

Natural Resource ENTERPRISES

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Fee hunting enterprises in Mississippi

Annual net revenues from fee hunting averaged \$3.91 per acre statewide during the 1997-1998 hunting season.

A fee hunting enterprise can be a means to increase or diversify income generated from private lands in Mississippi. Recent research has shown that on a per acre basis, annual net revenues averaged \$3.91 statewide and \$2.17 in the Gulf Coast counties (1997-98). In the MS Delta, revenues from fee hunting have been shown to be even greater. Landowners engaged in fee hunting enterprises may be able to increase revenues earned from their properties from wildlife resources, and this can supplement income earned from agricultural and forest commodities. Additionally, landowners can better control trespassing, poaching, and damage to property due to unlimited access (Birch 1997, Yarrow and Yarrow 1999, unpub. data, Forest and Wildlife Research Center, Mississippi State University).

Management and service amenity costs

To supplement and diversify income, landowners can combine activities that enhance fee hunting opportunities with traditional management practices for forestry and agriculture. Wildlife management expenditures for fee hunting averaged \$1.28 per acre statewide during 1997-1998 (Jones et al., 2001). However, management activities that benefit wildlife can be incorporated into typical management practices for timber or agriculture. Many forest management practices used to increase timber yields can also benefit wildlife populations (Yarrow and Yarrow 1999, Rohweder et al. 2000). Agricultural producers who manage field borders, protect riparian buffer strips, and leave unharvested crops, such as cereal grains, corn, and soybeans in the field, can increase game species on their properties for fee access recreation (Yarrow and Yarrow 1999).

Service amenities can include things such as road and trail construction and maintenance, liability insurance, and potentially guest accommodations. Expenditures for services appear to be greater in the Delta and Gulf Coast

counties. These expenditures for the Delta and Gulf Coast counties were \$2.21 per acre and \$0.71 per acre respectively for land dedicated to fee hunting. Statewide, service amenity expenditures averaged \$0.31 to \$0.24 per acre in 1996-1998 (Jones et al., 2001).



Marketing

For any business to be successful, marketing is a necessity. Marketing can be as simple as word of mouth advertising from satisfied customers or as far-reaching as advertising on the Internet. A successful fee hunting enterprise can draw clientele from throughout the United States and even from other countries. The costs and benefits of specific advertising methods should be considered prior to starting a marketing campaign.

Liability

In a recent survey, landowners engaged in fee hunting responded that they generally do not experience serious problems (Jones et al., 2001). Carrying accident liability insurance is a vital component of a fee hunting enterprise. Additionally, liability can be reduced by taking necessary measures to minimize hazards on the property such as posting warning signs and keeping maintenance records.

Although fee hunting enterprises can provide a source of income for private landowners in Mississippi, many things should be considered to determine the feasibility of undertaking an enterprise. A business plan and services provided by landowners within fee hunting arrangements can increase landowner income potential and the value of fee hunting properties to hunters.

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Landowner spotlight

One local landowner has turned his dream into a successful enterprise. Wade Henson, owner of Cypress Lodge Outfitters near Kilmichael, MS, developed a successful outdoor recreational business on his family's farm. He offers white-tailed deer, turkey, quail, dove and waterfowl hunts to Mississippians and visitors from around the country and the world. Offering only a few hunts on a shoestring budget at first, Henson now stays booked most of the year with hunts, church gatherings, and family reunions. Wade is just one example of how natural resource businesses can be integrated into existing farm and timber operations to diversify income.



Wade Henson, Cypress Lodge Outfitters
www.cypresslodge.com

Landowner workshop series continues

How to develop the natural resources on private lands into an income source is the topic for a series of workshops developed by the Natural Resource Enterprises Program at Mississippi State University. Two more landowner workshops were held this March at Lake Hall Farm in Lake Village, Arkansas and at Cypress Lodge Outfitters near Kilmichael, MS. Both workshops were well attended. Sixty-three landowners from Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Arkansas attended the workshop in Arkansas; fifty-eight landowners from 23 Mississippi counties as well as Tennessee and Texas attended the Kilmichael workshop.

Workshop attendees listened to presentations from resource professionals about types of natural resource enterprises, cost-share programs available for habitat management, developing a wildlife management plan, marketing, business planning, and legal and liability considerations.



After the morning talks, participants rode on tractor-drawn trailers and toured habitat management practices conducted on the properties to promote wildlife and fisheries. Wildlife biologists accompanied the tour to describe and discuss habitat and impoundment management.

Future workshops are planned for Sharkey, Rankin, Walthall, and Simpson counties in Mississippi. Through collaboration with partners in Arkansas and Alabama, a series of workshops will be conducted in Arkansas and one workshop will be offered in west Alabama.

Visit the website: www.wildlifeworkshop.msstate.edu for information on future workshops.

Photos from previous workshops can be found at: www.naturalresources.msstate.edu

Spring maintenance for farm ponds

Depending on your farm pond goals, spring farm pond maintenance can consist of four main activities: soil testing, liming, fertilization, and aquatic weed control. Performing a soil test on your pond bottom soil is an economical and effective way to determine if you need to add lime to your pond. Soil test kits are available at any county Extension office. Follow the directions, fill out the form and send the sample to the MSU Soil Testing Laboratory. The test results will indicate if you need to lime and the amount of lime needed. When needed, lime is used to alter soil pH and water alkalinity to a more optimal situation which can increase fish production. Typically liming should take place between October-January; however, if you plan to fertilize and your soil test indicates you need to lime, do so prior to undertaking a fertilization program.

Fertilizer increases phytoplankton (microscopic plants) growth, which are the foundation of the farm pond food chain. Phytoplankton are eaten by small animal organisms which are then eaten by bream and so on. Fertilization is not always necessary but can increase the quality of the fish by increasing the carrying capacity (pounds of biomass per acre) 2 to 4 times compared to a pond that is not fertilized.

There are several types of fertilizer ranging in price and application method (liquid, granular, and powder). Fertilization is recommended when pond water is clear enough to view objects that are 18-24" below the surface. Correct fertilization can help manage aquatic weeds by decreasing the sunlight that reaches the pond



Farm pond management, when practiced correctly, is a year-round effort. Although not every management practice is required every month, and some are only needed once every several years, timing is critical to the success of almost all of the standard practices recommended in Mississippi.

bottom. For more information on fertilization rates please obtain Extension publication 1428: Managing Mississippi Farm Ponds and Small Lakes.

Aquatic weeds are the number one problem for most landowners. Aquatic weeds can be controlled through proper pond construction, winter draw-downs, and as a last resort with chemicals or biological methods. Proper identification of problem weeds is crucial for management especially when using chemicals or biological controls because of the impact these methods can have on the overall pond environment. The MSU Extension Service and Natural Resource Conservation Service can provide identification services; additional information is available in MSU Extension publication 1428 or on msucares.com.

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For more information on managing Mississippi farm ponds, visit www.msucares.com/wildfish

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