

Natural Resource ENTERPRISES

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Outdoor recreational opportunities increase property values in Mississippi

Hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation on your property actually increase the property value of your land. Researchers at MSU conducted a survey in 2006 to evaluate sales values of private rural lands that were purchased primarily for recreational uses in Mississippi during 2002-2005.

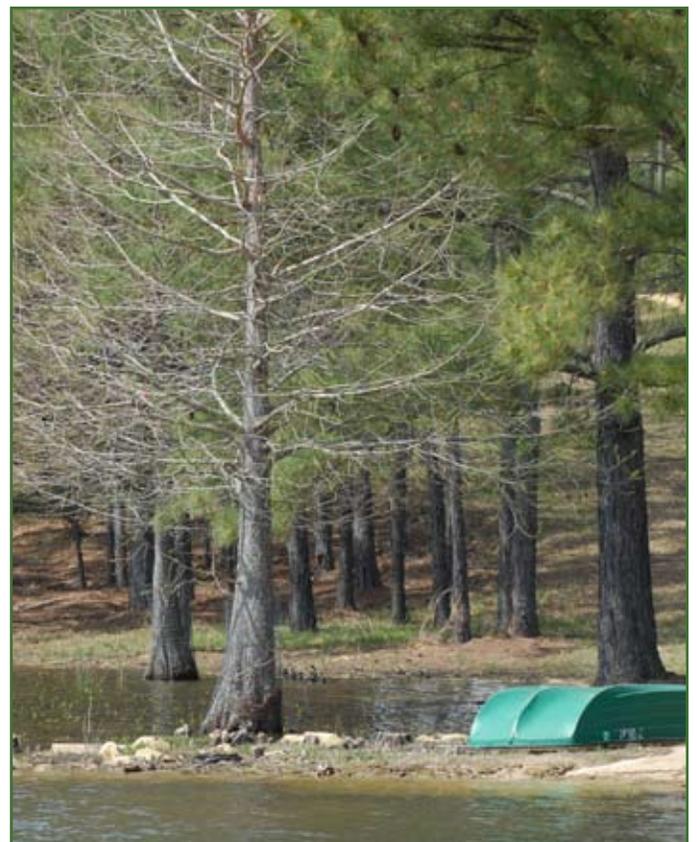
The evaluation was conducted jointly by MSU and the Mississippi Chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers and comprised 100 properties totaling approximately 33,000 acres. Most land parcels were located near or in the Mississippi River Delta region with dominant land uses being forests (52%) or agricultural row crops (43%). Important recreational uses on these lands included hunting (100% of properties evaluated), off road vehicles access (60%), horseback riding (45%), wildlife watching (44%), nature tourism (43%), and fishing (16%). Featured species associated with recreation on these properties were white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*; 93%), rabbits (*Sylvilagus spp.*; 65%), wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*; 56%), various waterfowl species (48%), squirrels (*Sciurus spp.*; 38%), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*; 15%), and northern bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*; 12%).

Total sales value of all properties with consideration of recreational opportunities was \$41,675,171, representing \$1,265 per acre. Appraisers reported that the sales value of the same properties without consideration of recreational uses would have been \$30,709,679.00 or \$932 per acre. Thus, recreational uses contributed an average increase of \$333 per acre or an increase of 36% in property value.

Property characteristics that increased sales price

were acres of bottomland hardwood forests, mixed pine-hardwood forests, and wildlife supplemental food plots. So, when landowners enhance outdoor recreational opportunities on their properties and those areas that support wildlife and fish, they increase the value of their properties and the price the property might bring if sold. In other words, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation on Mississippi private lands means money in the pockets of landowners.

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Recreational ponds like this one can provide a variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Charleston Farms

WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION AREA

Charleston Farms has a rich hunting tradition, but as this property has transitioned from row crop agriculture to WRP, the way they manage for waterfowl has changed. Charleston Farms takes a proactive approach to waterfowl management planning. They use the shallow water impoundments created through the WRP program as a chief means of attracting and harvesting waterfowl.

Charleston Farms has 350 acres of shallow water areas on the farm. By implementing smart management practices, they are beginning to see an increase in available habitat for waterfowl as compared to when agricultural fields once dominated this property. During the 2006-2007 season, hunters harvested nearly 1,300 ducks and geese on 1,750 acres. It takes time to harvest this many birds even on the most productive areas of the flyway; records indicate 258 hunter use days during the 2006-2007 season.

In 2006, Charleston Farms spent \$114 per acre on average to prepare waterfowl areas. These costs will diminish over time while benefits from management will be long term. In comparison, they spent around \$65 per acre on a less intensive management protocol in 2005. Although they spent 25% less on management expenses, the impacts were felt in the bag when they harvested 61% less birds than in 2006 due to less management conducted in 2005.

On intensively managed WRP sites like Charleston Farms, here are some rough numbers that may help guide your enterprise interests. On average, annual waterfowl management expenses will approximate \$100 per acre. Expect to spend this amount the first 2 to 3 years of management activities. These costs, if translated into unit effort, will be close to \$150 per man day when divided by hunter participation over the season. Another way to think about these costs is by birds harvested. For this site during the 2006-2007 season the costs translated into \$30 per bird harvested. These numbers are on the higher end of the

In 2005 the NRE Program began a demonstration project with Charleston Farms, Inc. illustrating the benefits to landowners of actively managing seasonal wetlands for waterfowl. These wetlands, or waterfowl areas as most landowners refer to them, make some of the most beneficial waterfowl habitat found across Mississippi. This demonstration project highlights ways in which landowners, managers, and waterfowl enthusiasts can gain knowledge about the techniques used to improve habitat and increase income from waterfowl hunting. The core of this demonstration is to explain the positive impacts associated with managing native vegetation, natural grasses, and forbs for ducks.

curve for waterfowlers but it does reveal the intentions and lengths that hunters will go to pursue their quarry of choice.

It's also important to realize that this is a high-end site and most WRP landowners may not be willing to manage to this intensity. What is being illustrated with this demonstration project are the various options available to those interested in managing for waterfowl and developing enterprises based on waterfowl hunting. Individual units on this property are managed exclusive of each other to show how a variety of techniques can be employed over an entire property to maximize waterfowl utilization.

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Waterfowl Management Tips

Extended Flooding- For best results, leave wetland areas shallowly flooded until late May or early June. This will greatly enhance beneficial wetland grasses, which are highly useful to overwintering waterfowl.

Drawdown Timing – Beginning in late May, drop water levels about 1 foot per week until each area has released all seasonal water.

Forage plantings – Although the native vegetation in these areas is adequate for providing ideal feeding areas for waterfowl, some banded plantings of grain crops can increase the attractiveness of these impoundments. Use banded plantings of corn, rice, if irrigated, and a mix of millet seed to increase overall seed abundance. Check planting guides for planting and maturation dates.

Mechanical treatments – Light disking may be used to stimulate germination of native grasses in areas where unwanted vegetation like broadleaf weeds, young saplings, and broomsedge persists. For best results, use this technique in June and early July.

Herbicide application – During July and August, use selective and targeted herbicides, as labeling indicates, to control problem weeds like Bermuda grass, buttonbush, and others. Spot spraying is the best technique for controlling problem weeds without harming beneficial vegetation.

Water - Irrigate, if available, during July and August to increase the growth of native grasses and increase seed abundance.

Fall Mowing - Banded mowing of native plants can promote use by waterfowl throughout the season. For best results, mow several 10 to 15 foot alleys in the native vegetation prior to fall flooding.

Fall Flooding – Begin flooding these areas in early September to attract Teal and shorebirds. For waterfowl season, you can flood 1/3 of your acreage in seasonal shallow water every month beginning in November. Ideally this means that all seasonal shallow water areas will be at full pool by the first week of January.



Upcoming Events

May 3, 2007 - The NRE Program and its partners will host a Natural Resource Enterprise Workshop in Tylertown, Walthall County, MS.

The morning session will be held at Tylertown Baptist Church and Family Life Center. Following lunch, the afternoon session will be hosted at Mr. Alan Zaunbrecher's property just outside of Tylertown, MS.

The workshop will consist of a morning lecture series by local natural resource and business professionals who will discuss the types of natural resource enterprises and associated revenue potential, USDA cost-share programs available for habitat management, outdoor recreation, nature tourism, business management, legal and liability considerations, and marketing.

After lunch, workshop attendees will board Mississippi State covered trailers for afternoon tours of Mr. Alan Zaunbrecher's property. Natural resource professionals from the NRE Program, Mississippi State University, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be on hand to discuss and answer questions about wildlife and fisheries management techniques used on the property. Some highlights include small upland game management, white-tail deer management, outdoor recreation, bird watching and much more.

Registration for the workshop is \$25, which includes a reference notebook, lunch, breaks, presentations by resource professionals and a field tour with agency personnel. Early registration is recommended due to space limitations.

For more information about the workshop or to register visit <http://www.wildlifeworkshop.msstate.edu> or call (662) 325-3133.

The NRE Program is currently planning additional workshops in central and south Mississippi and neighboring states this spring and fall. We will post those dates in the near future on our website!

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