

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of the State of Washington

May 12, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee,

We applaud your leadership during this pandemic health crisis for our state, nation and world. On behalf of Washington State's outdoor recreation guides & tours, we write to express our grassroots support for you to allow our outdoor professionals to return to work in Phase Two you have outlined. Public health safety is our shared prerogative, with appropriate protocols in place for our employees to lead the public in play outside. Our industry is poised to engage our recreation business services as a means to help with economic recovery and the essential mental and physical health of Washingtonians.

Our guides and tour operators have a tradition of offering guided trips for the public with the highest level of safety. The specialty segment of the outdoor recreation business sector are trained risk management professionals that can implement physical distancing and hygiene practices in accordance with regulations provided by the WHO and CDC during the pandemic. As professional outfitters & guides, our businesses already have qualified operational protocols in place for their staff and clients to follow. We are committed to collaboration by sharing best practices and procedures with others in our sector as we collectively try to "get back to work".

We have also become aware that some public lands (local, county, state and federal) are being abused by a public that is hungry to get outside. Our guides and tour operators provide their clientele with training in appropriate outdoor ethics, while also modeling those ethics to the unguided public. Public lands always benefit from the existence of outfitters and guides, operating properly and ethically, observed by others who wish to emulate the way that professionals operate.

As Washington State moves forward with the response to the ongoing pandemic and its economic reverberations, we ask that you consider the important role that outdoor recreation businesses are playing and will continue to play in our state's economic recovery. Allowing outdoor recreation guides and tour operators to return to work would make a meaningful contribution to pandemic recovery efforts.

As professionals in the service industry, outdoor recreation guides and tours should be considered in the next phase of businesses allowed to reopen to the public. We have enclosed our statement and plan to be a part of the solution. Also enclosed is information on the economic impacts of our outdoor recreation sector.

Respectfully yours,

Todd Elsworth, Executive Director
Washington Outdoor Business Alliance



Washington Outdoor Business Alliance
by Recreation Northwest
PO Box 2771 Bellingham, WA 98227

by Recreation Northwest

Statement from the Washington Outdoor Business Alliance - We are part of the solution!

The Washington Outdoor Business Alliance has swiftly formed the *Outdoor Recreation Guides & Tours Working Group* to advocate for our segment of the economy in the outdoor industry.

Public Health Safety

A common concern amongst all outdoor recreation guides and tour operators is safety. Professional guides and tour operators are risk managers. They manage the risk to their staff, their clients, the unguided public and to public lands every day. Guides and tour operators already manage the risk of injury and illness on their programs. Washington State outdoor recreation guides are building COVID-19 risk management plans specific to their operations which will manage the risk of infection to their clients, their staff, the unguided public, and to the gateway communities where many programs take place.

Risk Management Professionals

As risk management professionals, we are here to help the public reduce injury, minimize risk, and reduce search and rescue efforts. Our businesses predominately follow *Leave No Trace* behavior educational guidelines that can be extended “beyond the trip” for travel to and from the destination.

Economics

The economic ecosystem of recreation services, combined with risk management professionals can assist on the path to recovery in a safe manner. We are a core component of the recreation retail and tourism sector’s recovery as well. For some in our industry a minimum group of guests is needed to operate a trip.

Our businesses have been built over the years, and in some instances even decades, by seasoned professionals. Many of these operate as small businesses and we are concerned that they may lose the ability to salvage lost revenues for this core operating season, which for some only goes until October. Compared to normal operating seasons businesses are:

- Down bookings between 50-90% percent year to date.
- Some Outfitters are experiencing negative cash flow due to a massive amount of refunds for pre booked trips.

As we prepare for re-opening businesses still need time for staff training. Standard operators need an average of 2 weeks for staff training before opening their doors to the public. We’d like to request the ability to run staff training programs prior to restrictions being lifted. We want to ensure our safety protocols and employee expectations are in place before we are open to serve the public.



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Operational Protocols

Our updated operational protocols will follow the recommended guidelines issued by the Washington State Department of Health, the national Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization. Additionally, our outdoor professionals will adhere to specialty guidelines designed by guide associations and like-minded businesses to address the specific issues that might exist in each guided context (e.g. mountaineering, river rafting, horseback riding, kayaking, etc.).

The following are a few examples we could implement to help ensure the regulations laid out by the Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization are being met:

1. Create social-distancing protocols throughout every aspect of our operations.
2. Train staff in identifying COVID-19 symptoms, use of PPE, proper handwashing, and how to maintain social distancing in the workplace.
3. Establish a protocol for surveying staff for wellness when they arrive at work.
4. Employees need to self-isolate and inform a supervisor immediately if they develop a fever.
5. Do not allow symptomatic people to physically return to work until cleared by a medical provider.
6. Develop and implement policies and procedures for workforce contact tracing following employee positive COVID-19 test.
7. When necessary, stagger tour departures to minimize contact between staff and groups of participants.
8. Maintain small group sizes compliant with CDC and State recommendations.
9. If social-distancing cannot be achieved for any reason, provide appropriate PPE for staff.
10. Whenever possible encourage online reservations and online waiver signing. Where walk-up business is unavoidable; develop protocols to enable proper distancing and sanitary conditions.
11. Whenever possible develop outdoor check-in procedures to avoid the need for customers to enter our facilities.
12. Develop cleaning protocols that allow for proper disinfection of gear and related gear after use.
13. Develop launching and landing protocols that ensure proper distancing between participants.
14. Encourage customers to cancel if feeling unwell and ensure that they can reschedule with no penalty when they are feeling better.
15. Develop workplace protocols for regular disinfecting of high-use common areas throughout the day.
16. When required to transport customers, strictly follow CDC guidelines regarding passenger drivers.
17. Discourage the use of cash in transactions. Where possible ask customers to use credit cards and tap processing options, when purchasing products.
18. Owners and managers should keep up to date with all changes that are happening daily.



Outdoor Recreation Guides & Tours Working Group

The signers on this letter represent guide and outfitter businesses in the following disciplines: hiking, horse packing, trail riding, road biking, mountain biking, sea kayaking, white water rafting, outdoor education, backcountry skiing, rock climbing, alpine climbing and mountaineering. Their city of operations is also listed.

Kristi Kucera, Moondance Kayak
Sea Kayaking, Bellingham

Tommy Farris, Olympic Hiking Company
Hiking, Port Angeles

John Minier, Baker Mountain Guides
Mountaineering, Climbing and Skiing, Bham

Aaron Burkhardt, WA Outfitters and Guides Association
Horse Packing and Trail Riding, Twisp

Dan Moore, Pandion Consulting
Recreation Tourism Professional, Seattle

Jason Martin, American Alpine Institute
Mountaineering, Climbing and Skiing, Bellingham

James L. Moore, Orion Rafting
River Rafting, Leavenworth

Greg Whittaker, Alki Kayak Tours
Sea Kayaking, Seattle

Tom Murphy, Outdoor Odysseys
Sea Kayaking, Friday Harbor

Paul Engel, Wild and Scenic River Tours | Baker Bus
Rafting | Ski Shuttle, Glacier

Todd Starnes, Bicycle Adventures
Cycling, Redmond

Brian Kienle, Peak 7 Adventures- Rafting, Kayaking,
Hiking, Mountaineering, and Camping, Mead

Matt Paul, Sacred Rides
Mountain Bike, Seattle

Shaums March/Nicole Gerow, March Northwest
Mountain Bike, Bellingham

Nicole Gerow, Bike Instructor Cert. Program
Mountain Bike, Bellingham

Brandon Bertelsen, Methow Rafting
Rafting, Winthrop

Erik Schorr, Anacortes Kayak Tours
Sea Kayaking, Anacortes

Mark Zoller, Zoller's Outdoor Odysseys
River Rafting, White Salmon

Jennifer Spatz, Global Family Travels
Group Travel, Kent

Bill Corson, Outdoor Adventures Adventure Rafting
River Rafting and Adventure Tours, Index

Laura Ward, Earth Elements
Forest Therapy, Bellingham

Todd Elsworth, Recreation Northwest
Forest Therapy, Bellingham



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Outdoor Recreation Guides & Tours Working Group (con't)

Abram Dickerson, Aspire Adventure Running
Trail and Mountain Running, Bellingham

Eric Bone, MerGeo
Wilderness map and compass navigation, King County

Luke Baugh, Triad River Tours
River Rafting, Bellevue

Steven Fore, Alpine Adventures
River Rafting, Gold Bar

Mike Storm, Intrinsic Flow
Mountain Bike, Bellingham

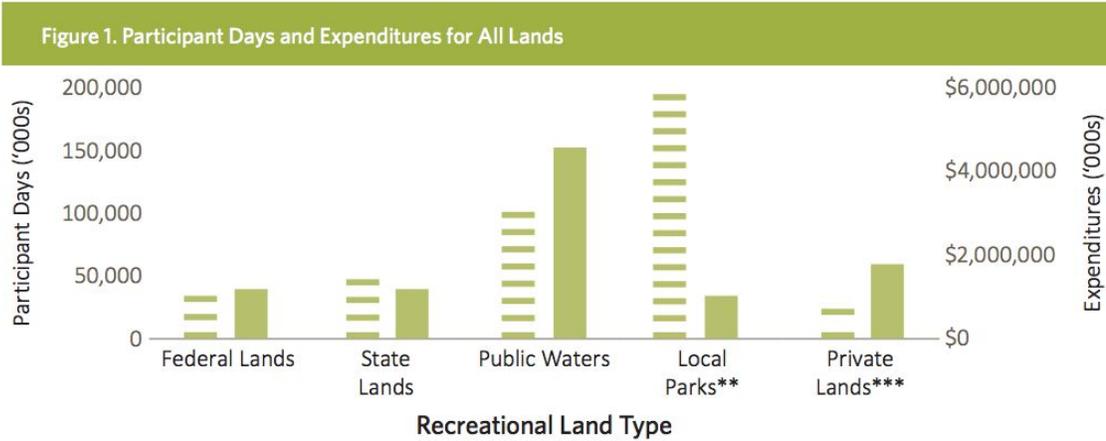
Scott Montgomery, 3 Peaks Outfitters
Horse Packing and Trail Riding, Cle Elum

Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State

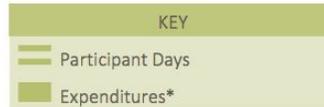
“The benefits of Washington’s outdoor recreation industry go beyond supporting jobs to include creating a way of life. It is estimated that Washingtonians, on average, spend 56 days a year recreating outdoors. According to the recreation surveys and public land records used in this study, there were a total of about 446 million participant days a year spent on outdoor recreation in Washington, resulting in \$21.6 billion dollars in annual expenditures.”
Recreation and Conservation Office, 2015.



Figure 1 shows the total expenditures and total participant days for different recreational land types.



*Excludes equipment expenditures, which total \$8,974,243,000
 **Excludes events occurring on public lands, which total \$1,986,000 in expenditures
 ***A limited number of private lands were included in this analysis



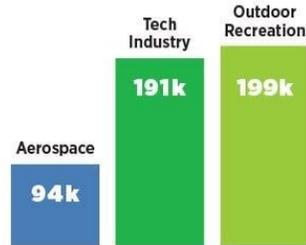
WASHINGTON STATE
Outdoor Recreation Economy Generates:

\$21.6 Billion

Spent in Washington on Recreation Trips and Equipment Annually

199,000 Jobs

Direct and indirect supported in Washington



JOBS IN WASHINGTON STATE
 Sources: Washington Aerospace Partnership, 2012
 TechAmerica Foundation, 2012
 Washington Recreation and Conservation Office, 2015

Bureau of Economic Analysis Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, guided tours and outfitted travel accounted for 3 percent of outdoor recreation GDP contributions. This data is not broken down at the state level, but we do know the total GDP contributions of outdoor recreation in Washington State – \$12.25 billion. We can back-calculate this estimate by known outdoor recreation multipliers to arrive at consumer spending in Washington - \$26.2 Billion. Taking 3 percent of total consumer spending in Washington (3% = national estimate of guide service % of total) leads us to an estimate of \$790 million of consumer spending supported by guide services in Washington.

Bureau of Economic Analysis Table 2	US Total	WA
Total Outdoor Recreation Value Added (GDP Contributions)	\$453,189,000,000	\$12,253,780,000



Guided tours/outfitted travel	\$13,693,214,570	\$369,745,532
Air and Land Guided Tours/Outfitted Travel	\$8,143,691,458	\$219,896,761
Water Guided Tours/Outfitted Travel (includes Boating and Fishing Charters)	\$5,549,523,112	\$149,848,771

Recreation and Conservation Office 2017 Recreation Demand Survey

Six percent of residents in Washington utilize a guide or charter service. An open-ended question was asked about the types of activities that residents used a guide service. Responses indicate 57% of the activities were related to fishing, while 14% were related to whale watching. None of the other activities listed in this category came in above 3%. On average, residents who responded to this question used a guide or charter service 1.77 times in the last 12 months.

Estimated Guide Trips in WA: 2,938,424 **Estimated Annual Spending: \$790,054,556**

This data was compiled using a variety of data sources. Without a formal study, these numbers are the best we can surmise from the information gathered. Sources listed below.

Sources:

Quote and Figure 1: [Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State](#),

Prepared by Earth Economics. Prepared for Washington Recreation and Conservation Office Olympia, 2015.

Jobs in Washington State Graphic

WA Aerospace Partnership, TechAmerican Foundation, and WA Recreation and Conservation Office

Bureau of Economic Analysis Table 2

[U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 1. Outdoor Recreation Value Added, Employment, and Compensation as a Percent of Total, 2017.](#)

Note: This data may be off, Washington may have a higher or lower proportion of guide services compared to the rest of the US

Recreation and Conservation Office 2017 Recreation Demand Survey

[Jostad, J et al, 2017. State of Washington 2017 Assessment of Outdoor Recreation Demand Report, Table 7.1: Percentage of Residents Who Used a Guide Service.](#)

Note: Many of the surveyed indicated they used guide services outside of Washington, which may make this data unreliable!

[2018 Washington Resident Survey of Outdoor Recreation, Eastern Washington University.](#)

***BACK OF ENVELOPE MATH*: Guided Services in Washington - ESTIMATE**

Estimated Guide Trips in WA: 2,938,424 **Estimated Annual Spending: \$790,054,556**



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Activity	Percent of Guide Services	# of Participants	Annual Spending
Alpine	1.61%	47,394	\$12,742,815
Backpacking	0.40%	11,848	\$3,185,704
Bicycling	0.40%	11,848	\$3,185,704
Birding	0.40%	11,848	\$3,185,704
Camping	0.40%	11,848	\$3,185,704
Fishing	58.06%	1,706,182	\$458,741,355
Horseback Riding	1.61%	47,394	\$12,742,815
Hunting	3.23%	94,788	\$25,485,631
Jet Boat	1.21%	35,545	\$9,557,112
Kayaking	2.82%	82,939	\$22,299,927
Mountain bike	0.81%	23,697	\$6,371,408
Nature	4.84%	142,182	\$38,228,446
Photography	0.81%	23,697	\$6,371,408
Rafting	6.85%	201,424	\$54,156,966
Sailing	1.61%	47,394	\$12,742,815
Scuba/Snorkel	1.61%	47,394	\$12,742,815
Whale Watching	13.31%	391,000	\$105,128,227
Total	100.00%	2,938,424	\$790,054,556



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