

## **AMGA Report to the IFMGA, April 2014 – Advocacy Department**

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This report contains status updates on various initiatives that the AMGA has been working on, as well as some new topics. Given the US government shutdown in October 2013, many discussions and initiatives were stalled, and have been slow in resuming. However, there is some encouraging news from both Denali and Rocky Mountain National Parks. Neither are major changes at this point, but incremental steps towards more positive policies for guiding.

### **New AMGA Accreditation Standards / National Guiding Standards**

Per my last report, the AMGA Technical Committee has been looking at alternate ways to enter the alpine program for aspiring guides who primarily work on simple glaciated terrain. The TC developed curriculum for a new entry-level course, which we are calling the Alpine Skills Course. This will have different entry requirements than the current Rock Guide Course, and will more adequately address the needs of those guides. The pilot course is scheduled to run this summer.

In addition, the AMGA and our legal counsel are currently researching different ways to implement mandatory guiding standards at a national level, since solely working with the land management agencies is not progressing as we had hoped. This is in the initial phase, but hopefully we will have something more substantial to report by the next IFMGA meeting.

### **Rocky Mountain National Park**

There has been some good news from RMNP, who opened up a pilot program for new Commercial Use Authorization permits for guided climbing. They are allowing four new permits for summer 2014, and are using the application process as a way of soliciting information about the public demand for guided climbing services. This will help them in developing a new plan for guided climbing this summer, which may result in some new opportunities.

This information was distributed to AMGA members in the hope of providing a large pool of applicants for the park. Overall, the park received 19 applications, and many other comments from guides who did not apply. As you may remember, the AMGA sent a proposal to RMNP in 2012, advocating for this type of permit program. In a recent meeting with park staff, they expressed intense interest in our participation in the planning process. Given some regulations, they have only until 2017 at the latest to finish this process, and are hoping to have some new permits available by summer of 2015. I will continue to work with the park on this matter, and will keep the IFMGA apprised of the progress.

### **Yosemite National Park**

In August 2012, the AMGA applied to conduct two programs in the park. I have been in communication with the permit administrator, and the official briefing on this

was conducted with the park management team in September 2013. Due to the government shutdown in the fall, the official decision was not released then. In further talking with the permit administrator towards the end of 2013, she stated that the AMGA permit request was denied, though she did not know the reason. We are still awaiting the official denial letter, which should have been sent out in January, according to the permit administrator. However, she did state that the park was willing to consider our request upon completion of the wilderness stewardship plan, which is still several years in the making, but will address both climbing and commercial services.

### **Denali National Park**

After many discussions with park staff, the AMGA recently sent a letter to park management, encouraging them to develop ways for both foreign IFMGA Mountain Guides and domestic non-concession guides to access the portion of the climbing permits unused by either the concessions or independent climbers. In my report from May 2103, I discussed the climbing permit allocation process, and how this would be integrated into the new concession guiding contracts. The park was able to extend the current contracts through 2015, thus giving them time to investigate additional guiding opportunities. They would likely look similar to the Commercial Use Authorization permit that RMNP is using. The letter was also forwarded to relevant members of the US Congress that provide oversight of the land management agencies. We are excited for this potential, and look forward to working with park staff to implement such a program. We will, of course, keep the IFMGA informed.

### **Sustainable Summits Conference**

In July 2014, the American Alpine Club is hosting “Sustainable Summits: The International Conference on Environmental Practices” in Colorado, USA. The conference focus is to shape and share environmentally sustainable solutions in mountain areas along with developing global partnerships. The AMGA and IFMGA have been invited to attend and participate, and we hope to have several representatives from both organizations in attendance.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the challenges posed by the American land management system, the AMGA is excited about the relationships we have developed, and the progress that has been made. We believe that by educating land managers on the value of AMGA credentialed guides, and working with them to implement technical standards, that mountain guiding can have a healthy, prosperous future in the United States.