

for the next ten years and a truly public process is important, the park needs your comments. Get involved and let the park know how you feel.

Commercial River Guiding and Outfitting in Utah

by Tony White

Commercial river running in the state of Utah is big business with approximately 60,000 passengers being carried by commercial outfitters in 1993. The professional river guides and outfitters providing this service to the recreating public must be commended for an outstanding safety record. In preparation for the upcoming season, CPRG and the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) would like to share information relating to commercial river guiding and outfitting in the State of Utah.

The administration and enforcement of the Utah Boating Act is under the supervision and direction of Utah State Parks. It is the policy of the State of Utah to regulate and promote safety for persons and property in and connected with the use, operation and equipment of vessels and to promote uniformity of laws. In fulfilling this policy, State Parks developed a commercial river guide permit program and outfitting company registration program. Under Utah Boating Act, any person who operates a vessel engaged in carrying passengers for hire on any river of the state must possess a Utah River Guide Permit and be employed by a registered outfitting company.

Each year, river outfitting companies must register with State Parks. This process involves a fee, verification of a business license, verification of river trip authorization from the state or federal land managing agency, and a listing of authorized agents' signatures. The outfitting company registration procedure is an effort by the State of Utah to protect the public from unscrupulous "pirate" outfitters who would fail to have business licenses, insurance, river trip authorizations, or professionally licensed guides. Once an outfitting company is registered and recognized by State Parks, the outfitter may send guide permit applicants in their employ to one of three testing and permitting centers (Moab, SLC, and Vernal). The river guide permit application process requires that the applicant be at least 18 years of age, complete the prescribed form with appropriate signatures and registered outfitting company sponsorship, be current in the required first aid and CPR certification, pay a \$10 fee, and have operated a vessel on the required number of

river trips necessary to obtain the guide permit being sought. Lead guides (Guides I and II) are also required to successfully complete a written test on Utah Boating Laws and Rules.

State Parks believes that commercial river guiding and outfitting is a profession requiring highly skilled and knowledgeable personnel that are capable of providing a safe, recreational experience to the public. Like all true professions, personnel must meet and maintain minimal standards in order to be considered a "professional." The minimal standards/qualifications utilized by the State of Utah for commercial river guide permit requirements are based on river running experience, emergency medical training, and knowledge of the Utah Boating Act.

Persons seeking Utah River Guide Permits must complete the Utah River Guide Permit Application in full with required river running experience listed. This information should be completed prior to the authorized agent signing the application. The application is considered a legal document and the authorized agent's signature verifies that the guide is employed by a State--recognized outfitting company and has obtained the required river running experience as listed on the application. These applications may serve as a first-line defense for a guide and outfitter in court proceedings where an injured party is attempting to show negligence or inadequate skills/training.

Guide permit applicants must also present original copies of first aid and CPR certifications. Photocopies are not accepted due to the ease of falsification. Also, it is required by Utah Boating Act that guides carrying the original certification cards and river guide permit at all times while working. The carry of these certification cards is necessary due to the large number of enforcement personnel who work the rivers to insure safety and compliance with Utah Boating Act. A river guide permit may be issued in May despite a first aid certification that expires in June. By requiring the guide to carry the original certification card, enforcement personnel are able to insure that the guide has completed the appropriate training to stay certified. Failure to maintain current first aid and CPR certification renders the guide permit invalid.

Guides and outfitters are reminded that experience trips are valid only when

obtained within ten (10) years prior to the date of application for the guide permit or renewal. Guides wishing to renew a permit must meet this log requirement, complete the prescribed form with appropriate signatures, pay a \$10 fee, and present original certification cards for first aid and CPR. It is the belief of State Parks that for a person to retain professional status as a commercial river guide they must maintain a certain level of proficiency both in vessel operation and emergency medical care, be sponsored/endorsed by a State--recognized outfitting company, and have a working knowledge of the Utah Boating Act.

The information that must be provided on the prescribed River Guide Permit Application for initial, renewal, and duplicate permits is as follows:

- 1) Type of guide permit sought must be checked off at the top of the application by the authorized agent of the registered outfitting company.
- 2) Applicant's full name and permanent address. Note: Guides must notify State Parks within 30 days of any change of address.
- 3) Applicant's date of birth, height, eye color, and hair color.
- 4) Applicant's social security number.
- 5) Applicant's signature and date.
- 6) Outfitting company name and type of guide permit authorized by outfitter.
- 7) Authorized agent's signature and date.
- 8) Minimum river experience required to obtain type of permit issued or being sought. Note: Experience trips are valid only when obtained within ten (10) years prior to the date of application for the guide permit or renewal.

Guide I...must list at least 9 "whitewater river" trips.

Guide II...must list at least 6 "other rivers" trips.

Guide III...must list at least 3 "whitewater river" trips.

Guide IV...must list at least 3 "other rivers" trips.

9) River section must be listed by the name of the river and mileage/section and qualify as the proper water classification (either "whitewater river" or "other rivers" as defined by Utah Boating Act) for the type of permit issued or being sought.

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10) Permit number (applicable only to state and federally permitted waters). Note: Permit number must be the number issued by a governmental land management agency. If the permit was for commercial carry of passengers, the guide may list the commercial outfitting company's name in lieu of a permit number.

11) Put-in and take-out dates must be listed by month/day/year.

12) Type and size of vessel operated.

13) Trip leader's name.

River guide permit applications and study guides of the Utah Boating Act may be obtained at any testing and permitting center. Applications and study guides will be mailed upon request. Numerous first aid and emergency medical training programs are recognized by State Parks as equivalent to American Red Cross training standards. A listing of these course equivalents is available upon request.

Guides and outfitters seeking further information regarding commercial river guiding activities or the Utah Boating Act are encouraged to contact State Parks at either of the following offices:

**Utah Division of Parks and Recreation
Southeast Region Office
89 East Center Street
Moab, Utah 84532
(801) 259-8151
Contact: Tony White**

**Utah Division of Parks and Recreation
Main Office
1636 West North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116
(801) 538-7220
Contact: Ted Woolley**