

Checking In + Next Steps

Dear Montana Outfitters and Guides,

By now everyone of you have realized some measure of impact from this far-reaching medial and economic crisis. It will pass and, if we do the right things now, you and your fellow outfitters and guides will survive. We will continue to provide the **BEST information available to you through these newsletters.**

An indication of the potential downturn we can expect to see is the lagging applications for non-resident hunting licenses. With the application closure date looming, the Department reports that Big Game Combination Licenses are down 41%, Deer Combination Licenses are down 35% and Elk Combination Licenses are down 37%.

In the coming days be looking for MOGA to provide the following:

- **Montana Outfitters Tool Kit** - a comprehensive and tailored set of specific tools that will help you plan for and navigate through this difficult period.
- **Recommended "Best Practices" for servicing early season clients** - specific actions that will keep your staff safe, your clients safe and your communities safe. These "Best Practices" will be used to ensure localized business closures do not include the outfitted client where social distancing is a prerequisite for the service being provided.
- **Continued updates** on action MOGA is taking to affect federal, state and local policy that will help your industry during these troubled times.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, [reach out](#) to the MOGA office. We're here to help and we will get through this together.

Mac Minard
Executive Director

MOGA Policy Updates

Over the last several days, MOGA has been working on several policy updates to help the outfitted tourism industry and everyone in it navigate through this storm. As we continue to work on this, we want to keep you informed on the most current actions that we are taking.

1. Declaration of Emergency Authority. Things are changing quickly and to help us be able to make decisions in the timeliest manner possible, the MOGA Board of Directors is voting on a declaration of emergency authority to be given to our Executive Committee and Executive Director.

2. Madison River Planning. MOGA is formally withdrawing from the Madison River planning efforts. You may have heard that Montana FWP cancelled the commission meeting slated for March 27. The prospect of dragging this process into spring when affected business communities are already facing economic disaster and potential health challenges was cause for the MOGA Board of Directors to unanimously agree to defer work in the issue indefinitely. You can see the [news release here](#).

3. Trails Clearing Economic Stimulus. The goals with this is to put outfitters and their crews, who will otherwise be filing for unemployment, to work clearing trails of blowdown from years of neglect. There are no more qualified people than already-permitted outfitters and their staff to get this job done well and quickly, as they have the livestock, knowledge and ability. This is not a new concept and was something America did during the depression to deliver work and public benefits. As we work through this, we'll continue to keep you updated on our efforts and latest news.

4. Managing Early Season Clients. As Montana outfitters have early season clients who are continuing to seek the services they have booked, MOGA is establishing protocols for managing those, with guidance on safety for staff, clients and communities. The goal is to successfully manage getting clients into the field and maximizing social distancing, while continuing to provide for some level of commerce. The outfitting industry is unique in that it innately allows for social distancing and minimal interactions.

5. Broaden Communication Reach. MOGA has reached out to state administrators - through the Office of Outdoor Recreation - and asked for the contact information for ALL Montana outfitters, regardless of their affiliation. We're all in this together and now is the time for the entire outfitting community to be working side by side to protect,

sustain and support this industry.

6. Outfitter Toolkit. A comprehensive toolkit has been created to help outfitters and guides navigate through the coming weeks, with best practices on communicating with clients, cancellation policies, travel insurance, crisis management and fiscal planning. **We'll send that to you later this week.**

Refine Your Cancellation Policies During Coronavirus

As we are heading into week two of many states shutting down, people being asked to stay in their homes and a significant hit to the economy, outfitters and guides are feeling the pinch of cancellations and refund requests as many guests and potential clients are facing the financial impact of being laid off, furloughed and more.

Over the next several days and weeks, you're going to have to make some tough decisions, including updates to cancellation policies. The best case scenario is to have a cancellation policy that helps your customers, your business and your employees. At the forefront, outfitters and guides are in the service industry and we have a **few main goals** in mind when navigating through cancellation policies, including reassuring guests, showing them you care, tell them about what you are doing right now (including what you can and cannot control) and share with them the benefits of postponing their travel instead of simply cancelling it. As you are likely very deep into figuring out the next steps to take for your business, [read this article](#) from Liquid Spark for more ideas and strategies.

50 Ways to Cut Expenses

As you are reassessing your financial commitments in order to make it through the fallout of COVID-19, Swan Mountain Consulting Group has put together a document titled "**50 Ways to Cut Expenses in an Outfitting Company.**" Ideas range from revisiting your phone plan costs, doing a price comparison on all food items, job sharing, online banking, assessing your transportation fleet, eliminating bank charges and more.

At the Office we are following these recommendations to ensure that our doors can remain open for as long as possible in service to you. We are reducing salaries, cutting expenses and suspending travel and eliminating or reducing contracts. The MOGA Board has passed an Emergency Declaration of Authority that cedes operational authority to the Executive Committee so decisions can be made at the speed necessary to fully support you and the industry. We are taking this seriously and we know you will too.

You can see the full list of recommendations by [downloading a PDF here](#).

Resources for Outfitters and Guides

MOGA has compiled a list of resources for your business. Please review each one and take advantage of this resource list.

America Outdoors: [landing page](#), [guidance for outfitters](#), [letter to Senate leadership](#), [letter to House leadership](#)

Liquid Spark Media & Marketing (member of AO): [COVID-19 support](#)

Global+rescue: coronavirus [blog](#); [questions your clients may ask](#)

SBA: [disaster assistance and loans](#)

U.S. Travel: [landing page](#) with communication materials, workforce protection and recovery policies

Montana Coronavirus Executive Taskforce: [situation updates](#)

Unemployment Benefits for Workers Impacted by COVID-19

U.S. Chamber: [guidance for employers](#)

CDC

WHO

Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce: [help desk](#)

ITRR: business [survey results](#); national economic conditions of large concern as travelers [results](#)

Outfitter response examples: [Outward Bound](#), [ARCC](#), [AdventureTreks](#), [O.A.R.S.](#), [Austin Adventures](#) and [ROW Adventures](#)

Tips for Business Preparedness: [PDF](#)

Customizable flyer for business: [PDF](#)

Business Resilience: [PDF](#)