

A State Choice Analysis of Mississippi Angler Preferences for Private Fishing Opportunities

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Abstract: Although numerous studies have been conducted on the need for providing recreational hunting and wildlife-watching opportunities on private lands, there is a paucity of research that has investigated similar potential for private recreational fishing opportunities. Trip-related private land use fees paid by U.S. anglers increased from \$50.4 million in 2001 to \$143.5 million in 2006, compared to \$176 million for trip-related public use fees in 2006. We conducted a mail survey of licensed anglers in Mississippi to ascertain their level of interest in private fishing opportunities and their preferences for the site attributes of private fisheries using stated choice experiments. Thirty-nine percent of respondents indicated they were moderately to extremely interested in private, daily fee fishing opportunities. Respondents were presented with paired hypothetical fishing trip scenarios on private fee fishing lakes and were asked to choose the trip that they most preferred. Fishing trip scenarios varied by the featured sportfish species, level of management, availability of shoreline fishing and boats, level of access, distance traveled, and the daily fee or price of access. A fractional factorial design was used to generate 80 choice sets with each angler being presented eight choice sets to minimize respondent fatigue. A conditional logit model was used to analyze angler preferences where choice served as the dependent variable and trip attributes served as the predictor variables. Our results showed that largemouth bass were the most preferred featured species followed by catfish and panfish (bluegill and crappie). Respondent's odds of choosing a trip scenario were 1.19 times higher if the fishery was intensively managed for trophy fishing rather than if fishing quality was similar to fishing quality on public waters. Respondents also indicated greater preference for sites with developed shoreline access and those that provided boats at no extra charge. Price was also a significant determinant of angler choice. Information of this nature can aid interested private landowners to develop fee fishing opportunities that will help meet growing demand among recreational anglers in the southeastern United States.

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