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1987-88 IDAHO SHOTGUN HUNTING STUDY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for
Idaho Department of Fish and Game

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CHAPTER 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The main goal of the Idaho Shotgun Hunter Opinion Study is to assist the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in developing information about the views of people who hunt with a shotgun in Idaho. Descriptions of shotgun hunters, quality Idaho shotgun hunting experiences, characteristics of preferred shotgun hunting settings, and hunters' opinions about various game management issues were explored.

This executive summary focuses on the key findings of a mail questionnaire administered in 1988-89 to resident and nonresident general season license holders who purchased neither a deer or elk tag, but instead bought a waterfowl stamp or upland game permit¹ in 1987. A total of 826 resident and nonresident Idaho shotgun hunters composed the data set used in the analyses.

These data are representative only of shotgun hunters who purchased a waterfowl stamp or upland game permit. Two other reports from this project describe rifle deer hunters and rifle elk hunters.

KEY FINDINGS

Characteristics of Shotgun Hunters

- A true cross-section of Idahoans, from all age and income groups, hunt with a shotgun. Most were male (89%) and employed full-time (66%). Nonresident hunters were more affluent than resident hunters.
- Five distinct types of shotgun hunters, differing in the relative importance

¹ Juvenile and senior resident license holders were excluded from the sample.

they placed on four reasons for hunting (nature, hunting skills, social factors, special equipment and harvest factors), were identified.

- Fewer than a quarter of all shotgun hunters were members of hunting, conservation, or sportsmen's organizations. Nonresident shotgun hunters were more than twice as likely to be members of hunting, sportsmen's and/or conservation groups than resident shotgun hunters.

Desired Kinds of Game

- Pheasant, ducks and geese were the most desired kind of game. Nonresident hunters recorded higher desirability ratings for all game species than did resident hunters.
- Specialization among shotgun hunters is almost nonexistent. Over half of all shotgun hunters pursued six of the seven major groups of upland birds and waterfowl. One in five pursued five species, and less than 5 percent went after only one species.

Shotgun Hunting in Idaho

- Not all shotgun hunters want the same type of hunting experience; different shotgun hunting experiences are desired and marketable. In most market segments, harvesting, and to even a lesser degree "bagging-out," is not the most important aspect of shotgun hunting.
- Unequal proportions of residents (about 19%) and nonresidents (about 57%) took shotgun hunting trips lasting more than a full day. About the same proportion of residents as nonresidents (61%) took one-day trips, and a slightly

greater proportion of residents (63%) to half-day trips compared to nonresidents (50%).

- Region 3 (Southwest) receives the highest visitation from both resident and nonresident hunters.
- Throughout Idaho, shotgun hunters primarily hunt in only one region. About one of every five resident and nonresident shotgun hunter hunts in more than one region of the state.
- Access by foot (92%) is the most common travel mode while hunting with a shotgun. Three quarters of all hunters used 4-wheel drive vehicles, two-thirds used 2-wheel drives and about a third used boats at least "sometimes." Dirt bikes, ATV's and mountain bikes were used by fewer than one in every ten hunters.
- Public and non-fee access private land are used about equally for shotgun hunting. Resident and nonresident hunters use both kinds of land in about similar proportions.

Quality Shotgun Hunting in Idaho

- The most important reasons for shotgun hunting in Idaho, selected by shotgun hunters from a set of 33 possible reasons, were not harvest related, but rather focused on other aspects of the hunting experience, such as being out in nature, viewing scenery, seeing animals in natural settings, bringing back pleasant memories, being with friends and getting away from the usual demands of life.
- Descriptions of quality shotgun hunting in Idaho, in response to an open-ended question, revealed that hunters feel knowing animals are abundant, the naturalness of the setting, being around few other hunters, seeing game, using equipment and applying hunting skills are key attributes of quality. Other lesser important attributes of quality

include getting away and being with family and friends.

- Over half of all shotgun hunters feel they experienced a quality hunt more than half the time when hunting in Idaho. Residents are slightly more likely than nonresidents to feel they obtained a quality hunt more than half the time.
- Over 90 percent of all shotgun hunters are positively affected by hunting in an area they are attached to. Seeing non-game, the opportunity to hunt more than one species, encountering no other hunters, hunting an area that is close to the hunter's home, hunting an area that has been stocked with game farm animals, or that has no roads are setting characteristics that add to the quality of the hunting experience of at least two-thirds of all shotgun hunters.
- Things that detract from the hunting quality of at least two-thirds of the hunters include encountering other hunting groups, motorized vehicles being used off of roads and areas being used by livestock.

How Shotgun Hunters Feel About Selected Issues

- The vast majority of resident (77%) and only 53 percent of nonresident shotgun hunters support fee increases to offset the increasing costs of game management.
- Hunting in an area with no roads strongly added to the shotgun hunting experiences of 66% of all shotgun hunters. This attitude was further supported because almost three quarters said hunting in an area having many open roads detracted somewhat or a lot from their shotgun hunting experience in Idaho.
- Hunters are cognizant of and sympathetic about the problem of crop depredation. When presented with alternative actions that could be taken

to address big game depredation, shotgun hunters tended to favor options that required both the landowner and the Department to contribute. The most favored options were to provide materials that the landowner would have to install to keep wildlife away or have the Department chase the animals away from the fields. The least acceptable options specified either direct payment to landowners or providing materials at no cost.

- Shotgun hunters favored the alternatives that limited the way that people can hunt black bear (using bait and hounds), rather than limiting the basic opportunities for bear hunting.
- Hunters favor retaining both the upland bird and waterfowl HIP programs, with no fee increase.
- Pheasant stocking is supported if the program is supported by funds from license receipts, an annual WMA access fee or daily use permit.
- Upland and waterfowl hunters generally support longer seasons at the expense of limiting daily and seasonal bag limits.
- Less than half of all shotgun hunters feel that the Department of Fish and Game is doing an excellent or good job of bird, upland game or waterfowl management, while 57 percent feel similarly about general fish and wildlife management. About one of every ten hunters feels the Department is doing a poor or very poor job of management.

MAJOR POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The results of the 1987-88 Idaho Shotgun Hunting Study lead to many conclusions. What these findings mean for the future management of Idaho's wildlife resources can only be assessed by examining them in the context of wildlife management policy. Seven key policy implications that address upland bird and waterfowl management from the

perspective of sport hunting are presented below.

- Managers formulating policy need to explicitly recognize that the Department presently manages a diversity of hunting opportunities or products. Also, the potential exists to market these to definable hunter market segments. Presently, Idaho's highest quality shotgun hunting product as defined by the hunter is an unroaded natural setting with an abundance of wildlife species, few other hunters, the opportunity to pursue several game species, and a chance to use special equipment and practice hunting skills with companions.
- Managers formulating policy need to describe non-hunting opportunities or products to be developed based upon the findings of this study and the national trends that suggest increasing numbers of people are interested in wildlife for non-harvest reasons. If trend measurements prove to be accurate, the development of new wildlife products (wildlife viewing, photography contests, etc.) will play a critical role in the future of the Department and its programs.
- Quality shotgun hunting in Idaho is the result of packages of attributes that include natural setting characteristics, an uncrowded feeling, healthy game populations with a mix of species, regulations that recognize that people hunt in groups, enjoy using their equipment and exercising their hunting skills, perceived game abundance, the chance for filling daily and/or seasonal bag limits, and harvesting an animal. Therefore, the department's effort, energy and money need to be balanced among these to ensure that multiple attributes are considered in the management and species planning process -- rather than just the number of animals available for harvest or how many licenses can be sold.
- Shotgun hunters have little interest in limiting their hunting opportunities, but are willing to trade off things like road

access and increased fees to ensure that a quality game population is maintained. This provides managers an opportunity to manage from both a biological and sociological perspective.

- Management issues are often perceived differently by diverse groups such as residents and nonresidents, Idahoans from different regions of the state, and hunters who seek distinct hunting products. Therefore, it is important to monitor these opinion trends and consider them when analyzing impacts and making decisions.
- Channels for communicating with the hunting public must be expanded to ensure that the opinions of formal, organized groups are not over-represented in the Department's policy,

planning and management processes. Many of the hunters surveyed expressed the need for additional information to more effectively evaluate wildlife management alternatives – and they are eager to learn more about wildlife management.

- This study points out the need to integrate social science expertise into the day-to-day management operations and research and planning programs of the Idaho Department of Fish & Game.