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Additional Resources

2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation – Tennessee
<http://www.census.gov/pod/2003pubs/01fhw/fhw01-tn.pdf>

Earning Additional Income through Hunt Leases on Private Land
<http://www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/pbfiles/PB1627.pdf>

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Welcoming Wildlife to the Farm May Pay

For some agritourism entrepreneurs, developing and maintaining wildlife habitat on the farm can bring big benefits.

These benefits include potential to increase income by creating a more enjoyable experience for visitors or development of additional attractions for your operation. Also, several state and federal conservation programs exist to provide technical and financial assistance in creating wildlife habitat.

Income Potential through Wildlife Tourism Opportunities

Welcoming wildlife to your farm can enhance visitor experiences and attract additional target audiences. In a study evaluating why people make trips to the farm, USDA determined almost 86 percent of people surveyed went to "enjoy rural scenery," which may include watching wildlife. In addition, 27 percent of people went to visit farms in order to hunt or fish.

Wildlife watching (observing, feeding and photographing wildlife), hunting and fishing generate big business. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 82 million people in the United States participated in wildlife recreation in 2001 spending \$108 billion. Expenditures include equipment purchases, trip costs and land leasing or ownership fees. In Tennessee, 2.7 million people 16 years or older participated in wildlife recreation activities in 2001.

Expenditures on these activities totaled \$1.7 billion in the state.

Are there ways you can add value to your farm resources by creating or improving wildlife habitat? Income may be added through admission or service fees; retail sales of equipment and accessories, concessions and/or meals; or land lease arrangements. Some examples may include:

- Develop wildlife watching as an activity at an on-farm bed and breakfast
- Develop enhanced wildlife watching along a nature trail with educational information about the wildlife in the area posted along the trail
- Develop educational programs or demonstrations about creating wildlife habitat, importance of wildlife habitat, identifying animals/birds or animal tracks, cooking game meats, etc.
- Create a fee fishing pond
- Offer fee hunts or guided hunts
- Lease land for hunting
- Offer special meals featuring game meats

Technical and Financial Assistance Available

Several state and federal conservation programs provide both technical and financial assistance and incentives to landowners developing wildlife habitat.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA)

Web site has a comprehensive list of available programs and links to program details at <http://www.state.tn.us/twra/wildlife/conprowild.html>

Programs include but are not limited to:

USDA Conservation Reserve Program-Continuous Sign-up-CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds: Up to 90% cost share on habitat establishment costs, an annual payment per acre (up to 20% higher than general CRP program) and sign-up incentive payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre for 10 or 15 year contract

USDA Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program: Provides 75% cost share for selected practices to develop, enhance and maintain good wildlife habitat under 5- to 10-year contracts/management plans

TWRA Farm Wildlife Habitat Program: Provides approximately 75% cost share for a 5-year contract, up to \$1,000 in any state fiscal year, to improve wildlife habitat for open land wildlife species in decline, such as bobwhite quail, cottontail rabbits, and shrub and grassland songbirds

TWRA Tennessee Landowner Incentive Program: Provides 75% cost-share and some cash incentives to landowners implementing best management practices to protect, enhance, or restore rare species habitats on Tennessee's private lands

Spotlight on Agritourism Success

Gentry Farm, located in Franklin, Tennessee, is a 150 year old family farm. Allen and Cindy Gentry are the sixth generation to be involved in the farming operation. Allen shared some information about their operation via phone recently.

Gentry Farm, operated then by Allen's father, diversified into agritourism 40 years ago by offering summer camps to children.

Today, Gentry Farm remains a family operation with traditional agricultural crops and is also a well-know agritourism operation. The farm offers agritourism activities for three major seasons: Fall (educational field trips for Pre-school to Kindergartners and weekends open to the public); Spring (Educational Field Trips for 2nd to 5th grades); and Summer Camps (Junior Camp for children finished K through 2nd and Senior Camp for children finished 3rd grade through 6th). The Fall season has been in operation for 15 years, and the spring season was added 10 years ago.

Most of the farm's school children and visitors are from Williamson and Rutherford counties and the Nashville metro area, according to Allen.

Gentry Farm has built loyal, repeat customers over the years. This coupled with a large, urban population base in the region and high demand for educational farm trips by the urban population provide the Gentry's with some unique opportunities. Because of these factors, the Gentry's do not need to focus much time or funds on promoting their operation. Their promotion strategies include a Web site (www.gentryfarm.com) and direct mail to their list of previous customers and potential customers on waiting lists.

This year, their fall field trip reservations were filled in a single day.

Allen says, "People are yearning to see farms. We are trying to keep the farm so people can see it. They can have just as much fun on the farm as they do playing video games."

In addition to sharing farm experiences with children and families, Allen has a passion for wildlife and wildlife recreation, especially for quail and training bird dogs. He has found a way to combine his passions for the farm and agritourism with those for wildlife and wildlife recreation.

With the city building up all the way around the farm, wildlife habitat was in decline. Allen wanted to try to increase the number of quail on his farm by improving and adding wildlife habitat. That's when he began working with Chris Wolkonowski, Wildlife Biologist at the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Allen and family accessed resources available from state and federal programs to assist them. Chris says the programs have allowed the Gentry's to create native grass buffers through the CRP program, establish native grasses through the Farm Wildlife program and install cross-fencing and water tanks through EQIP. Through these programs, Allen says he received technical assistance, cost-share assistance and access to special equipment such as a no-till drill. The Gentry's have also done additional work on their own and have raised and released quail onto the farm. The Gentry's have also hosted two field days on their farms in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the four years that Chris has worked with Allen.

Allen is observing positive results from his efforts and program resources. Quail numbers are improving, and he was excited to come across a covey of eight quail on the farm recently.

Quail are not the only wildlife he is seeing in greater numbers on the farm. Allen also sees increases in the number of rabbits, deer, geese, coyotes, wood ducks and turkeys. While these results are personally rewarding to the Gentry's, the improved habitat and increased number of wildlife are also benefiting their agritourism operation and visitors and enhancing the farm experience.

Allen says agritourism and wildlife "work hand and hand." The Gentry's incorporate wildlife and habitat into the summer camp activities. Agritourism visitors enjoy seeing wildlife on the farm. Allen says he and a group of summer camp kids saw a turkey with nine little ones trailing behind just the other day. The kids enjoy looking at the wildlife and wading in the farm's creek.

In addition, Allen suggests the agritourism activities also help the wildlife on the farm. "Our corn maze is located next to the CRP [native grass buffers]." The maze may provide some extra protection from the weather, cover and food source for wildlife making their home in the buffer or moving through the buffer.

The Gentry's participation in the state and federal conservation programs have helped him on his way to improving wildlife habitat on his farm and has enhanced his agritourism operation in the process.



Appreciation is extended to the following people for their assistance and contributions to "Welcoming Wildlife to the Farm May Pay" and "Spotlight on Agritourism Success"

- Aubrey Deck, Extension Wildlife Assistant, University of Tennessee
- Allen Gentry, Owner/Operator, Gentry Farm
- Chris Wolkonowski, Wildlife Biologist, Natural Resources Conservation Service

New Agritourism Coordinator Joins TDA

On June 1, 2007, Pamela Bartholomew joined the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Market Development Division as their new Agritourism Coordinator.



Pamela Bartholomew
TDA Agritourism Coordinator



Prior to joining TDA, Pamela taught at Riverside High School in her hometown of Decaturville, Tennessee. She earned a degree in Agriculture Education from the University of Tennessee at Martin in 2006.

Pamela says, "My goal as Agritourism Coordinator is to help producers maximize their potential and help the Agritourism industry grow across Tennessee. I look forward to meeting and working with each of you."

Dan Strasser, who served as Agritourism Coordinator prior to Pamela's arrival, is now serving as Chief of Marketing for the Department.

2007-2008 Agricultural Enhancement Cost-Share Program

By Pamela Bartholomew

The Agricultural Enhancement Cost-Share Program will be offered again in 2007-2008 with opportunities for agritourism entrepreneurs in the Ag Growth Producer Diversification Cost-Share segment of the program. Some agritourism entrepreneurs may also be able to take advantage of increases in the allowable reimbursable percentage of a project cost and maximum level of funding based on specific eligibility requirements.

Producers in the Agritourism sector may be eligible for reimbursement of 50% cost

share, up to the maximum of \$15,000 per fiscal year if they have attended a TDA/UT Extension sponsored agritourism educational workshop or conference within the last two years. All Tennessee farmers who qualify for the program can apply for reimbursement of 35 % cost share, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

Eligible activities for cost-share reimbursement may include: farm infrastructure, marketing, and specialty equipment. Additional details of what expenses may be eligible under each of these

categories are listed on the program Web site.

Applications must be postmarked July 2 through August 31, 2007. Visit www.picktnproducts.org or call 615-837-5348 for more information and application materials.

Producers will have until June 30, 2008 to complete approved activities and submit reimbursement paperwork. Only projects that are approved in advance by TDA will be eligible for cost share assistance.

Resource Review: Health and Safety

The health and safety of visitors and employees should be a major concern to all agritourism operators. Three educational resources can assist entrepreneurs in developing and maintaining a safe operation:

1) Chapter 7: Safety Considerations, *Agritourism in Focus: A Guide for Tennessee Farmers*, UT

Extension Publication PB1754 written by Dr. Tim Prather, Available on-line at <http://cpa.utk.edu>.

2) *Agricultural Safety and Health On-line*, Web-site includes information on labor laws, tractor and equipment safety, etc. by Dr. Tim Prather, Access at <http://bioengr.ag.utk.edu>

[u/extension/ExtProg/Safety/](http://extension/ExtProg/Safety/)

3) Agritourism Health and Safety Guidelines for Children, National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, Available on-line at <http://marshfieldclinic.org/agritourism>

Upcoming Events

Christmas Tree Grower Field Days

8:30am to 3pm
July 14 – Fall Branch, TN
September 15 – Crossville, TN
Pre-registration cost \$12
On-site registration \$15
Contact tctaa@citlink.net

Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program – Producer Diversification Cost Share Program Dates

Applications Accepted Beginning – July 2
Application Deadline – Postmarked by August 31

Additional details at <http://www.state.tn.us/agriculture/enhancement/growth.html>

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.