeks. Even if we see a downturn of the spread of the virus, I honestly do not think the State of Washington would lift the stay at home order. I think giving folks a timeline causes false hope in addition to the letdown people feel when they are told the stay at home order is being extended.

Another question that has come a few times is in regards to the Columbia River springer fishery. WDFW is unable to tell us if this fishery will be extended to allow for sport fishing. This is because they have no idea when the stay at home order will be lifted. That said, if the stay at home order is lifted, it is very likely the 6-foot social distancing rule will still be in effect and effectively keeping us from fishing. Now that we are where we are knee deep in this pandemic, It’s my opinion the State will prevent us from operating as guides and charters until the 6-foot rule is lifted. Although, I am not 100% positive of this.

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I think it is most likely the state will not reopen boat ramps until the stay at home order is lifted. That said, this could change with the mounting pressure from the public to the governor's office. Tom Nelson was on the Dory Monson show on Thursday and Dory absolutely blasted the state on this issue.

To this end, it will be important to understand that once we see a downturn in our state, if travel restrictions are eased, the virus could be reintroduced into our state and were back to where we are now. So, whatever you do, make sure you are following best practices when you do return to operating.

In regards to unemployment, the vast majority of guides are self-employed and do not pay into the state unemployment. That means you will be unable to collect unemployment. The Executive Board had an emergency meeting today and I asked Cary Hoffman to sit in on the meeting because he has been aggressively researching SBA loans. One of the big keys to these loans is the passage of this relief package by the federal government. There will more information coming out on this soon.

As of today, I have heard of several people who have contacted their loan institutions, explained what is going on and their loans have been deferred for 3 months, apparently tacking the payments onto the end of their loan. This is always an option you can look into with your financial institutions, apparently the smaller institutions such as credit unions are doing this more than the larger institutions.

Lastly, I recently sent out an email that explains that NACO has in the past garnered relief for fisheries that failed and charter operators lost revenue. 2016 is a prime example. That said, in the past those who apply for relief typically need a USCG license so they can classify themselves as a charter for the relief package, due to the way the relief has been articulated in the bill at the time. This time may be different. That said, it is important that all operators are maintaining good records of booking lost as a result of this.

I know you want to know how long this will last. I cannot answer this. I don't think anyone can. For now, we need to hunker down. Spend time with family or get caught up on maintenance, tying leaders and more. I think we all know there will be a time when we will get back to normal, but to say when that will be is impossible.

As of now, we are only 3 days into a 2 week stay at home order by the State of Washington. Having watched a lot of coverage on this virus, it is believed a person may carry the virus up to 6 days before exhibiting symptoms. Then if they get sick, may have it up to 20 days. If my math is correct, that is 26 days, not 14. I believe we will see an extension to the current stay at home order.

The Executive Board is trying to gather as much information as we can to get to you. As soon as we have more, you will know.

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If you have specific concerns or questions, please let anyone of the board members know. Lastly, make sure you go to the WA State Guides Association Facebook page and follow it.

Other discussion included:

- It was decided that it will be necessary to maintain records of lost bookings to apply for any type of benefit

-Cary Hoffman stated that it appears the household rebate will be the only direct benefit received personally by small business owners

It also appears approximately 350 million dollars is going to support small businesses in the form of low interest SBA loans, and as reimbursement for employee pay to prevent layoffs.

The length of the shutdown will likely determine if additional support will follow the current package.

At this point nobody has seen the actual language in the stimulus package so the details are unknown.

The CARES act is what we are speaking about

- There was a lot of discussion regarding the fishing closure in Washington State. It was unknown specifically whether the closure was ordered by the Governor or the Director of WDFW.
- It appears it was a response to last weekends statewide crowded beaches, docks, riverbanks, and state lands by people who came out en masse from all over to fish, camp, and party in small, less populated counties. This caused a lot of serious concern among the residents of the smaller communities. The concerns were that these small communities have little if any virus present and are not equipped medically to handle a large infection. People believed the large crowds may result in a spike in local infection.
- The discussion included that fishing itself falls within the governor's stay at home guidelines which allow for outdoor activities that maintain a 6 foot social distance separation.
- There was also discussion that the fishing closure itself appears to have been a "spur of the moment" decision and that there were additional options that could have been considered instead of an all out closure.
- Several board members suggested the guides' advisory committee should have been consulted for alternatives and suggestions since the committee was requested by and adopted by WDFW for input on fishing related regulations in Washington State. It appears WDFW chose to ignore the opportunity for further discussion and input on alternative reasonable options
- It was made clear that, in the event fishing is reopened, along with other activities on state owned lands, outdoors people who choose to take advantage of the opportunities are going to have to use a lot better judgement and restraint in how they travel and congregate or it will just be closed indefinitely to protect citizens from corona virus.

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- The board discussed drafting a response letter to WDFW from our association regarding our position and suggestions for alternative action which would provide for outdoor opportunities while still staying within the covid19 guidelines. No final decision was made on this issue.

Doug discussed the need for additional association membership. Various options were discussed including discounts during the shutdown and marketing options. It was decided that for now we will make an effort to communicate what we are doing and the reasons all Washington guides should join this association to make it stronger, more representative, and more relevant in the hopes that people will choose to join.

The message is “If you are a fishing guide in Washington State you need to join the WSGA so you are part of the process of strengthening our industry”. WSGA is the voice of the industry to the decision makers in Olympia, we need members from all over to ensure the voice we present is representative of the interests and needs of every guide in the state, not just the few who are currently members.”

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1420 hrs

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