

Guides services on the Kenai Refuge in 2007

by Tai Davis

Guides provide many valuable services to visitors on Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, such as big game guiding and hunter transporting, scenic white water and flat water float trips, sport fish angling, campground services, boat drop offs, air taxi service, canoe rental and drop off service, wildlife sight-seeing, hiking, and guided horseback trips. The most popular service is guided sport fishing.

The Refuge has a set of specific Special Use Permit conditions specific to various commercial activities in addition to general permit conditions that apply to all guides and/or outfitters. These regulations are in place in order to provide safety for guides and their clients, protect wildlife, and resources and in some cases limit congestion at Refuge facilities. All guides must comply with various regulations of the Refuge, Alaska State Parks, the Kenai River Special Management Area, and State hunting and fishing regulations.

Suppose that you were interested in providing some kind of guide service on the Refuge. There are a lot of hoops to jump through, and here is what you would need to do. You would start by filing an application by April 1st. The permit year generally begins on May 1 and extends until April 30 of the following year. After holding a one year permit that is in compliance with all Refuge regulations, the next year a five year permit is issued.

There is a non-refundable administrative fee of \$100 for each permit issued. Guides are required to report services provided on the Refuge. In addition to the administrative fees, fees are also collected for actual client use days, based on various types of activities. A calendar use day is defined as one calendar day (24 hours or portion thereof). Client use days should be reported to the Refuge by November 15. Failure to report by November 15 will result in non-renewal and Notice of Violation for noncompliance with permit conditions. Once use reports are received, the Refuge is responsible for computing and issuing a bill for collection to permittees within 30 days. In turn, permittees are required to pay fees within 30 days of receiving the bill for collection. Special Use Permits will not be issued until all past due fees have been collected.

Instruction letters sent out with the guide packets explain the application process in detail. There is also a checklist to assist with compiling appropriate documents. Returning the application form and all required documents to the Refuge at your earliest convenience will ensure your application is processed and in a timely manner. Also, if there is reason there is a problem, there will be time to correct it, and a permit can be issued prior to the guide season. Once administrative fees are paid and documents received, stickers will be issued. The stickers are required to be placed on vehicles and watercraft to show proof that your organization is authorized to operate on the Refuge. Operating without a sticker will result in a Notice of Violation.

In brief, applicants can expect to provide a copy of the following:

- Completed KENWR Visitor Service Application Form, filled out in as much details possible describing proposed activities and experience
- State of Alaska Business License
- Liability insurance binder, naming Refuge Manager as co-insured. Insurance must cover all activities for permittee and employees
- United States Coast Guard operator's license for watercraft, intended to carry six or less persons for hire. Copy of Alaska Boat Certificate numbers. Copy of licenses for each employee working under the permit, vessel numbers.
- FAA Pilot License/Air Taxi Certificate for those interested air transport
- Other licenses or permits needed. (i.e., ADF&G Sport Fishing Guide & Business License #)
- List of all vehicles, aircraft, watercraft, and/or hauling equipment expected to be utilized and their registration numbers. Multiple year permittees must update this list
- List of all employees who will be working under the permit.

- Safety Plan (explains actions you would take in case of an emergency)
- Special Use Permit administration fee of \$100.00 (cash, check, credit card, or money order accepted)

New applicants can contact the Refuge to obtain information. Packet can be faxed, emailed, mailed through the U.S. Postal Service, or picked up in person.

Current guides/outfitters can expect update information to be mailed to them that will need to be returned for processing prior to the season beginning.

If you have further questions regarding the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and/or commercial Special Use Permit requirements, please contact Rick Johnston, (907) 262-7021 or FAX (907) 262-3599.

Tai Davis is the permit specialist at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Previous Refuge Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.