

Wildlife Recreation: Rural America's Newest Billion Dollar Industry, continued from page 3

2003 reported that recreation was a reason for investor (nonfarmer) purchases of farmland. In 2001, wildlife recreationers spent over \$12 billion on land leasing and ownership.

Higher land values, however, are evidence that wildlife recreation also poses some serious challenges for rural communities. Recreational use may not always be complementary to traditional uses. In addition to higher land costs for farmers, land taken out of agricultural production for recreational use reduces the potential customer base for traditional agricultural service providers. And, wildlife recreation is often a seasonal activity, meaning that additional economic opportunities are needed for the off-season.

Still, wildlife recreation appears to be a growing way to attract wealthy recreationers to rural places. Many of the wildlife recreation participants have above-average income levels and reside in metro areas. For example, over 20% of the people with incomes higher than \$35,000 are likely to fish, while less than 15% of those with incomes below \$25,000 fished. Metro residents accounted for 59%, 72%, and 76% of hunting, fishing, and wildlife watchers, respectively.

Tourism opportunities

Wildlife recreation offers even more promise for rural communities with existing entertainment amenities. Tourists, even wildlife recreationers, often prefer places with amenities beyond scenic landscapes and abundant wildlife. They eat at restaurants, sleep in hotels, and visit night spots. As a result, a growing number of hunting resorts that combine entertainment and wildlife are beginning to dot the rural landscape. To help draw customers, many of these resorts also offer off-season activities and promote other types of entertainment in the region. They clearly show that rural places with a regional identity that embraces both entertainment and wildlife amenities are probably in the best position to capture wildlife recreation's dollars.

Nature has always been a strong foundation for rural America. Now, wildlife recreation appears to be the newest opportunity. The industry may not be the answer for every rural community, but those with entertainment and wildlife may be able to leverage Mother Nature to spark new growth.

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Learn management and marketing over the Internet

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Are you just too busy to go to that seminar or Extension meeting this week, but you would really like to have the information? There are other options. Iowa State University Extension offers home study courses on a variety of management and marketing topics over the Internet. Farmers, landowners and other agri-business people can access the courses any time or place that they can connect to the Internet. They are part of the Agricultural Management e-School, or AMES for short.

AMES courses are designed for adult learners who want in-depth information on a topic. Most of the courses have a one-time enrollment fee of \$100, much less than for courses that carry college credit. Access is available indefinitely once the enrollment is completed, so learners can work through courses at their own pace. File sizes are kept small, so download time won't be long.

Nearly 500 people have signed up for AMES courses since they first became available. Most

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of them cite the convenience of being able to log on at any time, any place, as the number one advantage. The authors of the courses, mostly ISU Extension economists, are available to answer questions by e-mail about the topics that are covered. Some courses have "threaded discussions," where enrollees can post questions and see responses from anyone else who is enrolled in the same course. Others will have group discussions scheduled by e-mail at specific times.

The Agricultural Management e-School Web site is at: [www.extension.iastate.edu/ames/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ames/). Detailed information about each course is available there, including a free preview of each of the modules in every course. A short tutorial about how to use the different features of the course software is also available.

Other features found in AMES courses include:

- a list of references with further information on related topics, with direct Internet links
- a glossary with definitions of important terms, with direct links in the text
- multiple choice quizzes that are self-graded
- electronic spreadsheets that can be used to analyze the users' own management questions
- capability to print modules for future reference

**Advanced grain marketing**

Learn how to develop your own personal marketing plan. Topics include price trends, storage costs, cash marketing, futures and options, and how to use outlook information. New modules being added for 2005 will address fundamental and technical forecasting, USDA commodity programs, and new generation price contracts.

**Financial decision making**

Learn how to develop accurate and useful financial statements for your own business and for credit applications. Understand cash management, cash flow budgeting, asset

investment, financial trouble shooting, and how to work with your lender. Case studies are included, as well as spreadsheets for financial statements and analysis.

**Farmland ownership**

Learn about what factors affect land values, and how to analyze investments in agricultural land. Understand techniques that professional appraisers use to value farm properties.

**Farm leasing arrangements**

Learn about different types of farm leases, how to set fair rents for land and buildings, and how to negotiate an effective lease. Other topics include legal and tax considerations, USDA programs, environmental concerns, and custom farming agreements.

**Farm machinery economics**

Learn how to control machinery costs, how to compare leasing and ownership, and how to set custom hire rates. Other topics include joint machinery ownership, transferring ownership to the next generation, replacing equipment, estimating hauling and drying costs, and designing harvesting systems. Includes nine spreadsheets.

**Lean hog marketing**

Study seasonal and cyclical price movements, cash contracts, futures, options, and livestock revenue insurance. Learn about price forecasting and how to develop a swine marketing plan.

**Quality management systems**

Find out how to certify your business as compliant with accepted quality management system standards, and how to make processes such as internal audits, corrective actions, work protocols, and useful records work for you.

Future courses will treat topics such as risk management in dairy marketing, human resource management, production of identity preserved grain, and strategic planning for farm families. Watch the AMES Web site at [www.extension.iastate.edu/ames/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ames/) for more details.