



Suggestions for Developing Wildlife Recreational Enterprises

*Gene T. Miller
Technical Guidance Biologist
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department*

First, it is important for rural landowners to note that the population of Texas (~20 million) is growing rapidly, is expected to double by the year 2030, and will reside mainly in large urban areas. There will continue to be an increasing demand for high-quality wildlife recreational experiences. In Texas, while we are blessed with many public waters and good fishing, 97% of the wildlife habitat in our state occurs on privately-owned land. Therefore, potential exists for landowners to develop fish and wildlife resources and habitats as an economic enterprise. This sheet is intended only as a “primer” on the subject, and interested persons are encouraged to consult the references provided for more detail.

Getting Started

- Identify groups and the services they prefer - key in on specific “market segments”
- Understand your resources - hunting, fishing, and appreciative use
- “Recreation is the reason” - the entire experience is more important than the end product
- Determine a level of management that is comfortable for you - consider time/effort required

Marketing Your Own

This is a process that involves continuous, year-round adjustments keyed to your clients. It involves all five parts of the recreational experience (anticipation, travel to, on site, travel back, and recollection). First, you have to understand the characteristics of wildlife occurring on your property, the natural carrying capacity of species for sustained harvest, the activities (i. e. type of hunting, hiking, camping, wildlife watching, fishing, wildlife photography, etc.) that you wish to permit, the level of services and amenities you wish to provide, the level of habitat management, road access, and so forth. Once you decide how you wish to market your “outdoor experience” to clients, you may choose to do the following (falls into the category of “intensive management”):

- Anticipation - Landowner telephones client to provide an *accurate* report on conditions for hunting or other activities, clarify details, and field questions. This helps to create enthusiasm.
- Travel to - Landowners who are working within a Wildlife Management Association or Co-op, or with other businesses in the community which extend hospitality to clients have an advantage. Additional economic benefits to the community may be realized.

- On site - This is the landowner's prime chance to provide an experience that the client will want to repeat.
- Travel back - A pleasant outdoor experience by the client while on your property often makes the return trip to home a time for positive reflection and the beginning of anticipation for the next visit.
- Recollection - This is a time for the landowner to communicate by phone with the client about experiences of the past season, or after a number of visits by the client, to provide updates on game and range conditions, weather, and management activities.

Types of Recreational Leasing & Pricing

- Landowners should check with TPWD Law Enforcement about current Hunting Lease License requirements.
- Four general types of leasing arrangements - Annual or seasonal lease, day-hunting lease, guided hunt (by the landowner) of a specified length with possible "trophy" fees, and the landowner selling trespass rights to his land for hunting or appreciative use to an outfitter for a period of time. All have set terms and conditions. A contractual lease agreement is recommended in all cases as a good business practice.
- Pricing will vary with type of wildlife recreation activity, aesthetics, acreage, management provided, proximity to urban areas, and region of the state.

Landowner Liability

- Landowners may purchase liability insurance and recover costs through lease pricing. They may wish to consider utilizing a Release of Liability; however, it is strongly recommended for landowners to obtain legal advice and to insure that liability issues are clearly addressed in the wildlife recreational lease contract. For more information concerning hunting lease liability insurance, contact Texas Wildlife Association @ 1-800-TEX-WILD or other providers advertising in popular hunting magazines. (**Note:** This is not to be considered as a product endorsement, but is offered solely as information).

Advertising

- There are many avenues including (but not limited to) newspapers, magazines, sports shows, friends, local referral, Chambers of Commerce, and mail-out brochures, and the Internet. The landowner must study the "market segment" they are trying to reach.

Advantages of Participation in a Wildlife Management Association or Co-op

- There are many benefits to landowners interested in belonging to a local Wildlife Management Association (WMA) for enhancement of fish and wildlife resources and habitats. Three notable points are: WMA's foster a cooperative approach among landowners working toward common management goals (i. e. increase quantity and quality of wildlife), additional economic benefits may be afforded to the community,

and smaller properties benefit from management activities when voluntarily joined into a larger contiguous block of land.

Help is Available

- Free, non-binding, technical assistance is provided upon request to landowners wishing to develop wildlife resources on their lands through Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's ***Private Lands & Habitat Program***. Call the Wildlife Division at 512/389-4395 to initiate contact with a biologist in your area. Technical assistance is also available through local County Extension Offices and Field Offices of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. These can be found in the government pages of your local phone book.

References

- Obtain "**Quick Facts**" from the 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service) @ Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 512/389-4766 in Austin.
- Obtain "**Marketing the Hunting Experience**" (B-1694) by Jack Thigpen and Don Steinbach @ Texas A&M University, 409/845-7471 in College Station.
- Obtain "**Development of Wildlife Resources on Private Lands**" by John Thomas, Clark Adams, Roy Knowles, and Don Steinbach @ Texas A&M University, 409/845-7471 in College Station.
- Obtain "**Texas Hunting Leases**" (L-2441) by Jack Thigpen, Clark Adams, and John Thomas @ Texas A&M University, 409/845-7471 in College Station.
- Obtain "**The Texas Deer Lease**" (L-2334) by Judon Fambrough @ Texas A&M University, 409/845-7471 in College Station.
- Obtain "**Eye on Nature**" @ Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 512/389-4771 in Austin.
- Obtain "**Wildlife Management Associations and Co-ops**" @ Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 512/389-4407 in Austin.
- Obtain "**Making Nature Your Business**" @ Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 512/389-4771 in Austin.

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