

The Natural Resource Enterprises Program at Mississippi State University

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Abstract: Previous research conducted at Mississippi State University found that non-industrial private (NIP) landowners in Mississippi can diversify incomes derived from their properties through the development of fee hunting enterprises. In 1998, revenues collected from fee hunting on Mississippi private lands ranged from US\$2,964 to \$5,254 on average per landowner or \$7.50 to \$14.28 per ha, depending upon the region. Net revenues averaged from \$1,539 to \$3,244 per landowner survey respondent or \$3.90 to \$9.54 per ha. Additionally, fee access wildlife recreation contributed an average increase of \$808.73/ha or an increase of 36% in sales proceeds collected on lands sold in Mississippi between 2002–2005. Similar trends in fee access wildlife and fisheries recreation and land sales influenced by outdoor recreation have been documented in other southeastern states. To inform NIP landowners on income diversification opportunities on their properties with fee access recreational businesses, educational programs are needed to enhance landowner knowledge in business planning and operations, marketing, and wildlife habitat management. To meet this need, the Natural Resource Enterprises Program was established at Mississippi State University Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Cooperative Extension Service to educate NIP landowners in the South on enterprise development (i.e., fee hunting and angling, wildlife watching, horse trail riding, agritourism), compatible habitat management practices, and integration of enterprise operations with agriculture and forestry. Through program partners, we have developed and conduct educational workshops and demonstrations and provide educational tools (i.e., website and publications) to landowners, resource agencies, and rural community leaders on wildlife enterprise opportunities and associated habitat management on private lands. NRE Program partners to date include federal and state government entities, universities, cooperations as well as non-governmental organizations. Since 2005, we have conducted or facilitated 19 landowner workshops and educational events drawing 953 participants, including 763 landowners from eight states.

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