



April, 2019

In December 2018, the ACA submitted a letter to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) to ensure that our membership in Tennessee was included in any process, on any governmental level, related to rule making regarding paddlesports. We expressed that it is vital for the paddling community to have a seat at the table when it comes to the formation and implementation of rules related to paddling, and that we want to see the permanent establishment of a paddlesports advisory council through the TWRA, including representatives from commercial outfitters and private boaters in Tennessee to provide critical input in any potential rule making processes. Your ACA State Director, Andrea White, reiterated this theme in testimony to the Senate Agriculture, Energy, and Natural Resources Committee in late March.

TWRA testified to the Senate Committee that their latest plan is to pilot the new paddlesports outfitter rule with a few outfitters in 2019 and start full implementation in 2020. This includes the boat markings, safety requirements, and data collection about how many rentals they put on the water and at which access points.

The ACA is pleased to see the pivotal changes proposed for the rule in SB665 in Amendment No. 1 to the benefit of the paddling community in Tennessee. The most important amendments to SB0665 are summarized here:

1. Establishes that outfitters will submit their data to TWRA and establishes a schedule for those submissions. (The rule previously just stated TWRA could request information from outfitters.)
2. Outfitters can submit data under seal so their confidential business data will not be subject to FOIA requests. TWRA can report the data in aggregate.
3. Moratorium on outfitter fees until July 1, 2021.
4. A formal Commercial Paddlecraft Advisory Board will serve at the invitation of the Executive Director of TWRA...following the same model as the Commercial Fishing Advisory Board.



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5. At the request of the lobbyist for the Ocoee Outfitters Association, they cleaned up the language that gives them an exemption from these state regs to make it more explicit. Outfitters operating under permit from Cherokee National Forest are still exempt, which covers most outfitters on the Hiwassee and Nolichucky Rivers.

We are happy to see the process moving in a positive direction for the paddling community, and will provide continued updates as the process progresses. Currently, the next step is to reopen the House full committee. If it passes through the full committee, SB665, including Amendment No. 1 will move to the house and senate floors for consideration. In the meantime, you can best direct questions to TN State Director, Andrea White at tnstatedirector@americancanoe.net.

Sincerely,

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