

Educating Landowner-Entrepreneurs about Outdoor Enterprises in Arkansas



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What is an “Outdoor Enterprise?”

- Any business in which clients experience an element of the outdoors
- Deer leases
- Duck lodges
- Pumpkin patches
- Corn mazes
- You-chop Christmas tree farms



Arkansas' Rural Landscape

- Rural population loss & net outmigration a continuing trend
- Lost 30,000 manufacturing jobs from 2007 – 2012
- Increase earnings in rural areas, but lower earnings per job than urban areas
- Statewide nearly one in four Arkansans received supplemental nutritional assistance in 2013

Source: Rural Profile of Arkansas 2015, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

Outdoor Enterprises: A Natural Fit in “The Natural State”

- Greater percentage of rural people in the state compared to the nation since 1900
 - 2010: 19% nationally, 44% Arkansas
- 25% jobs in rural Arkansas: farming, forestry, mining and manufacturing
- “The changing structure of the Arkansas economy, especially in rural areas, suggests a need to diversify and invest in economic enterprises that utilize and add value to local resources.”

Source: Rural Profile of Arkansas 2015, University of Arkansas Coop Extension Service

Example: Stuttgart, Arkansas

- “Rice & Duck Capital of the World”
- Champion Duck Calling Contest in 1936
- Grew into current-day “Wings Over the Prairie Festival”
- Attracts thousands of visitors
- Sixty-day duck hunting season annually
- Lodges, restaurants, gas stations, hunting gear, grocery stores
- Significant source of income for a rural economy



Natural Resource Enterprise/ Outdoor Business Education

- Provide landowner-entrepreneurs with tools and resources for self-evaluation of assets and investments to make informed decisions about starting an enterprise.
- Deciding not to invest could be their best option and is counted as an educational success.
- Those with established outdoor enterprises benefit by identifying business improvements or expansion opportunities.

Information & Decision-making Tools

- Land management
 - Wildlife habitat
 - Modified farming practices for entertaining visitors
- Business management
 - Physical equipment, infrastructure
 - Financial planning & management
 - Legal and liability issues
 - Insurance
 - Marketing & hospitality

Educational Methods

- Presentations at local meetings
- Multi-county/regional workshops
- Web module
 - “Developing a Wildlife Enterprise – Is It For You?”
- Website
 - U of A Extension
- Social media
 - facebook



Partnerships & Collaborations

- Natural Resources Enterprise Program, Mississippi State University
- National Agricultural Law Center, University of Arkansas
- Practicing attorneys
- Insurance providers
- CPAs
- Farm bill providers
- U.S. Small Business Administration – Arkansas District Office
- Land management experts (e.g., wildlife biologists)
- Arkansas Agriculture Department
- Arkansas State Parks
- Landowner-entrepreneurs who own and operate Outdoor Enterprises

Achievements from 2006 - present

- 11 workshops / conferences
 - Natural resource enterprise
 - Wildlife enterprise
 - Agritourism
- Web module
 - Developing A Wildlife Enterprise – Is It For You?
- Facebook page – agritourism
- Web presence & five Arkansas fact sheets



Arkansas Workshop Evaluations: 2011 - 2014

- Survey of participants (response rate varied per workshop)
- Data collected by Mississippi State University
- Initial workshops focused on wildlife enterprises, but content expanded to agri-tourism
- Evaluations reported today reflect wildlife enterprise focus
- National follow-up survey within the next year

Workshop Ratings

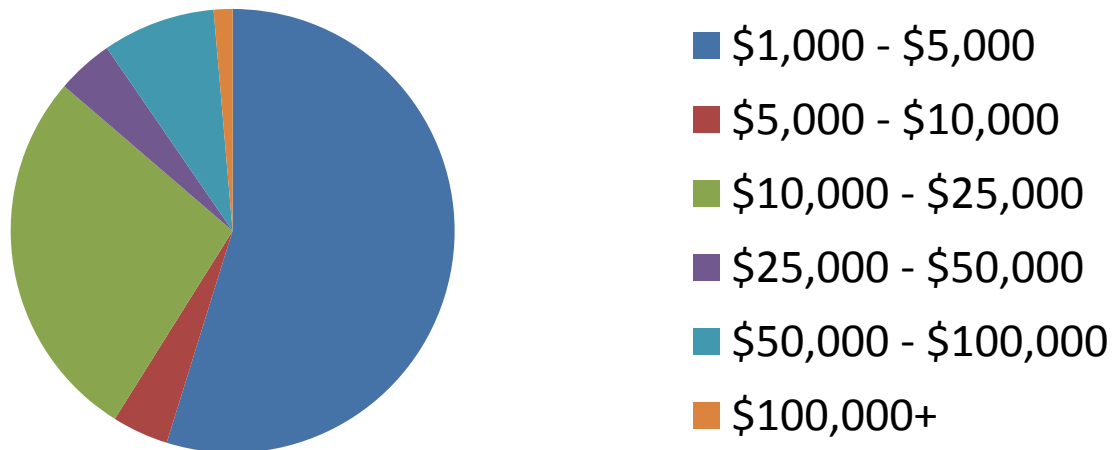
(percent response, n = 88)

Question	Outstanding	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Poor
Content organized & understandable	70	25	0	2
Content useful	70	25	1	0
Materials/handouts helpful	65	28	2	1
Instructors knowledgeable	78	19	0	1
Instructors interesting	72	25	0	1
How does this course rate overall	73	22	3	0

Revenue Potential Estimate by Landowners (n=88)

	Yes	No
Information will assist with increasing revenue potential for your property	97%	3%

Revenue Potential



Workshop Impacts

(percent response)

	Yes	No
Change land use practices with knowledge gained from this course (n = 84)	90	10
Currently lease or organize outdoor trips for hunting, fishing, camping, etc.? (n = 86)	66	33
If No, do you plan to start a Natural Resource Enterprise on property based on info learned at this course (n = 28)	46	54

Next Steps

- Current one-contact workshops and website have yielded benefits for self-motivated entrepreneurs.
 - Many participants reported having an enterprise prior to attending workshop.
- Future plan
 - Design a community-based educational strategy with repeated contact opportunities and locally-available resources
 - Series of workshops
 - On-site visits offered by experts
 - Discovery Farm