

# Action

PUBLIC ISSUE INFORMATION FOR ALABAMA CITIZENS

FROM THE EDITOR

## Agri-Tourism in Alabama Part II

**Agri-tourism** is the combination of two of Alabama's largest industries: tourism and agriculture. Each had an economic impact of over \$6 billion last year. While agri-tourism has had a significant impact in the upper Midwest for a number of years, it is just beginning to develop a foothold in Alabama. This is the second issue of a three-part series examining **Agri-tourism in Alabama**.

*Action* is a quarterly publication of the Community Resource Development (CRD) unit of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES). *Action* is one tool we use to link community groups to internal and external resources. The CRD unit provides educational and technical assistance in economic development, leadership development, strategic planning, environmental education, community health, and public policy education. Internal linkages within ACES between the agriculture and community developments are represented by this issue.

ACES's involvement and linkages to others in **agri-tourism** are again the focus of this Fall 2002 issue of *Action*. Arlie Powell, Extension State Program Leader for Agriculture, and J. Thomas Chesnutt, Extension Tourism Specialist, are the coordinators for this issue. Other contributors are Robert Hendrix (Dothan Area Convention and Visitors Bureau), Richard Murphy (County Extension Coordinator), H. Lee Stribling (Extension Wildlife Scientist), and Jimmy D. Smitherman (County Extension Coordinator).

The next issue of *Action*, Winter 2003, will also highlight **Agri-Tourism in Alabama**. It will be the final issue in the three-part series and will highlight current agri-tourism opportunities in the state. For more information on these topics or suggestions for additional topics, contact the editor at (334) 844-3517, or fax (334) 844-9022, or e-mail [jchesnut@aces.edu](mailto:jchesnut@aces.edu).

**J. Thomas Chesnutt**  
Editor  
Extension Tourism  
Specialist

## A Cotton Pickin' Good Time

The peanut is king in Dothan, Alabama's unofficial Peanut Capital and home of National Peanut Festival. Yet, this was not always the case. A century ago, cotton was king of the Wiregrass until an onslaught of boll weevils virtually wiped out the entire crop. Now, thanks to advances in boll-weevil eradication—in an era when farmers “fear no weevil”—this exiled king has returned to claim its crown.

Beginning in October, as part of the “Cotton Pickin' Good Time Tour,” motorcoach visitors to the Dothan area will get to learn more about the return of this once and future king. The tour begins at Landmark Park, a 100-acre living history museum, aptly named Alabama's “Official Museum of Agriculture.” Tourists will get to visit a late-19th century farm to get an up-close and personal view of what it was like harvesting cotton in the Wiregrass, long before the advent of air-conditioned combines.

Tourists will venture into fields for an up-close look and try their hand at cotton picking the old-fashioned way. The tour will also feature a visit to the Alabama Agriculture Museum and an exhibit exploring “When Cotton Was King.” Just a stone's throw away from the park is Spanish

Acres Country Store, where visitors will be served a Southern-style lunch, replete with a barbecued pork sandwich, chips and drinks.

Next stop, Auburn University's Wiregrass Research and Extension Center, Alabama's oldest agricultural experiment station, where visitors will see how cotton is grown and harvested in the 21st century. Experiment Station staff will be on hand to answer questions about cotton farming and its enduring impact on our state, national, and world economy. In case of rain, an indoor presentation will be held in lieu of the outdoor tour.

Next, tourists will visit one of the nation's state-of-the-art cotton gins, where seed is removed from the fiber and where cotton is graded according to quality and, finally, pressed into 500-pound bales ready for shipment to spinning mills throughout the world. Optional stops also will include visits to Porter Hardware, Alabama's oldest operating hardware store, and Troy Simm's Pecan Store, where visitors can sample peanuts and pecans and purchase numerous souvenirs.

The cost of the tour is \$15 per person, which includes the BBQ lunch. Tours are available from mid-October through mid-December. To obtain more information about this

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Supplemental Income From Wildlife on Your Land

Demands for hunting opportunities are growing rapidly, and this trend is expected to continue in the future. This is particularly true in a state like Alabama where there are large populations of deer and turkey. The leasing of private lands for hunting can supplement other income and land uses. Land leasing and fee hunting are not new to most parts of the Southern United States. Private land has been leased for deer hunting in Texas since the 1930s. Many hunters are willing to pay for the privilege to hunt.

Studies have shown that hunting in Alabama accounts for more than \$750 million in expenditures each year. Hunting lease payments to Alabama landowners total over \$30 million each year. You may want to consider the income-generating potential of wildlife on your land. Your decision will involve an assessment of the wildlife potential of your land; an evaluation of the attitudes and abilities of yourself, your family, and your employees to manage wildlife and to manage the people who will use your land; and a consideration of your expected income and expenses.

## Land Potential

The size of your land is an important factor to consider. For example, although a field as small as 15 acres can be profitable for dove hunting, the property should be at least several hundred acres if deer or turkey hunters are to enjoy their experience.

Most hunting land in Alabama is leased for deer and turkey hunting. As a rule, allow about 100 acres per deer hunter and 300 acres for each turkey hunter. To overcome the size problem, adjoining landowners can

combine their properties to manage wildlife and to attract paying hunters.

A large variety of plants and land uses contribute to wildlife abundance. A mixture of croplands, grasslands, brushy hedgerows or windbreaks, wetlands, and woodlands is ideal. Landowners who want to increase the price of hunting on their land must increase and improve the quantity and quality of game animals that live on their property. Positive wildlife management practices will help achieve this.

## Hunting as a Business

Entertaining the public will require changes in operation to prevent conflicts with other uses or management of your land. Time and money are required to run this new business, including machinery time and the expense of establishing and maintaining a wildlife habitat. Furnishing hunters with room and board may add to income, but it will demand more time and expense.

Charging for hunting access may mean changing the way you, your neighbors, and your friends hunt on your land. The prime times of the hunting season may be reserved for your paying guests. The choice will be yours, however, because you coordinate how and when guests use your property.

Regardless of how hunters are permitted access, ethical and law-abiding conduct should be expected. You determine the parts of your land that hunters can use. You also determine how they are to use facilities such as roads, gates, and fences. When presented tactfully, your guidelines should be followed with minimum supervision.

Accepting money for access privileges may change your liability status. Generally, landowners who lease land to others for hunting incur some liability for the safety of the hunters. You must also eliminate hazardous conditions or warn your visitors so they can avoid problems.

Clauses that limit landowner liability and liability to the guests are standard parts of hunting and other lease/rent agreements. You may want to require that lessees buy additional liability insurance and name you as an additional insured. Legal advice is recommended before entering this business.

## Hunting Management Options

There are many ways to manage a fee-hunting operation. Your decision will depend on the size and diversity of your land, the wildlife resources there, hunting seasons, your distance from population centers, and amount of time and other resources you and your family want to invest. The following methods are used for fee-hunting operations.

- Day-use permits. The hunter reports to your home or office and buys a permit to hunt for the day. In addition to the usual information about the identity of the person, your signature, and the date, the permit can carry rules about the hunt, including a liability clause.

- Day-use with room and board. The hunter arranges dates in advance and submits a deposit. This option may involve the use of an extra room, bathroom facilities, and a place at the table. In some cases, a bunkhouse or separate house or lodge is provided.

•Season leases. The landowner leases hunting rights to an individual, several people, or to a hunting club for the season. The owner can lease hunting rights for one or more types of game. Leases contain specific agreements on where the hunting boundaries are, how the property is to be used, responsibility for maintaining facilities, safety areas where hunting is not allowed, the length of the agreement, and the amount to be paid.

## Estimating Income Potential

Rates for hunting access and services vary greatly across the state and will depend on your location;

the quality, quantity, and diversity of game; and the accommodations you provide. Talking with your neighbors and professional consultants will help you estimate your potential income and expenses.

## Marketing Your Product

Word-of-mouth from satisfied hunters and repeat business will keep most landowners supplied with paying customers. To begin your business, seek out those who have been on your land. Talk to your agribusiness contacts at the co-op, sale barn, grain elevator, gas station, and bank. Be sure your doctor, den-

tist, lawyer, and their friends know about the hunting opportunities on your land. Gun shops and trap and skeet clubs may give you free publicity. You also need to advertise in newspapers and magazines that are likely to be read by hunters who may come to your area.

H. Lee Stribling  
Extension Wildlife Scientist

## Field Trials and Hunting Dogs

Country gentlemen and ordinary folk have been coming together since the 1800s to test the prowess of their dogs in the field. October 1874 marked the beginning of the first field trial held in the United States. It was held east of Memphis in a place now called Germantown, Tennessee.

You might ask, "What is a field trial?" A field trial is a judged event where dog trainers and dog handlers test the abilities and skills of their dog(s) against other competing dogs. Dogs are run in pairs for approximately 45 minutes and judged for their style, ability, and perseverance in finding the famous bobwhite quail.

Typically, there is a gallery of horseback riders that follow the dogs, handlers, and judges as they watch the spectacular show that is held in sedges, piney woods, and fields. Upon completion of the first "brace" or "run," the dogs are picked up and a new pair is released. The judges and gallery are

off again for a new brace, sometimes with the same trainer, but usually with a totally new set of trainers and handlers.

One of the highlights of a field trial is participating in the pre-trial festivities. These festivities consist of drawing of the dogs, which is the pairing of the dogs prior to the actual trial. Many times, an old-fashioned barbecue or dinner is prepared for people attending the drawing. An occasional party or dance, consisting of families of the trainers, handlers, and participating locals, is held during the pre-trial festivities. At times, there will be a little boasting and betting on who will have the best finishing dog at the "Calcutta."

Opening day usually begins with several dogs and horses and a crowd of people dressed in riding attire. Individuals who do not have a horse or cannot ride a horse are able to observe the race from the gallery on a wagon. If you cannot follow the

(Continued on page 4)

### Action

Alabama  
Communities  
in Transition

### Editor

J. Thomas Chesnutt

Extension Tourism Specialist



Action is published once each quarter by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

We would like you to share success stories in your community for inclusion in future issues of Action. Send to: J. Thomas Chesnutt, 218 Extension Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849.

**Field Trials and Hunting Dogs  
(Continued from page 3)**

race via horseback or wagon, you could go back to town to see the wonderful displays in the small town that often hosts the event.

Union Springs, Alabama, has a wonderful tradition of dressing up storefront windows with history and memorabilia of past field trials and trial winners. Some individuals have called the National Amateur Free-for-All Championship in Union Springs the "Mardi Gras" of Union Springs. The storeowners welcome new faces and visitors to the "Bird Dog Field Trial Capital of the World."

Union Springs is the home of Sedgefields Plantation, which hosts five annual field trials during the official season. The National Amateur Free-for-All Championship is the most popular of the five events and always begins February 22. This championship is considered a popular event because only amateur handlers can participate. During this event, approximately eighty different dogs are run within a week's time.

The last few days of the field trial are reserved for "call backs" where the best dogs from the preliminary races are given a second chance to prove their skills in finding bobwhite quail. Let it be noted that the quail always get away for another day during the field trial events. The purpose of the trial is to test the dogs' abilities—not to take the bird.

If you are interested in learning more about the sport of field trialing, you can contact many of the states that host the event. In Alabama, you can contact the Union Springs/Bullock County Tourism Council at (334) 738-8687.

**Jimmy D. Smitherman**  
County Extension  
Coordinator  
Bullock County

**A Cotton Pickin' Good Time  
(Continued from page 1)**

tour from the Dothan Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, call 1-888-449-0219, visit our Web site at [www.dothanalcvb.com](http://www.dothanalcvb.com), or contact us by e-mail at [dothancvb@mail.ala.net](mailto:dothancvb@mail.ala.net).

**Robert Hendrix**  
Executive Director  
Dothan Area Convention  
& Visitors Bureau

**Richard Murphy**  
County Extension Coordinator –  
Houston County

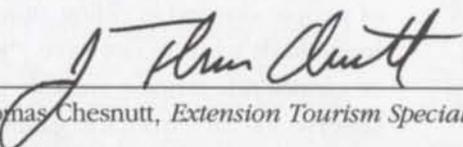
Visit the Community Resource Development home page at [www.aces.edu/departments/crd/](http://www.aces.edu/departments/crd/)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
STATE HEADQUARTERS  
AUBURN UNIVERSITY, ALABAMA 36849-5631

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE

  
J. Thomas Chesnutt, *Extension Tourism Specialist*

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
USDA  
PERMIT NO. G268

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.