

Kenai River Guide Academy

Background

In January 2004, a group of organizations and agencies began working together to create a certification program for Kenai River fishing guides. The Alaska State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Kenai River Professional Guides Association (KRPGA) and Kenai Peninsula College (KPC), a community campus of the University of Alaska Anchorage, collaborated in creating the Kenai River Guide Academy.

In early 2005, the Kenai River Working Group (KRWG) incorporated the Kenai River Guide Academy program into their recommendations to DPOR for new State Park Regulations. Draft regulations were written and a public hearing was held in Soldotna in January 2006 to listen to comments about this program as well as other changes to Title 11. After the public comment period the regulations moved on to Lieutenant Governors Office for signature. The proposed regulations have been signed by Lt. Governor Loren Leman and will take effect on March 14, 2006.

Purpose

The purpose of the Kenai River Guide Academy is to educate and train all Kenai River fishing guides in the following areas:

- Regulatory
- Safety
- Guide ethics and behavior
- Habitat and conservation

Mandatory Program

In 2006, this program will be optional. In 2007 the course will be mandatory for all new guides who wish to possess a Kenai River Commercial Guide Permit. The applicant must successfully complete a course approved by the director of DPOR that is specially designed to train persons to provide professional guide services as sport fishing guides within the KRSMA. The guide must pass the course in order to receive a DPOR commercial operator permit to guide on the Kenai River. If you attend the optional course in 2006 and pass, you will not have to take the course in later years.

Kenai River Professional Sport Fishing Guides who have held a valid permit prior to December 31, 2005 are required to successfully complete the course within a specified amount of time based on the number of years as a Kenai River Guide:

- 1 year but less than 6 years, must successfully complete the course within 2 years.
- 6 years but less than 11 years must successfully complete the course within 3 years.
- 11 years or more must successfully complete the course the course within 5 years

One Course to be Offered in 2006

While the course is optional in 2006, there will be one training class offered from April 24-28, 2006 at Kenai Peninsula College in Soldotna. Many guides have expressed interest in being able to take the course before it becomes mandatory in 2007. There are 25 seats available for this one course and guides will be registered on a first come, first paid basis. Guides that are interested in attending this course must register by calling the college at 262-0311 or 262-0314. Tell the person you want to register for the Kenai River Guide Academy course.

Guides can pay the \$206 course fee via credit card over the phone or can mail their check to:

Kenai River Guide Academy
c/o Kenai Peninsula College
ATTN: Shelly Blatchford
34820 College Drive
Soldotna AK 99669

Guides will not be confirmed for a seat until payment is received. Once payment is received you will receive a confirmation email or phone call from the college. The course begins at 8 am each day and ends between 4 pm and 6:30 pm. A 100-question multiple choice/true-false test will be given on Thursday and oral examinations will be given on Friday. Guides that do not pass the course in any year can retake the test up to three times. If a guide does not pass the test on the third try they will be required to take the class again and pay the class fee again.

For more information on the content of the course, contact Gary Turner at KPC at 262-0317. Contact Pam Russell at the Kenai River Center at 260-4882 ext 232 if you have questions about the Kenai River guide permits.