



Monday, November 24, 2025

Commercial Recreational Land Use Permit Application

As required by Sitka General Code 14.10 No person may conduct commercial recreational activities on city and borough of Sitka lands subject to this title except as authorized by a permit issued by the municipal staff as designated by the administrator.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Business Name Discovery Journeys

Primary Contact Ben Swanson

Address [REDACTED]
Lynnwood, WA, 98036

Phone Number [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

DETAILS OF TOUR OR GUIDED ACTIVITY

Season Start Date Friday, May 22, 2026

Season End Date Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Commercial Allocations: For each area, the commercial carrying capacity is indicated in the far left column next to the area name, denoted as (maximum client group size/maximum groups per week). For each area at which you would like to request commercial recreational use, check the "Area of use" box. Additionally, provide your maximum proposed group size (clients only, not including guides) for each area; may not exceed commercial carrying capacity maximum group size. For groups per week, provide your estimated number of groups per week based on a season average that will use each area. Enter an estimated total client number using each area in the far right column.

	Area of use	Group Size	Groups per week	Total Clients
Cross Trail North (12/26)				
Cross Trail South (8/23)				
Gavan Hill Access (7/19)				
Indian River (7/23)				
Thimbleberry/Heart Lake (14/24)				

	Area of use	Group Size	Groups per week	Total Clients
Herring Cove/Beaver Lake (7/18)				
Herring Cove Beach (6/24)				
Blue Lake Road (12/26)				
Blue Lake (6/20)				
Green Lake Road (8/26)				
Green Lake (6/20)				
Swan Lake (6/16)				
Eagle Beach ("Back Beach") (6/18)				
Sitka Sound Islands (6/18)				
Baranof Warm Springs (6/18)	✓	5	2	10
Goddard Hot Springs (6/14)				
Other (please list area below)				

OTHER - Areas of proposed use not listed above. Please list each area, group size, maximum groups per week and total client estimates.

Bathing Instructions

Before you soak

Remember take it slow and easy. We are a long way from medical help. Rocks and trail to Grotto pools are very slippery.

Leave products behind: Do not use soap, shampoo, or body products in the hot spring pools. Sunscreen and bug spray should also be avoided in the water; apply them to your clothes instead.

Remove jewelry: Jewelry can tarnish in the hot springs.

During your soak

Water can be very hot, so enter gradually to avoid shocking your system.

Tub temperatures will vary depending on ambient weather and rain prolonged soaking can lead to dizziness or lightheadedness. Add cold water as needed in tubs or take a break if in Pools

Mind your towel: If using tubs there are hangers and plenty of space provided. Grotto Pools mind your gear and towels. Others may be coming and going so please keep path to and from clear of gear and towels

Keep it quiet: Avoid loud conversations maintain a relaxing atmosphere for everyone. In either the case of tubs or Grotto pools the sounds of nature and the nearby waterfall are part of the experience

Do not splash, or submerge your head in the water.

Be respectful: Avoid staring at others and be mindful of others' privacy. Occasionally tub visitors will opt to tub in the buff

Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of water, especially after soaking, to avoid dehydration.

After your soak

Dry off:

Rest and catch your breath. Please be sure you have ALL of your belongings and be sure that shipmates have theirs as well. As with all of our trips ashore please gather trash along the way and be sure to leave the wilderness as we found it or better

Don't be afraid to ask crew for a helping hand if accompanied.
Meet back at pre arranged location and or cal on the radio if late or need assistance

Details of tour or guided activity: Fully describe tour or activity in each area, including guided activity, outfitting resources provided, typical areas of use, etc.

Historically since 1981 we used to visit Baranof Warm Springs and overnight. When the shelter was built we would occasionally cookout (weather dependent).

Due to the amount of traffic and pressure on the area we then switched gears to make a stop for 2 to 3 hours where a crew member or two would guide typically 8 guests in two separate groups. E.G We would all go ashore together where I would tell some history of Baranof and stories of times past at the ramp. One group would hike to Lake and one group would tub and we would trade places so each group could experience both. Our group sizes vary sometimes 4 and although rare sometimes as many as 10. Last year given the limit of 6 we would often send 4 ashore and upon their return guide the next group. Our weekly schedule is very fluid, the years have proven it advantageous to keep a loose itinerary to take advantage of weather and wildlife opportunities as they present themselves. Photo groups are more interested in ALL wildlife so they prefer to focus on Bear and Whale action and pass by a visit to the hot springs. We also have some guests that are not as steady as they once were so I opt to pass by the Hot Springs as hiking in the wilderness is better to be left to those more fit. The above question of visitation is arbitrary based on several factors but all in all we typically make a stop at the Hot Springs 5 or 6 times throughout the season

Please include the following information and attachments with your application.

Certificate of Insurance (City & Borough of Sitka named as additionally insured)

File Upload



2026_OpPlan.pdf



Charter Lakes 2025 Policy.pdf



History.docx

APPLICANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Commercial Use Regulations:

- Applications and permits issued under [SGC 14.10 COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL USE OF MUNICIPAL LANDS AND FACILITIES](#)
- Guidance provided by the [2026 Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan](#)
- Permits shall expire on December 31st of each calendar year.
- Permits are valid only for the dates, times, activities, and areas specified.
- Permits are not automatically renewable. Issuance of a permit shall not entitle any priority or preferential consideration for subsequent, new, or additional permits for the same area or for related uses.
- Permit Fees will be invoiced after January 4, 2026 application closure.

Upon acceptance of a permit, all permittees shall execute an instrument under the terms of which the permittee shall agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the City and Borough of Sitka from any and all claims for injury or damage to persons or property suffered in connection with the permittee's activities

unless such injury or damage is caused by the gross negligence of the City and Borough of Sitka.

I certify that the business/operator(s) are registered with the CBS Sales Tax Office, unless specifically exempt from collecting and remitting sales taxes for sales outside of City and Borough of Sitka jurisdiction, and have no outstanding judgements to the City and Borough of Sitka.

Terms and Conditions

Accepted

Date

Monday, November 24, 2025

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. R." followed by a stylized surname.

Outfitter/Guide Operating Plan
Juneau Ranger District & Admiralty Island National Monument

Tongass National Forest



/s/John A Swanson & John B Swanson

PERMIT HOLDER

01-01-2025

DATE

PERMIT ADMINISTRATOR

REVIEWED DATE

DISTRICT/MONUMENT RANGER

APPROVED DATE

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF OPERATION

a. Year Operating Plan Developed: 2018

b. Permit Holder Name: John B. Swanson

i. Valid Alaska Business License Number: See attached

ii. Business License effective date / expiration date: 10/09/2024 to 12/31/2026

iii. Business Name: Discovery Journeys LLC

iv. Contact Person: John B. Swanson

v. Address: [REDACTED]
Lynwood, WA 98036

vi. Phone Number: [REDACTED]

vii. Cell Phone Number: [REDACTED] (John); [REDACTED] (Ben)

viii. E-Mail Address: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

ix. Website Address: <http://www.alaskacharters.com>;
<http://www.discoveryjourneys.com>

* The holder shall notify the authorized officer in writing when a change in control of the business entity that holds this permit is contemplated; (I.H.1. Notification). The permit will terminate upon change of control of the business entity and is not subject to appeal; (VI.F. Termination).

c. Name of Vessel (s) & AK#:

Name	Registration #
MV Discovery	231097

d. Season(s) of Operation:

From (month/date/year): 5/1/26

To (month/date/year): 9/25/26

e. Annual Itinerary (you may attach a calendar or other description of itinerary/schedule):

See Attached

f. Do you require assigned sites? No

g. Describe any Temporary Facilities proposed for use. None

h. Do you plan to store any hazardous materials on the national forest (boat gas, oil, propane)? No

i. **Hazardous materials storage approved:** None

j. **First Aid Training:**

Name*	Level of Training	Expiration Date
John B Swanson	First Aid & CPR, STCW	12/26
Jamie Swanson	First Aid & CPR	12/26
Ron Niebrugge	First Aid & CPR	12/26
Brandon Swanson	First Aid & CPR	05/27

*You may attach a separate document identifying all staff and their appropriate safety certifications.

k. **First Aid Equipment available:**

Aboard we have a very comprehensive and complete Coast Guard approved First Aid Kit that is updated annually. We also have a Zoll AED. Prior to departures, we conduct a comprehensive boat safety orientation with our passengers. Topics include man overboard procedures, fire safety, and overall vessel safety and awareness. The vessel has all appropriate and Coast Guard required safety equipment.

While afield, we have a small first aid kit during most of our shore excursions. We also carry a handheld VHF radio so that we can contact the appropriate authorities or the vessel. For Bear safety we carry Bear Mace where we are likely to encounter bears.

I. Please describe what is included in your standard client safety briefing(s).

We have a safety briefing prior to all shore excursions. We discuss location, what to expect, staying together as a group, safety in numbers, and what passengers are allowed to carry ashore i.e. water only. A standard Bear safety briefing trying to highlight bear and human interaction. Because the areas differ significantly our briefing procedures vary based on location.

m. What type of Communication System is maintained for general operations and for Emergencies.

We carry cell phones on the boat; limitations depend on service areas. We have VHF (fixed and hand held) and CB radios on the vessel. The VHF radio has the capability of reaching the Coast Guard in an emergency throughout Southeast, Alaska. We have 2 diesel generators on the vessel for AC & DC power. We also have a trace inverter that provides AC on battery power.

n. Explain your emergency procedures in case of Accidents, Injuries or other Emergencies:

We would assess the situation to ensure the scene is safe before attempting to contact the patient, stabilize the situation, and apply the appropriate first aid. If it is something beyond our capability we would contact the US Coast Guard for assistance or a private carrier depending on the nature of the emergency.

o. Explain in general how your operation on the Forest will be run:

Activity	Length of Trip	# Clients per Trip	Max client - guide Ratio	Min client - guide Ratio
Nature Tours	8 Days	10-12	1:6	1:1

p. Explain methods for managing trash and waste (litter, animal carcasses, etc.):

Trash is collected and stored on the vessel in accordance with MARFAC then properly disposed of in Juneau, Petersburg or Ketchikan. We maintain a logbook for disposal. If anything goes ashore it is carried back to the vessel for proper disposal.

q. Explain methods for managing human waste (including toilet paper):

When ashore we use established facilities when available. Our shore excursions are usually less than 4 hours. As such, we encourage passengers to use onboard facilities before going ashore. If passengers need to relieve themselves while ashore we encourage them to carry toilet paper and a baggie for proper disposal on the boat; or to cover it up.

r. Describe methods for minimizing impacts to other visitors' (outside of your group) experiences:

We avoid going ashore when other people are present. This is not always possible at Anan or Pack Creek. If possible, we will wait until fewer people are present. If people are at the viewing spit, we'll typically go to the tower or vice versa. We also attempt to avoid other vessels when choosing anchorage.

s. Maps: See attached

t. Brochure: See attached

u. Web page: Provided above

v. Guide Qualifications:

United States Coast Guard Charter Boat Captain's License Registration				
Guide Name	License Class	Reference #	Issue Date	Expiration Date
John B Swanson	1214690		2/2/23	2/2/28

2. STIPULATIONS FOR AUTHORIZED USE

Note: Outfitters/Guides must acknowledge that they understand and concur with each of the following standards and guidelines by initialing the line preceding each letter.

_____. Your Operating Plan and other necessary documentation **must** be submitted according to the following schedule:

USE PERIOD	SUBMISSION DATE
Spring Use (March 15 to May 31)	January 15
Summer Use (June 1 to Sept 30)	January 15
Fall/Winter Use (October 1 to March 15)	July 15

_____. For priority use permits in good standing, this Operating Plan is updated yearly, for the term of the permit. *The Operating Plan details proposed use that is currently authorized on face of your permit. Requests for new activities*

and/or changes in locations or authorized levels of use must be submitted in a separate proposal to the authorized officer.

JS ____ .Understand that the use that you originally request may not necessarily be what is ultimately approved. Approved maps will become Appendix A to your permit. The permit language, the operating plan and the Appendix A maps will delineate the areas, activities and quantities authorized for use.

JS ____ .All advertising relating to the permitted operation must include reference that operation is under permit with the Tongass National Forest. Additionally, to comply with federal law, at a minimum you also need to include on all advertising: “[Your name/company] is an equal opportunity service provider” (per Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended).

JS ____ .There will be a mid-season and/or annual performance evaluation completed by the Forest Service permit administrator. (see section VI, Inspection and Evaluation).

JS ____ .The District Ranger may withhold authorization for the holder to use all or part of an assigned amount of service days for reasons of resource protection, public health and safety, or because of permit violations.

JS ____ .The permittee, as well as his or her employees, agents, guests, and customers, shall abide by all current Forest Service regulations. The permittee is wholly responsible for any actions of these persons.

JS ____ .The permittee shall furnish a report of actual use within thirty (30) days of the close of the operating season. The "Actual Use Report" form is attached to the permit as Appendix E..

JS ____ .All guides who work alone with their clients will have, as a minimum, a current American Red Cross Standard First Aid (8 hours) card or equivalent First Aid Certificate.

JS ____ .All injuries and accidents of clients or employees occurring on National Forest lands will be reported at the earliest opportunity to your permit administrator or to the Juneau Ranger District/Admiralty Island National Monument at (907) 586-8800.

JS ____ .All major search or rescue operations will involve the U.S. Coast Guard. Emergency dispatch numbers and radio frequencies will be known by all employees and be readily accessible.

JS ____ .A thorough safety briefing is given to all clients (or multiple briefings). Clients are warned of the dangers of hypothermia, cold water imersion and traveling in brown bear country. Clients are also notified to stay in their guided group and not to travel by themselves.

JS ____ .Stipulations for operating on the Tongass National Forest and specific areas therein will be added to the permit as Appendix G.

JS ____ .Outfitters/Guides operating in designated wilderness must complete and attach the Operating Plan Addendum: Wilderness Education Plan.

JS ____ .Outfitters/Guides and their clients are expected to practice Leave No Trace principles (per Appendix G). It is the responsibility of the outfitter/guides to teach their clients all pertinent skills and practices.

JS ____ .Performance Evaluations. The objective of outfitter and guide performance evaluations is to provide feedback to the permittee on how well the operation met the conditions of the permit and operating plan. The overall goal is increased resource protection, service to the public and safety.

Performance Standards - The performance evaluation form, with its listed performance elements, is attached to the permit as Appendix F, and represents the performance standards to be assessed for this permitted operation.

It will be the District Ranger's final decision on what rating to assign for failure to follow the terms of the permit or operating plan.

Probation, Suspension and Revocation - Special Uses Permit for Outfitting and Guiding, Terms & Conditions, VI. Revocation, Suspension, and Termination details the situations in which a permit may be revoked, suspended or placed on probation.

3. PERMITTEE CHECKLIST

The following items will be needed annually by your permit administrator. Those of you who have automated your offices, please scan the items and transmit them via email to your administrator.

JS

First Aid & CPR Cards

JS

State of Alaska Business License

JS U.S. Coast Guard Licenses (Holder and guides operating boats carrying passengers)

NA Pilots License (FAA required)

JS Certificate of Liability Insurance showing US Government as additional insured.

NA Guide Use Area Registration Confirmations (Holder and all guides for hunting operations only)

JS Big Game/Sportfishing Guide Licenses (Holder and all guides for hunting/fishing operations only)

JS Hunting/Fishing licenses (Holder and all guides for hunting/fishing operations only)

JS Copy of Current Advertising Brochure & Website addresses