

*Resident Hunter Effort & Game Harvest Estimates
for the 2005-2006 Mississippi Hunting Season*

Prepared for the

**DIVISION OF WILDLIFE
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & PARKS
P.O. BOX 451
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By

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INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the Mississippi resident hunter survey is to establish annual statewide and district estimates of hunter effort and harvest for each game species. These estimates provide trend data which allows Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) Wildlife Division staff to monitor changes in harvest and effort through time. The secondary purpose is to measure resident hunters' participation patterns, attitudes towards hunting and wildlife, and opinions towards agency programs and wildlife management tools. When interpreting this data, it is important to consider current wildlife management programs, habitat changes and availability, land use practices, species abundance, and the social and economic climate of the state.

Since 1974, a self-administered mail survey has been used to obtain total harvest, average daily kill, average seasonal harvest, and total man-days hunted for each game species, among other trends. The estimates obtained for each of these categories are precise because of the large sample size used, however, because mail surveys contain sampling, response, and nonresponse biases the accuracy of the estimates are always of concern to researchers (Filion 1980). Nevertheless, similar methodologies used to conduct the mail survey over time help to hold constant these biases and the estimates derived from the survey should provide adequate estimates for monitoring trends in hunter harvest and effort.

The primary objective of the mail survey for the 2005-06 hunting season was to obtain a reliable set of statewide effort and harvest estimates for each game species in Mississippi. The secondary objective was to provide district estimates. The third objective was to collect demographic information on those who hunted during the 2005-06 season. No effort was made to interpret the data presented here. The purpose of this publication is to compile existing information for future reference and to help guide future management decisions.

METHODS

The sampling frame for the survey consisted of resident holders of a Type 100 – Sportsman, Type 101 – All Game Hunting and Fishing, or Type 103 – Small Game Hunting and Fishing licenses purchased during the 2005-2006 license year. A random sample of 4,000 license holders was selected to participate in this study from the 175,422 licenses processed from July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006.

The survey process followed the Total Design Method (TDM) prescribed by Dillman (1978). This methodology pays particular attention to detail, persistence, and takes a personal approach to obtaining a response. This is accomplished, in part, by using personalized letters and envelopes processed with laser printers to simulate a first class mailing to differentiate it from “junk mail”. The TDM uses a series of four mail-outs to help increase response rate: 1) An introductory letter, questionnaire (APPENDIX A), and postage-paid business reply envelope (i.e., a complete packet) were sent; 2) Ten days after the second mailing a post card was sent to all hunters in the survey. The purpose of the post card was to remind hunters about the survey and to thank those whom had already returned a completed questionnaire. A phone number was provided on the post card in case the recipient had not received or misplaced their questionnaire, so they could request another be sent; 3) Twenty-one days after the postcard mailing, a second complete packet was sent to all hunters who had not yet responded, and 4) Twenty-eight days after the second complete packet was sent, a third complete mailing was sent to all hunters who had not yet responded. Actual correspondence can be found in APPENDIX B. All surveys were numbered using a bar coding system printed on clear adhesive labels. When surveys were returned to Mississippi State University, the bar codes were scanned into a computer file and assigned with a “returned” status; this prevented respondents from receiving another mailing.

Procedures for editing and data entry of returned questionnaires were similar to Steffen (1981). Data entry involved entering data from the surveys into the computer using a Microsoft Access data entry screen that had been previously developed. First, non-numeric responses in the

survey were numerically coded for preparation for data entry. After all responses were converted into a numeric framework, responses from the surveys were data entered. The responses to the last question of the survey, which was open-ended, were typed into an MS Access file so comments could be queried by agency staff.

Effort and harvest estimates and their standard errors for each species were calculated for total kill, average seasonal kill per hunter, proportion of licensed hunters, total licensed hunters, proportion of hunters who were successful, total man-days spent hunting, average days afield per hunter, and the average daily kill per hunter. These estimates were calculated both on a statewide and district basis. Calculations were based on statistical programs originally developed by Steffen (1981) for mainframe computing, modified as necessary for desktop computing using SAS software.

RESULTS

A total of 4,000 questionnaires were mailed to resident hunters. There were a total of 1,709 useable questionnaires returned by hunters. Useable questionnaires included those who indicated they hunted at least one species one or more days during the 2005-06 season (n=1,444), and those who indicated they “DID NOT HUNT” on their returned survey (n=265). Thus, since harvest estimates are extrapolated to all hunter license holders, those who indicated they did not hunt were included in the database as hunting zero days and harvesting zero animals for each species. Questionnaires were checked for the completeness of responses where it was found that 11 individuals indicated their refusal to participate. When non-deliverable surveys (n=286) were excluded from consideration, an effective response rate of 46.2% was obtained.

Statewide expansions were calculated based on the 175,422 total hunting licenses sold and accounted for by June 30, 2005. There were 175,422 individuals licensed to hunt small game (Type 103) and 171,655 (Types 100 & 101) of these license holders also were eligible to pursue big game (deer and turkey) during the 2005-2006 hunting season.

The expanded statewide summaries of the total harvest, average daily kill, average seasonal harvest, percent of successful hunters, total man-days, average days hunted in the season, total number of hunters, and percent of total licensees that hunted are provided in Table 1 for all game species included in the survey. Table 2 provides the expanded statewide estimates of total harvest and the variability of these (standard error and 95 percent confidence limits) for all game species surveyed.

Tables 3-8 summarize small game hunting on a statewide and district basis. Waterfowl hunting is summarized in Tables 9-13. Tables 14-17 summarize fox (red and gray), bobcat, and coyote hunting. Statewide and district summaries of deer (buck and doe data from archery, primitive weapon, and gun seasons) and turkey hunting (spring and fall) are provided in Tables 18-26. Table 27 summarizes district and statewide estimates for feral hog. Tables 28-36 summarize hunter responses to demographic, participation, attitude, and opinion questions contained in the questionnaire.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This compilation would not have been possible without the efforts and cooperation of many people. Many present and former MDWFP personnel from all divisions provided direct or indirect assistance. MDWFP personnel deserving special recognition are: Ben Sessums and the print shop crew for producing survey instruments, Curtis Thornhill and his staff for providing license information, and Randy Spencer & Dave Godwin for serving as liaisons between MDWFP and Mississippi State University.

Thanks also go to Katie Nelson, Mallory Sullivan, Brittany Harris, and Nathan Gregory of the Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory in the Forest & Wildlife Research Center at Mississippi State University for data processing and construction of data tables.

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- Filion, F. L. 1980 Humans surveys in wildlife management. Pages 441-453 in Schemitz, editor. Wildlife Techniques Manual. 4th ed. Rev. The Wildl. Soc., Washington, D.C. 686 pp.
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TABLE 1. EXPANDED STATEWIDE COVERAGE OF THE 2005-06 MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT MAIL SURVEY OF GAME HARVEST BASED ON 175,422 SMALL GAME LICENSE HOLDERS AND 171,655 BIG GAME LICENSE HOLDERS.

SPECIES	TOTAL HARVEST	AVERAGE DAILY KILL	AVERAGE SEASONAL HARVEST	PERCENT SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS	TOTAL MAN-DAYS	AVERAGE SEASONAL DAYS HUNTING	TOTAL HUNTERS	PERCENT OF TOTAL LICENSEES (A)
DOVE	1,208,041	6.78	23.59	93.4	170,437	3.43	51,220	29.2
QUAIL	50,501	1.90	11.44	83.7	21,786	5.17	4,414	2.5
WOODCOCK	2,771	0.96	3.13	75.0	2,669	3.25	821	0.5
RABBIT	266,161	1.33	9.26	91.2	169,280	6.35	28,741	16.4
SQUIRREL	613,002	2.25	13.2	93.4	260,523	5.90	46,396	26.4
RACCOON	103,878	0.60	12.77	90.9	166,902	21.12	7,904	4.5
TOTAL DUCK	348,867	1.90	18.77	87.7	157,151	9.88	15,910	9.1
MALLARD	162,386	0.87	8.63	72.9	-	-	-	-
WOOD DUCK	69,902	0.39	3.82	63.9	-	-	-	-
OTHER DUCKS	115,579	0.64	6.31	60.0	-	-	-	-
GEESE	16,013	0.83	6.04	90.0	17,142	7.26	2,361	1.3
RED FOX	3,490	0.09	3.00	72.7	16,648	18.0	1,129	0.6
GRAY FOX	3,387	0.12	3.30	60.0	16,555	23.0	1,026	0.6
BOBCAT	6,261	0.20	1.21	87.5	19,043	5.4	4,927	2.8
COYOTE	16,423	0.18	1.89	83.9	68,945	10.39	8,314	4.7
TOTAL DEER	256,870	0.08	2.00	73.7	2,542,662	21.03	128,180	74.7
BUCK	130,629	0.04	1.02	59.2	-	-	-	-
DOE	126,241	0.04	0.98	51.6	-	-	-	-
ARCHERY DEER	31,841	0.06	0.85	48.5	372,463	11.27	37,250	21.7
BUCK	9,389	0.02	0.25	20.3	-	-	-	-
DOE	22,452	0.04	0.60	41.6	-	-	-	-
PRIMITIVE DEER	46,741	0.10	0.81	56.8	381,539	7.38	57,354	33.4
BUCK	20,003	0.04	0.35	30.6	-	-	-	-
DOE	26,738	0.05	0.47	39.1	-	-	-	-
GUN DEER	178,289	0.09	1.48	69.8	1,681,590	14.89	120,220	70.0
BUCK	101,238	0.05	0.84	55.8	-	-	-	-
DOE	77,051	0.04	0.64	42.1	-	-	-	-
TOTAL TURKEY	27,044	0.08	0.85	53.4	278,393	9.59	31,739	18.5
SPRING 2006	25,616	0.08	0.85	53.9	272,488	9.79	30,310	17.7
FALL 2005	1,429	0.13	0.70	50.0	5,323	3.47	2,041	1.2
HOG	29,254	0.26	2.96	75.0	85,125	9.92	9,854	5.6

(A) DEER AND TURKEY PERCENTAGES BASED ON BIG GAME LICENSE HOLDERS; ALL OTHERS BASED ON SMALL GAME LICENSE HOLDERS.

TABLE 2. EXPANDED STATEWIDE ESTIMATES OF TOTAL HARVEST (AND VARIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES) FOR RESIDENTS FOR ALL GAME SPECIES IN MISSISSIPPI DURING THE 2005-06 HUNTING SEASON.

SPECIES	TOTAL HARVEST	STANDARD ERROR		95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL	
		SE	AS % OF TOTAL (A)	LOWER LIMIT	UPPER LIMIT
DOVE	1,208,041	74,460	0.62	1,059,120	1,356,961
QUAIL	50,501	12,106	23.9	26,289	74,715
WOODCOCK	2,771	1,402	50.6	-34	5,576
RABBIT	266,161	28,332	10.6	209,496	322,826
SQUIRREL	613,002	46,661	7.6	519,680	706,324
RACCOON	103,878	21,095	20.3	61,689	146,067
TOTAL DUCKS	348,867	36,582	10.5	274,702	421,032
MALLARD	162,386	18,673	11.6	125,039	199,733
WOOD DUCK	69,902	7,869	11.3	54,164	85,640
OTHER DUCKS	115,579	15,494	13.4	86,390	144,768
GEESE	16,013	4,404	27.5	7,205	24,821
RED FOX	3,490	1,891	54.2	-293	7,273
GRAY FOX	3,387	1,855	54.8	-322	7,097
BOBCAT	6,261	1,031	16.5	4,199	8,323
COYOTE	16,423	2,428	14.8	11,568	21,279
TOTAL DEER	256,870	7,858	3.1	241,155	272,585
BUCK	130,629	4,304	3.3	122,020	139,238
DOE	126,241	4,859	3.8	116,524	135,958
ARCHERY DEER	31,841	2,720	7.2	26,400	37,282
BUCK	9,389	1,141	12.2	7,107	11,671
DOE	22,452	1,983	8.8	18,486	26,417
PRIMITIVE DEER	46,741	2,699	5.8	41,342	52,140
BUCK	20,003	1,525	7.6	16,953	23,053
DOE	26,738	1,824	6.8	23,091	30,386
GUN DEER	178,289	5,677	3.2	166,935	189,642
BUCK	101,238	3,547	3.5	94,145	108,330
DOE	77,051	3,330	4.3	70,391	83,711
TOTAL TURKEY	27,044	2,230	8.2	22,584	31,505
SPRING 2006	25,616	2,150	8.4	21,316	29,915
FALL 2005	1,429	519	36.3	390	2,467
HOG	29,254	5,413	18.5	18,428	40,080

(A) %=100(SE/TOTAL HARVEST)

Summary of Responses to Opinion Questions for 2005-2006

Table 28. Percent of respondents by their age category (Q2)

Age Category	Frequency	Percent
18-20	26	1.8
21-25	56	3.9
26-30	121	8.6
31-35	121	8.6
36-40	175	12.4
41-45	204	14.5
46-50	208	14.7
51-55	205	14.5
56-60	178	12.6
61-65	105	7.4
66-70	10	0.7
>70	2	0.1
TOTAL	1411	100.0

n missing = 0

Mean age of hunter = 44.8

Table 29. Percent of respondents by their gender category (Q3)

Gender Category	Frequency	Percent
MALE	1311	93.2
FEMALE	95	6.8
TOTAL	1406	100.0

n missing = 5

Table 30. Percent of respondents by their approximate annual household income category before taxes (Q4)

Income Category	Frequency	Percent
Under 10,000	52	3.9
10,000-19,000	65	4.9
20,000-29,000	114	8.7
30,000-39,000	148	11.3
40,000-49,000	146	11.1
50,000-59,000	155	11.8
60,000-69,000	129	9.8
70,000-79,000	103	7.8
80,000-89,000	94	7.2
90,000-99,000	70	5.3
100,000 and above	239	18.2
TOTAL	1315	100.0

n missing = 96

Table 31. Percent of respondents by their highest completed level of education (Q5)

Education Category	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	26	1.9
High School	558	39.8
College	671	47.9
Graduate School	147	10.5
TOTAL	1402	100.0

n missing = 9

Table 32. Percent of respondents by their Spanish/Hispanic origin (Q6)

Response	Frequency	Percent
No, not Spanish/Hispanic	1228	99.7
Yes, Mexican, American, Chicano	2	0.2
Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic group	1	0.1
TOTAL	1231	100.0

n missing = 180

Table 33. Percent of respondents by their race (Q7)

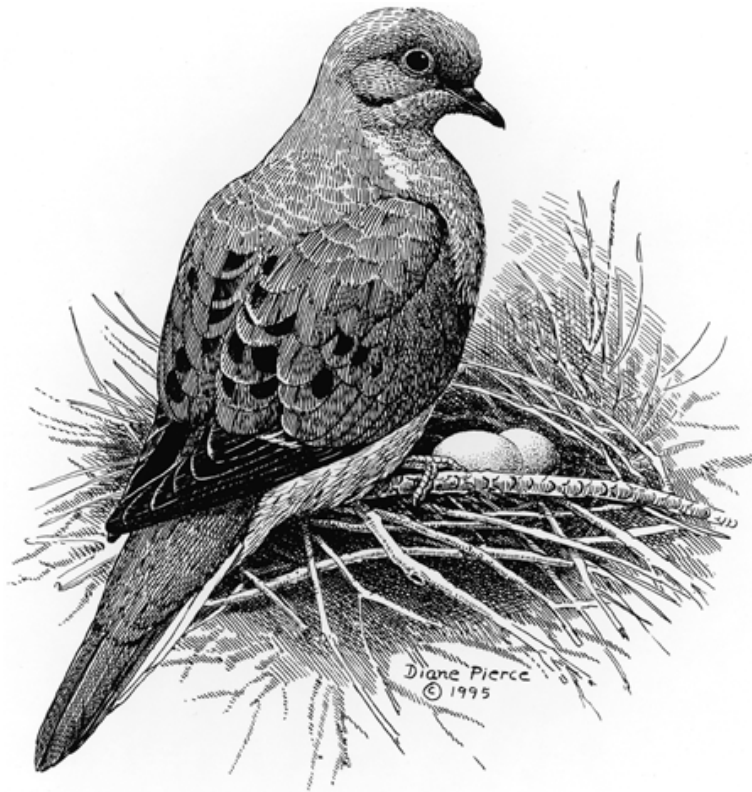
Race Category	Frequency	Percent
WHITE OR ANGLO	1328	94.7
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	65	4.6
NATIVE AMERICAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE	8	0.6
ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	1	0.1
OTHER	1	0.1
TOTAL	1403	100.0

n missing = 8

Appendix A

Questionnaire: 2005-06 Survey of Mississippi Resident Hunters

*2006 Survey
of
Mississippi Hunters*

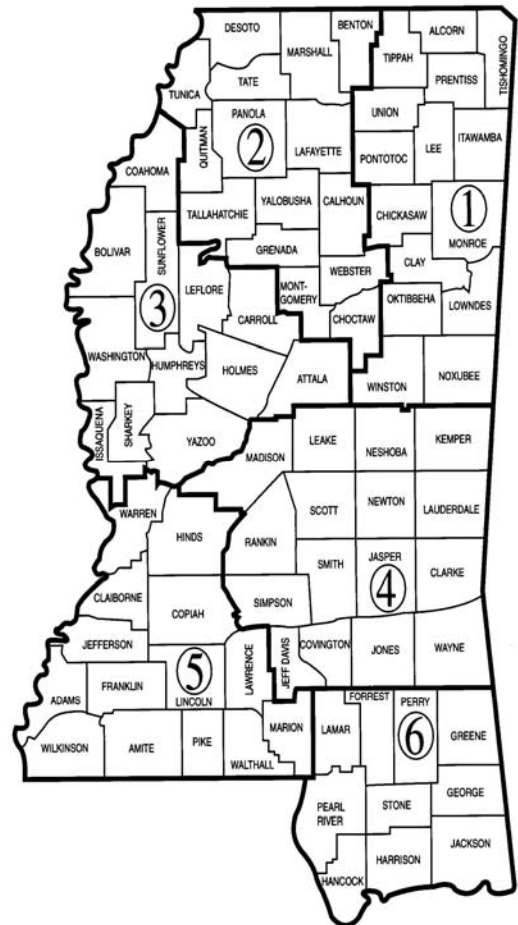


*Conducted for the
Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks
by the
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory
Forest & Wildlife Research Center
Mississippi State University*

1. Please fill in the blocks below for each game, furbearer, or predatory species you hunted during the 2005-2006 hunting season (even if you were unsuccessful). If you hunted more than one species on a particular day, count a day for each species you hunted. Report only game, furbearer, or predatory species taken by you in Mississippi.

Species Sought	Total harvested in Mississippi in 2005-06 season	Days hunted species in Mississippi in 2005-06 season	District Hunted Most
Dove			
Quail			
Woodcock			
Rabbit			
Squirrel			
Raccoon			

**DETERMINE DISTRICT (1-6)
HUNTED MOST FROM THE
MAP BELOW**



	Bucks	Does		
Deer (Archery)				
Deer (Primitive Weapon)				
Deer (Gun)				
Turkey (Fall 2005)				
Turkey (Spring 2006)				

	Mallard	Wood	Other		
Ducks					
Geese					
Red fox					
Gray fox					
Bobcat					
Coyote					
Feral Hog					

The following questions will help us to know more about hunters. The information you provide will remain strictly confidential and you will not be identified with your answers.

2. What is your age?

_____ YEARS

3. Are you?

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

4. What is your approximate annual household income before taxes?

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Under \$10,000 | 7 \$60,000 - \$69,999 |
| 2 \$10,000 - \$19,999 | 8 \$70,000 - \$79,999 |
| 3 \$20,000 - \$29,999 | 9 \$80,000 - \$89,999 |
| 4 \$30,000 - \$39,999 | 10 \$90,000 - \$99,999 |
| 5 \$40,000 - \$49,999 | 11 \$100,000 and ABOVE |
| 6 \$50,000 - \$59,999 | |

5. What is your highest completed level of education? *(Please circle only one number)*

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>11</u> | <u>12</u> | <u>13</u> | <u>14</u> | <u>15</u> | <u>16</u> | <u>17</u> | <u>18</u> | <u>19</u> | <u>20</u> | <u>21</u> | <u>22+</u> |
| elementary | | | | high school | | | | college | | | | graduate school | | | | | | | | | |

6. Are you of Spanish/Hispanic origin?

- 1 NO, NOT SPANISH/HISPANIC
- 2 YES, MEXICAN, MEXICAN AMERICAN, CHICANO
- 3 YES, OTHER SPANISH/HISPANIC GROUP *(Please specify: _____)*

7. What is your race?

- 1 WHITE OR ANGLO
- 2 BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
- 3 NATIVE AMERICAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE
- 4 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
- 5 OTHER *(Please specify: _____)*

8. Was this survey completed by the person to whom it was addressed?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about hunting or wildlife management in Mississippi?

Your contribution of time to this study is greatly appreciated. Please return your completed questionnaire in the postage paid business reply envelope as soon as possible. Thank You.

Mississippi State University
Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690
5/06

Appendix B

Survey correspondence with hunters for the 2005-06 Survey of Mississippi Resident Hunters

10000



Mississippi State
UNIVERSITY

Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory
Forest & Wildlife Research Center
Box 9690
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690

September 1, 2006

John Doe
123 Buck Drive
Fawn, MS 30759

Dear John:

In conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) we are conducting the annual harvest survey of licensed hunters in Mississippi. We conduct this study each year to determine the demographic characteristics of hunters and the amount of game they harvested in Mississippi during the previous hunting season. The information you provide helps managers evaluate how wildlife populations and hunter harvest are affected by various management programs and regulations.

The enclosed survey is designed to tell us about your game harvest in the 2005-2006 Mississippi hunting season (September 1, 2005 – May 1, 2006). Although the survey is completely voluntary, we hope that you will take the 5-10 minutes necessary to provide your input and be a part of the wildlife management process. If you bought a license but did not hunt last year, please write "DID NOT HUNT" on the front cover and send it back to us. That will prevent you from receiving follow-up letters from us, and help us to complete the study.

You are one of a small number of license holders selected to participate in this study. It is important that YOU and no one else complete the questionnaire. Your responses are important to us whether you hunt often, just occasionally, or last year was your first time hunting in Mississippi. All responses will be strictly confidential, and you will not be identified with your answers. Your answers will be grouped with other respondents in a non-identifiable manner. The survey has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so we can remove your name from the mailing list once we receive it.

After you complete the questionnaire, please return it to Mississippi State University in the postage-paid, business reply envelope as soon as possible. If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at Mississippi State University at (662) 325-4153. For additional information regarding human participation in research, please feel free to contact the MSU Regulatory Compliance Office at (662) 325-5220.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. We hope that your 2006-07 hunting season is a safe and successful one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin M. Hunt".

Dr. Kevin M. Hunt
Assistant Professor & Director
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory

10000



Mississippi State
UNIVERSITY

Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory
Forest & Wildlife Research Center
Box 9690
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690

September 22, 2006

Johnny M. Hunter
1234 Duck Drive
Starkville, MS 39759

Dear Johnny:

About three weeks ago, we sent you a survey of Mississippi hunters. As of today, we have not yet received your completed questionnaire. If you have recently returned your survey, please accept our thanks. The success and accuracy of our study depends on you and the others who have yet to respond. You and the others who have not yet responded may represent a completely different portion of the hunting public than those who have responded and have different hunting patterns and harvest rates. We ask for your help in making sure our results are representative of all hunters in Mississippi.

In case you misplaced your survey, we've enclosed another. The survey is designed to tell us about your general hunting activity and game harvest during the 2005-2006 hunting season. Results help MDWFP better understand how harvest regulations affect wildlife populations so they can make improvements that benefit both hunters and wildlife. Although the survey is completely voluntary, we hope that you will take the 5-10 minutes necessary to provide your input and be a part of the wildlife management process. If you did not hunt during the 2005-2006 hunting season please write **DID NOT HUNT** on the front of the questionnaire and mail it back to us so we can take your name off the mailing list.

All responses will be strictly confidential, and you will not be identified with your answers. Your answers will be grouped with other respondents in a non-identifiable manner. The survey has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so we can remove your name from the mailing list once it is received. After you complete the questionnaire, please return it to Mississippi State University in the postage-paid, business reply envelope as soon as possible. If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at Mississippi State University at (662) 325-4153. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and good luck during the upcoming hunting season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Hunt".

Dr. Kevin M. Hunt
Assistant Professor & Director
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory

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Mississippi State
UNIVERSITY

Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory
Forest & Wildlife Research Center
Box 9690
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690

October 20, 2006

Johnny M. Hunter
1234 Duck Drive
Starkville, MS 39759

Dear Johnny:

About a month ago, I sent you a survey of Mississippi hunters. As of today, I have not yet received your completed questionnaire. If you have recently returned your survey, please accept our thanks. The success and accuracy of our study depends on you and the others who have yet to respond. You and the others who have not yet responded may represent a completely different portion of the hunting public than those who have responded and have different hunting patterns and harvest rates. We ask for your help in making sure our results are representative of all hunters in Mississippi.

In case you misplaced your survey, I've enclosed another. The survey is designed to tell us about your general hunting activity and game harvest during the 2005-2006 hunting season. Although the survey is completely voluntary, I hope that you will take the 5-10 minutes necessary to provide your input and be a part of the wildlife management process. If you did not hunt during the 2005-2006 hunting season please write **DID NOT HUNT** on the front of the questionnaire and mail it back to me so I can take your name off the mailing list.

After you complete the questionnaire, please return it to Mississippi State University in the postage-paid, business reply envelope as soon as possible. If you should have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me at Mississippi State University at (662) 325-4153. Thank you in advance for your cooperation during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Hunt".

Dr. Kevin M. Hunt
Assistant Professor & Director
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory