

Natural Resource ENTERPRISES

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During a recent site visit with Brian Spearman, who operates a trail riding business for family members, we discussed ways for him to earn additional revenues based on the natural resource options on this landscape. He asked me a question, which I hear very often on site visits, "do you really think we can make money by allowing hunt'n and fish'n out here?" The quick answer is YES, and the reason for that is simple, most people who want to come to a site like this aren't just interested in the harvest of game; in fact, survey results tell us that folks just want to have a good place to go, where they can have an opportunity to hunt or fish for quality quarry, spend time with the members of their hunting party, and have great accommodations as a backdrop to these daily activities.

As we explored the property, I learned important information about Brian's short- and long-term visions for this land. By using his vision, we were able to discuss how hunting and fishing recreation could play a part in meeting his financial goals. Brian was able to visualize how offering select hunting and fishing opportunities on the property could bolster his revenues throughout the year.

Can hunting and fishing revenues from only 500 acres in the hills of Pontotoc County really add to the bottom line? Well Brian has a few things on his farm that allow him to maximize his on-site, trip related expenditures. When the average person takes a trip for the purpose of recreation, usually they will incur several types of trip related expenses. These expenses can range from food & beverage costs, lodging, fuel, equipment rentals, entertainment, etc. The way Longbow Trails, with its small size, is able to capitalize from these expenditures is with several key accommodating features. For example, Brian has a small bunkhouse that can be used by his trail-riding clients or for overnight stays by sportsmen. He also uses a parking area with RV hook-ups, which are inviting to visitors looking for that type of amenity. Longbow Trails also has a barn that was

Landowner spotlight



Brian Spearman Longbow Trails, Inc.

Longbow Trails, which is nestled within the rolling hills of Pontotoc County, provides recreational trail riding as the primary means of producing income from the property. This property consists of nearly 500 acres of upland hardwoods, planted pine, and some open grazing lands all encompassing a scenic man-

made lake. The area is dissected by various trails and resting points scattered about. These resting points, all equipped with primitive camping sites, a fire pit, and log seating, are used by the riders to sit and rest while enjoying nature.

converted into an outdoor kitchen and eating area. These things add up to making the outlook for success very good and help facilitate growth for other areas of outdoor recreation on the property.

What will Longbow Trails offer as part of their future recreational avenues? They will probably start with some select archery hunting for white-tailed deer. Then they will likely offer a handful of weekend hunts for eastern wild turkey and combine these hunts with an opportunity to have a quality fishing experience along the shores of their 7-acre lake. Of course, they have ample opportunity for the trail rider, mountain biker, and would-be bird watchers on their 20 miles of interior trails. For more information on Longbow Trails, Inc. feel free to visit their website at www.longbowtrails.net.

-Adam Tullos, adamt@ext.msstate.edu

Field Borders for Wildlife

Most agricultural producers recognize that some portions of their crop fields are less productive than others. For example, the edges of fields are typically not as productive as the interior portions of fields. In fact, productivity can be up to 40% less on the field edge. However, many producers might be surprised to learn how much these low producing areas might be costing them in net profitability.

The USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) now has a conservation program (CP33 - Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds) that provides economic incentives for producers who leave these field edges fallow. Research by Dr. Wes Burger and his colleagues in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at Mississippi State University have shown that, in some cases, enrollment of 30 - 120' buffers around crop fields can be more economically profitable to producers than continued row crop production.

Financial incentives associated with CP33 include sign-up incentive payments, annual rental payments, cost-share assistance for cover establishment, practice incentive payments, and mid-contract management cost-share. Research has also shown that wildlife species like bobwhite quail and other grassland birds have increased more than 2-fold following implementation of CP33 field borders. Several publications and a DVD that explain the program are available through the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries at Mississippi State University.



Farm field with low yielding areas (marked in orange) replaced with CP33 habitat buffers



To request a copy of the DVD or other CP33 publications contact:

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NRE Program Hosts Successful Multi-county Landowner Workshop in Raymond, MS

The Natural Resource Enterprises (NRE) Program of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in conjunction with Hinds Community College hosted a Natural Resource Enterprise Workshop at the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Raymond, MS on September 10, 2006. Fifty-four landowners from 15 counties in Mississippi attended the workshop.

The workshop consisted of a morning lecture series for which local resource professionals discussed several topics related to the development of natural resource enterprises, including the types of natural resource enterprises and associated revenue potential, USDA cost-share programs available for habitat management, business management, legal and liability considerations, agritourism, and marketing.

A highlight from the morning lectures was a talk entitled, "Gaddis Farms: A real life example" by Kendall Garraway of Gaddis Farms in Bolton, MS. Mr. Garraway spoke from firsthand experience of operating several natural resource enterprises, including commercial farming, timber management, deer leases, and lodge management.

After lunch, workshop attendees boarded two Hinds Community College coaches for the afternoon tour. After a warm welcome from Raymond mayor Ms. Isla Tullos at the first stop, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Davis, owners of Dupree House and Maime's Cottage in Raymond, discussed the daily operations of owning a bed and breakfast. Following this presentation, Mr. Dave Carney from the National Park Service discussed the historic and economic importance of the Natchez Trace Parkway to local rural communities.

The second stop of the afternoon was hosted by Mr. David Barton at Barton Farms of Raymond, MS where attendees toured wildlife related enterprises including fee hunting (small and big game), fee fishing, and wildlife watching. Biologists from Mississippi State University, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, and Natural Resources Conservation Service guided the tour, providing detailed explanations of management practices and answering attendees' questions.

The NRE Program would like to thank all of the collaborators previously mentioned, especially Mr. Darcel Jackson of Hinds Community College, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, and the Mississippi State University Extension Service personnel that assisted with the workshop.

The NRE Program is currently planning workshops in Rankin and Simpson counties in March 2007. Also, look for workshops in south Mississippi and neighboring states next fall. Visit our website www.naturalresources.msstate.edu for further information in the near future.

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