

Natural Resource ENTERPRISES

www.naturalresources.msstate.edu

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Wildlife demonstrations planned for 2006

The Natural Resource Enterprises (NRE) Program at Mississippi State University annually provides landowners and outdoor enthusiasts opportunities to attend a diverse makeup of wildlife and fisheries demonstrations across the state. Those who attended our demonstration events in 2005 indicated a high level of overall satisfaction; workshop attendees also indicated that the tips from our panel of managers were especially beneficial.

These wildlife demonstration sites are intended to serve as a hands-on introduction into wildlife management, thereby increasing learning capabilities and bridging the gap between basic habitat management concepts and understanding annual lifecycle needs of wildlife populations. The sites also enable attendees to better understand the management prescriptions used to increase habitat productivity and wildlife attractiveness for recreational properties.

This year the NRE program, in cooperation with the MSU Extension Service and MAFES, will continue the educational experiences offered from these demonstrations. Planned demonstrations for this year include three dove field management demonstrations, a waterfowl management demonstration, a wildlife planning and off-season incomes for hunting clubs demonstration, and four managing wildlife plantings demonstrations. Environmental conditions caused us to cancel several events in 2005; as a result, we have rescheduled similar events for 2006. Please keep checking our web page and upcoming newsletters



Alfalfa (above) and winter peas (right) make excellent wildlife food plots.

These wildlife demonstration sites are intended to serve as a hands-on interaction into wildlife management.

for more details about each of these events planned for 2006.

- *Managing wildlife plantings:* Marshall, Pontotoc, Clay, and Newton Counties, beginning in July
- *Dove field demonstrations:* Leflore, Hinds, Newton and possibly Monroe Counties, beginning in August
- *Waterfowl demonstration:* Tallahatchie County, mid September
- *Wildlife planning and off-season incomes for hunting clubs:* Warren/Yazoo County, September

For more details, visit our web page at www.naturalresources.msstate.edu where you can find information about these demonstrations and other Natural Resource Enterprises workshops and programs.

-Adam Tullos, adamt@ext.msstate.edu

Upland game species use of steer/heifer harvested no-till corn sites in Mississippi: benefits to wildlife and landowners

To determine the economic and ecological returns to landowners, researchers are investigating the vegetative conditions and waste grain availability of cornfield forage sites for cattle (steers & heifers). These sites, planted in corn and established by using no-till technology, are commonly known to attract numerous wildlife species. Additionally, scientists believe using this technique in a pasture or agroforestry setting creates desirable open foraging habitat making grain, soft mast, and grass seeds available for various wildlife species.

The objective of this study was to evaluate the wildlife



response from cornfields harvested by steers on Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*), White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), Eastern Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*), and Northern Bobwhite Quail (*Colinus virginianus*) occurrence. Two studies were conducted to test responses from wildlife and to determine the effects on steers & heifers. In Study I (2003-2005), 2 steer harvested sites (SHS) and 2 conventionally harvested sites (CHS) were monitored by measuring Mourning Dove use. Study II (2004 - 2005) incorporated agroforestry techniques comparing steer harvested plots (SHP), unmanaged pine plots (UPP), and thinned pine plots (TPP) contained on 2 different sites.

The results from these studies indicate Mourning Dove numbers are significantly greater on SHS and SHP, White-tailed Deer numbers are significantly greater on SHP, and steers grazing no-till corn attracted wildlife by creating desirable habitat, optimum foraging conditions, and a long-term food source (> 6 months). Beneficial changes to the environment were also detected from added value due to fertilized trees growing at a faster rate, increased income potential from corn fed steers ready for market, and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of wildlife. Scientists noted this system has specific potential in rural areas of Mississippi to landowners looking for compatible uses between wildlife and existing livestock operations thereby increasing per acre income potential.

-Dawn Manning

Landowner workshop series continues to be popular

On May 23rd, landowners, resource professionals, and agency staff gathered at Mallard Lodge, owned by Jack Branning, near Rolling Fork, MS.

The day began with talks on agritourism, cost-share programs, liability issues, marketing, revenue potential from natural resource enterprises, operating a bed and breakfast, and assistance available from the Small Business Association. After a catfish lunch, workshop attendees climbed aboard two open-topped buses for a tour of the property. Resource professionals discussed wildlife habitat management and answered questions from participants.

Future workshops will be held in south and central Mississippi this Fall. Check our website: www.naturalresources.msstate.edu for updates and scheduled events or to view photos from previous events.



Where's the **RAIN?**

Water conservation techniques for your backyard

Many of us in Mississippi, especially the central and southern regions of the state, are experiencing rather dry conditions for this time of the year. These conditions are not only affecting the farming industry, but the backyards of many of our citizens. With that, water use is increasing and will require citizens to employ water conservation techniques not only to conserve water, but also save money.

Plant and site selection is a crucial element in reducing use of water in the backyard landscape. Matching the selected plant with its most suitable habitat will produce healthier plants allowing it to tolerate stress events like droughts. Using native plant species is an excellent way to reduce maintenance and water consumption along with providing habitat for wildlife. Native plants are well adapted to the local environmental conditions and are more tolerant of stress events unlike some of their horticultural counterparts. If you are partial to horticultural varieties, choosing plants that are adapted to dry conditions will be beneficial.

-Adam Rohnke, arohnke@ext.msstate.edu

Watering Tips

Watering plants may be necessary if dry conditions continue. There are several easy tips to efficient watering:

- Watering at night or in the early morning will reduce evaporation.
- Using mulch (newspaper, woodchips, pine straw, leaves) around garden beds and tree bases will help maintain soil moisture for longer periods of time.
- Well-prepared soil beds (organic matter and reduction of soil compaction) will increase soil moisture and water flow to the roots.
- Use of efficient irrigation systems like drip and slotted pipe systems target watering to the base of the plants unlike sprinklers.
- Collecting rainwater in a barrel from your roof can provide a free source of garden water.
- Constructing windbreaks (fences, tree and shrub rows) reduces evaporation.

Use of one or all of these tips is relatively inexpensive and has shown to be very cost effective for property owners and beneficial to the environment. For more information on this topic visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service's backyard habitat program website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/WildHab.html.



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