

Assessing the Potential for Farm and Ranch Recreation



**BUM STEER
INN**

AUTHENTIC RANCH LIVING
• BIRD HUNTING

**Spotted Horse
INN**

HORSEBACK RIDING

COOKOUTS

SQUARE
DANCING • RANCH STYLE FOOD •

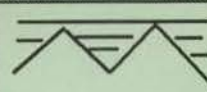
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**MOUNTAIN
COUNTRY
RANCH**

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RANCH**

TRAIL
RIDES •

RAFTING

• HIKING
FISHING •

**TREASURE TRAIL
Guest Ranch**

WESTERN FUN

**Sundown
Working
Dude Ranch**

CHUCK
WAGON
FEEDS

Neil R. Rimbey and Richard L. Gardner



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Assessing the Potential For Farm and Ranch Recreation

Neil R. Rimbey and Richard L. Gardner

Introduction

Production agriculture in the 1980's has become more and more dependent on fickle export markets and macro-economic policies fashioned for nonagricultural purposes. This has caused severe financial stress for many farms and ranches. At the same time the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has placed thousands of acres of Idaho cropland in permanent cover. No grazing or haying of this land is allowed, and many producers wonder what will happen when the payments end. Alternative sources of income are needed and off-farm employment opportunities are not always available. Agricultural diversification is a commonly heard phrase.

The search for new income sources means expanding beyond the traditional concept of a farm or ranch. Landowners in other western states are discovering the income potential of a resource they had previously given away — the recreation values of their farm or ranch. The purpose of this bulletin is to explore the topic of farm and ranch recreation and how such an enterprise might fit into many farm and ranch operations.

Before going into greater detail, we need to emphasize four major points:

1. With rare exceptions, recreation enterprises are secondary to the agricultural operations of the farm or ranch. They are not likely to "save the farm" but can be a significant source of supplemental income. A recreation enterprise may take several years to reach its full potential, because developing and marketing the product takes time. In some cases, the markets for these "products" may be extremely narrow, and operators will require ingenuity to develop and maintain a competitive enterprise.
2. Recreation enterprises are offering a service, not a commodity. For instance, if the enterprise is hunting, a quality hunting experience is the product being marketed, not dead game. The more services offered, the greater the "value-added." Unlike crop or livestock enterprises, recreation services are people-oriented. Communication, marketing and management skills are extremely important.

3. Farm and ranch recreation is not a black-or-white, up-or-down decision. With imagination and persistence, a successful recreation enterprise can be added to nearly any operation that is consistent with the goals and objectives of the owners.
4. Each recreation enterprise should be analyzed using a budget framework to be sure its benefits outweigh costs and contribute to bottom-line profits. This also applies to components of the enterprise like serving meals, fixing up a guest cabin or raising game birds.

Considerations in Defining Your Recreational Service

Goals and Objectives

While economic textbooks say that each business operator is determined to maximize profits, that may not always be a top priority. Other goals may include maintaining a certain family lifestyle, passing the operation to a new generation while maintaining retirement income, surviving the threat of financial ruin, conserving the soil, water and wildlife resources of the farm and many others. Such goals have an important bearing on whether you emphasize quantity of visitors or a quality recreation experience, as well as how much you invest in a recreation enterprise in terms of time, capital improvements and wildlife habitat. Different family members may have different goals. Communication is a key ingredient to successful integration of farm and family goals.

Farm and Ranch Inventory

An obvious first step is to ponder what resources your farm or ranch has to offer. How much land does your operation own? How much is leased from a private party, and who controls hunting? Do you use public lands? Would a recreation enterprise be dependent on adjoining public lands? What recreation activities could your farm or ranch offer? Go beyond natural resources to buildings, spare bedrooms, campsites and using human resources such as retired folks. Remember to be

creative in your brainstorming (use something like the checklist in Appendix 1).

Recreation enterprises include much more than fee hunting and fishing. Activities such as camping, hiking, swimming, boating, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horse riding, wagon rides, cattle drives, trap shooting, rockhounding and just plain soaking up the beauty of the outdoors are a few examples of these opportunities. Do you have wooded draws or old line camps that would make good campsites? Do you have spare bedrooms or buildings that could be converted to guest cabins? Do you have horses or an old wagon? Don't forget attractions off your land, such as nearby reservoirs or trout streams, hot springs, rodeos, fairs, museums and parks. They could help make a stay at your ranch a unique and enjoyable experience.

Survey research indicates many urban people are willing to pay to vacation on a working farm or ranch. As the farm population dwindles, young professionals have a growing curiosity to learn about agriculture and to show their children that food does not originate in the grocery store. Conversely, retired people may wish to revisit the simple, rural lifestyle they remember from growing up on the farm. In what areas can your farm or ranch offer a quality experience?

Time Management

One motivation for starting a recreation enterprise may be to make more productive use of a family member's free time or to retain a valued seasonal employee for a longer period. Perhaps the grandparents no longer actively manage the ranch, have spare bedrooms available and enjoy telling stories to newcomers about the history of the area. Perhaps a son or daughter has some interest, or would like the responsibility of managing the recreational side of the farm business.

The labor requirements of each task in the recreation enterprise need to be estimated. The timing of these tasks must be matched against available "free" time of family members and hired help. Scheduling a fall hunting activity during times when cattle need to be gathered and trailed home may necessitate the hiring of additional labor. You may find it helpful to construct a table with weeks or months of the year along the top and each person in the rows in order to see where time is available. Some tasks, like improving habitat or facilities, can be scheduled into the off-season, while the tasks of directly serving customers cannot. Will there be time to serve as a guide or simply show new hunters around the place if it conflicts with a crop harvest or cattle roundup? Will someone be available to deal courteously with guests or to cook meals? Labor requirements can change with the structure of the enterprise, but this is an important dimension to analyze.

You also may need to maintain additional horses through the year to handle the pressure of gathering and hunting in the fall. If additional labor or contingencies are not arranged, the potential exists for substantial

losses in revenue either from reduced yields or complete crop failures. Perishable crops such as seed crops, potatoes, sugarbeets and others would appear to be the most susceptible to this timing issue.

People Management

In addition to having the time available, consider the personal characteristics of the people who will work with the customer. They may be the biggest asset or hindrance in delivering a recreational service that customers will want to repeat. Many customers will be ignorant of agriculture. They may make statements that seem obnoxious or incredibly stupid. Yet most have a genuine curiosity about farm and ranch life that surfaces as a hundred increasingly familiar questions. A close-mouthed operator may frustrate customers. Do your family and employees genuinely like people and are they willing to answer the same questions and repeat the same stories with enthusiasm? Can they make guests feel welcome? A hidden opportunity here is the chance to educate urban people about your views on the environment, the need for farm programs, how regulations affect you and other agricultural "public relations" matters.

Another dimension of people management is the people you live and work with outside the farm. People like extension agents and Soil Conservation Service personnel may be valuable resources for use in developing these opportunities. However, notifying your neighbors of your plan is also vital to success. Seeking cooperation from your fish and game officer, sheriff, county commissioner and chamber of commerce is usually worth the effort and diplomacy.

Liability and Insurance

The risk of being liable for an accident on your land is a key legal and cost consideration. Because farm recreation is so new, actual figures for accidents and lawsuits are still being compiled. Many insurance companies are uncertain how to calculate risks and costs for these unique enterprises, and to date there is little consistency in treatment. Your insurance company may simply add the enterprise to your policy with little additional cost, or insurance may be a major and expensive stumbling block until you find a company familiar with recreation businesses. Most policies will exclude all business pursuits besides farming and ranching unless run by a minor. Read your insurance policy and discuss it with your insurance agent to be sure you are covered.

Your agent should be able to "manuscript" an "umbrella policy" that will cover aspects your regular policy does not. It may cost as much as 10 percent of your gross revenue. The Idaho Bed and Breakfast Association can provide you with information about supplemental liability insurance for bed and breakfasts for \$50 per bed up to eight beds.

Idaho currently limits landowner liability for hunters allowed on the land for free. Fee hunting is excepted

from this regulation. Asking customers to sign a simple liability waiver, or "hold harmless" form, does not appear to be an effective legal protection. Liability waivers can be strengthened by including a checklist of all the hazards on the place. These hazards are then shown to each customer on their orientation tour (which is a must anyway) and checked off the list. The customer then signifies that he has been shown the rickety outbuilding that may collapse, the ill-tempered bull in the pasture, the rockpile with rattlesnakes and other hazards and waives liability to the rancher. Of course, the best thing is to remove or make safe as many hazards as possible.

Recreational leases and contracts should be carefully drawn up to ensure that you and the customer understand exactly what services are being provided. This should include a description and map of the boundaries of your land, your rules of conduct, what species can be hunted, what activities are permitted, exactly who is permitted to hunt or visit and other factors. Be specific and detailed to avoid later problems. Remember, in the case of fee hunting, the farmer is leasing permission to trespass on the property for hunting. He cannot sell the game because the public actually owns the wildlife. Model leases are available from the Extension Service or the Idaho Department of Agriculture. Visit your insurance agent and lawyer to review liability and legal risk issues before commencing with a recreation enterprise.

Habitat Improvements

In terms of forage consumption, crop damages and predator loss, most farmers and ranchers are already investing in wildlife production. Ranch recreation is a way to harvest revenue from those costs. When viewed as a commercial fee hunting or fishing operation, investments in improving wildlife habitat may be economically, as well as biologically, justified. A deer or elk could be a more economically efficient way to convert forage into income than a steer.

Each investment should be analyzed carefully. Fee hunting will likely justify a greater investment in habitat improvement than nonconsumptive uses by other ranch recreation. Costly improvements should be delayed or done in stages until sufficient cash flow from the recreation enterprise develops. Improvements that benefit several ranch enterprises should receive higher priority than those directed to single purposes. Technical and financial assistance may be available from the Soil Conservation Service, Soil Conservation District, BLM, the Forest Service and your extension agent. Enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program offers a unique opportunity to improve wildlife habitat. The Soil Conservation Commission and your local Soil Conservation District offer low interest loans for rangeland improvements, conservation investments or protecting riparian habitat. Check with these experts; likely you will find some improvements that can be done at very low cost.

Public Land Use

Texas is far and away the leader in the area of lease hunting. The reasons are obvious. The state has a growing urban population, and the vast majority of Texas is privately owned. In contrast, two-thirds of Idaho is owned by the federal or state government. This fact poses both competition to private recreation enterprises and potential management complications where public lands are involved. The use may be as simple as guests hiking, fishing or hunting on public land. The regular use of public lands by persons who are paying a farmer/rancher/outfitter and who view the public land use as part of their purchased recreation package will, however, require an outfitter or special use permit. Consult the BLM, Forest Service or Idaho Department of Land personnel in these cases.

Outfitter's License

One issue unique to Idaho is its strongly regulated recreation industry. The Outfitter's and Guides Act is a model for other Western States. It reassures consumers that they will experience a safe, quality recreation experience in Idaho. The Act requires an outfitter's license of anyone who furnishes facilities, equipment or services for compensation for a broad array of outdoor recreation activities. At a minimum, this means a license will be required any time a paying ranch recreation guest is escorted on an activity, regardless of whether the recreation occurs on private or public land.


The point at which a farmer is outfitting or guiding a guest, rather than simply allowing recreation, is not always clear. For instance, is a license required for the farmer who loans his guest a fishing pole and points the way to a stream or pond? Or a rancher who carries a deer off his pasture in his four-wheel drive pickup? Or a bed and breakfast operator whose guests bring their own snowmobiles? Or a farmer whose vacation guests ride in the combine or stack hay? These are gray areas the Outfitter's and Guide's Licensing Board will need to clarify, because farm recreation is such a new thing.

In the meantime, you should check with the board before starting business if you are at all unsure. Outfitting without a license is a misdemeanor. Securing a license for recreation on your deeded ground should be fairly easy. If public land is involved, you will need to explain in your plan of operation exactly what land will be used. Outfitters can receive exclusive rights to public lands for commercial operations, just as with special use permits.

Organization and Fee Structures

The landowner's time commitments and involvement with customers can be planned according to how the enterprise is operated. This particularly applies to fee hunting. Table 1 shows a Hassle Index of increasingly direct management. Of course, income will tend to increase with the hassle as more services are usually provided.

Table 1. Hassle free index for fee hunting.

Most hassle	Type of hunting enterprise	Comments
	Daily permits and passes	Clients always new. Hard to regulate. Hard to identify trespassers. Liability problems. Most common with goose blinds, dove hunting or shooting preserves.
	Owner guides and hired guides	Guide hassles and client hassles. Outfitter's license required.
	Landowner guides	Owner responsible for client's good time. Increased income. Food and lodging option. Need outfitter's license.
	Cooperative hunting club managed by owners	Must coordinate landowners plus clients. May need outfitter's license.
	Owner-controlled hunting club	Seasonal permits. Can screen for good sportsmen. Develops long-term clients. Food and lodging option. May need outfitter's license.
	Let friends and neighbors hunt.	No income. Hard to resolve conflicts. Still have trespass problems and people asking permission.
	Lease to hunting club	Can require club to pay liability insurance. More people on property.
	Post land against all hunting	Still have trespass problems. Minimizes recreational use of land. No income.
	Lease to guide service	Can require guide to pay liability insurance. Have control over hunters. Guides will help with trespass problems.
Least hassle		

Adapted from Schweigert, 1987.

Leasing to a guide service or hunting club shifts the need to pay liability insurance to another party. A hunting club run by others means having hunters on your land that you may not have previously met or approved. Income is minimized, but you may gain \$1 to several dollars per acre.

Note that the "no action" alternative of posting your land or allowing hunting with permission may not be the least hassle. Count how many people hunt your land in a year and you may be surprised. Consider the hours spent telling them where they can and cannot hunt, the time and hassle spent dealing with trespassers and the costs of occasional vandalism.

Next up the Hassle Index is the owner-controlled hunting club. This has the advantage of letting the landowner select the members after an introductory meeting and tour. It can be started gradually. Marketing can be minimal with membership expanding by word of mouth until your quota is reached. Satisfied customers will be members for years and may develop into friends. Members will know your property well, minimizing liability risks, and may even help patrol "their ranch" for trespassers as they hunt.

A group of Montana ranchers run their recreation enterprise cooperatively on 65,000 acres. They have expanded the hunting concept to encourage all types of outdoor recreation by the whole family 8 months of the year. Memberships were \$250 per individual and \$375 per family in 1986.

Next on the Hassle Index are owner-guided hunts. This people-oriented enterprise is a value-added, higher income option. This option clearly requires an outfitter's license in Idaho.

Finally, issuing daily permits is the greatest hassle. It may be justified for hunting migratory waterfowl from blinds or for operating shooting preserves. Shooting preserves involve raising game birds and releasing them before a hunt. Hunting seasons and bag limits are en-

larged in this way, but owners must follow regulations established by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Analyzing the Feasibility Of Recreation Enterprises

The profitability of any recreation enterprise should be estimated with a partial budget of changes in revenues and costs associated with the activity. See Schermerhorn and Withers (1986) or Schermerhorn and Makus (1988) for an introduction to budgeting. These budgets will clearly be rough since some effects, such as the demand for your product, will not be known beforehand. Remember, budgets are a management tool. In the planning stage, they have flexibility. Initial expenses should obviously be kept to essentials until you are more familiar with the business. There may be ways to make do with less investment or substituting sweat equity for cash outlays.

In attaching costs, remember to include only the additional time over and above what you are already doing. For instance, you may already be spending time patrolling your property and dealing with trespass problems. Pricing the labor of hired help is straightforward enough, but pricing family labor is another matter. The owner-operator's time at harvest time may be worth a lot. On the other hand, a family member unable to find off-farm employment may be willing to work for any additional income. One way to handle family labor is to measure the hours required only and not place a value on them. The net income after covering all other costs is the return to land, management and family labor.

Another tip is that the cost of some improvements can be spread (depreciated) over several years. Habitat improvements, extra horse tack, remodeling guest rooms or cabins and purchasing equipment for guests are some things that will help your recreation enterprise for years. To be conservative and allow for risk, however, we recommend that you depreciate those

investments over fewer years than they are expected to last. Check with your accountant on IRS requirements for depreciation of various categories of assets.

Enterprises: What Are They?

Enterprises are nothing more than the profit (or loss) centers of farm or ranch business. In other words, they are areas within the business that generate revenue and contribute to costs of the total operation. For example, consider a cattle ranch in central Idaho that produces calves for market. The operation weans calves in the fall and overwinters them on raised hay and barley. This type of operation probably has at least four separate enterprises. These are the cow-calf operation, overwintering the weaned calves, hay production and barley production. The ranch could have considerably more enterprises than these four, since any operation that produces a product or incurs costs that can be readily separated from others can be considered an enterprise. The actual sale of the product is not necessary for enterprise consideration. For example, the transfer of calves from the cow-calf operation to a backgrounding operation does not usually involve a sale and the transfer of money. A product is transferred from one profit center to another, however, and the cow-calf and backgrounding operations can thus be separated into two enterprises.

Within each operation are contributors to and detractors from overall farm or ranch profits. It is next to impossible to pick these out of income tax returns, a profit and loss statement or any other instrument that combines revenues and expenses of the total operation. With minor effort during periodic farm accounting sessions, most expenses and revenues can be separated into enterprises. This approach allows the manager an opportunity to determine the contributors and the detractors and make better decisions on alternative strategies to enhance profitability.

Revenue and expenses will be impacted in most management decisions on farms or ranches. For example, the manager deciding whether to apply additional fertilizer to a field of corn should consider the impact the decision will have on costs and returns. The most obvious considerations would be the increased revenue resulting from increased corn yields and increased costs associated with the fertilizer application. In many cases, decreased revenues and costs will also be associated with the management option. Continuing with the corn example, if the fertilizer application is somewhat risky during a certain time frame, the potential exists to reduce the quality of the product or to impact the yield negatively. Either of these could potentially reduce net revenue. Decisions on adding land, livestock, machinery or other capital investments to a farm or ranch also obviously affect costs and returns. These costs and returns should be carefully considered before the decision is made to proceed with the action.

A tool is available for analyzing the impact of management changes on costs and returns. This tool —

partial budgeting — has been used by farm and ranch managers for many years. The partial budget has applicability in analyzing the alternative enterprises now being considered by agricultural producers. Three case studies are used to illustrate the process of applying this analysis technique to farm and ranch recreation alternatives.

Case Study: Bird Hunting

Oliver Ritowski and his wife Emma are considering an endeavor on their 800-acre irrigated row crop operation in southwestern Idaho. They feel that they can do a few things to enhance the native pheasant and quail populations on their farm and market the hunting rights through access permits. They are currently operating 640 acres of cropland and 160 acres of permanent pasture that provide summer forage for their small herd of registered cattle. They produce field corn, alfalfa hay, sugarbeets and wheat. Occasionally, they contract alfalfa seed and lettuce seed. They feel that a wildlife marketing enterprise would fit into their operation since most of the crops would be harvested before the start of the hunting season. The exception would be the 50 acres of beets that they usually harvest in late October or early November. The farm is surface irrigated through a series of concrete ditches. Water is furnished through the local irrigation district and one diesel-powered well that is capable of irrigating 160 acres. A live stream also runs year-round and provides considerable upland game bird habitat.

In visiting with their county agent and Soil Conservation Service representative, the Ritowski's decide that their place can handle about 16 hunters without causing a problem of overcrowding. They have done some groundwork with the local sportsmen's club and got a list of 15 people who expressed an interest in this hunting opportunity. This will initially form the basis of their clientele development program. Emma is one of the best cooks in the local Grange and as part of the package will provide six lunches per hunter per season. Since the kids have all left home, they are also considering allowing use of the four basement bedrooms for weekend hunting parties.

To maintain a quality hunt for the lessors, they have decided to post and patrol their property. They anticipate this will cost \$100 for the signs. They will hire the neighbor and use of his motorcycle for \$150 for the season to do the periodic patrols. They have also budgeted \$1,000 for the increased food, utilities and miscellaneous expenses associated with Emma's feeding and boarding the hunters. They also feel they will need to have a hired man during beet harvest to take Emma's place driving truck. They have visited with the neighbor and he can be hired to help with the beets and other fall work. They have budgeted \$1,000 to cover his salary and fringe benefits during October and November.

They also consulted with their insurance agent who advised them to increase their liability coverage associ-

Table 2. Partial budget of Ritowski hunting enterprise.

	\$/hunter	Total	Your value
Increased income:			
Added returns:			
16 hunters	\$375	\$ 6,000	_____
Total		\$ 6,000	_____
Reduced costs:			
Total reduced costs		0	_____
Total increased income		\$ 6,000	_____
Decreased income:			
Added costs:			
Posting, patrolling land		\$ 250	_____
Facilities and food		\$ 1,000	_____
Labor and advertising		\$ 1,000	_____
Overhead		\$ 90	_____
Insurance		\$ 225	_____
Habitat improvement		\$ 500	_____
Total added costs		\$ 3,115	_____
Reduced returns:			
2 acres corn depredation loss (\$180 per acre)		\$ 360	_____
50 acres beets yield reduction (5 percent yield reduction from late harvest; normal yield is 28 tons/acre and price is \$35/ton)		\$ 245	_____
Total reduced returns		\$ 605	_____
Total decreased income		\$ 3,720	_____
Net change		\$ 2,280	_____
Breakeven analysis:			
Total cost estimate		\$ 3,720	_____
Total number of hunters		16	_____
Breakeven (cost divided by number of hunters)		\$ 233	_____
Breakeven (number of hunters at \$375 per hunter per year)		10	_____

ated with the venture. They estimate the annual premium of the extended liability coverage to be \$225.

They feel they must engage in an annual habitat improvement program that will benefit the resident bird population. They have plans to install a flushing bar on their hay swather and to attempt some minor wildlife seedings, shrub or willow plantings and other improvements near the creek. They have budgeted \$500 per year for these activities. This can be viewed as the amount used to service a habitat improvement loan or an annual expenditure. In addition, during the initial phases of the program, they anticipate losing up to 2 acres of field corn per year to depredation of pheasants and other upland birds in the spring. They budget a one-half percent reduction in beet yields as a risk measure associated with delaying the harvest until later in the season. Depending upon weather conditions, they may also adjust first cutting of hay to allow for more chick pheasant survival.

After reviewing the situation with the county agent and SCS representative, they decide to run this information through a partial budget analysis to determine their breakeven price and quantity levels of hunting. They would also like to use some of this information in test marketing and to visit with representatives of the Department of Fish and Game. The resulting analysis is included in Table 2.

Given the situation as presented by the Ritowski's, some conclusions can be drawn from the simple partial budget analysis. First, the enterprise will be a contributor to ranch profitability. In this case, the added revenue exceeds the added cost associated with the hunting venture by about \$2,300 (see Table 2). Their breakeven price level per hunter is \$233 and they need to attract at least 10 hunters at \$375 per hunter to cover their costs. Obviously, they will not immediately be striking it rich with this new enterprise. The margin per hunter is \$142 (\$375 revenue, \$233 cost).

They must now decide whether the commitment of resources over the 2 to 3 months of operating the enterprise is worth this amount of return. They have valuable information to help make the decision concerning adding the enterprise. Further analyses will center on removing the food and/or lodging provisions from the package deal and charging for these services on a demand basis. They will also consider some type of "test marketing" of their product to see what access charges the market will bear. Another item which could be included in the analysis is income tax liability associated with the increased revenue. Check with your accountant on integrating this into your analysis. In addition, the analysis can include such options as revenue reductions from lower quality hay if swathing is delayed.

Case Study: Big Game

A rancher in southcentral Idaho is also considering marketing a recreational hunting activity on his ranch. Barney and Bunny Oldfield operate the ranch with help from their two children, B. J. and Brian. B. J. is a senior at the University of Idaho majoring in business. He will be returning to the ranch after graduation. Brian is a junior in high school with many outside interests.

The family operation runs 400 beef cows with calves. Winter forage for livestock is provided by irrigated hay fields and pastures around the home ranch. In the spring (usually around May 15), they turn the cattle onto adjacent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) rangelands. Cattle remain on BLM lands for 6 weeks and then are moved onto an adjacent Forest Service (FS) allotment. They are on the FS allotment until mid-October, when the cattle are gathered. Calves are then weaned and shipped home to be fed through the winter on raised hay and grain. At times, weaned calves will be sold in the fall rather than fed through the winter. Cows are moved back to BLM for fall use until mid-November, when they are trailed home and placed on hay fields for grazing until the snow flies. Winter feeding usual-

ly starts in early to mid-December, depending on weather conditions, and lasts until cattle are turned out onto spring range.

The Oldfields have a unique situation in that their private land controls access to BLM and FS lands east of the home place. All of the private lands on the ranch are fenced into pastures and fields. The five access points to public lands have been gated and locked for several years. Private land is currently posted and patrolled by various family members. Because of the land ownership pattern, there has been little hunting pressure on the area.

In addition, quite a few of the resident elk, deer and antelope rely on Oldfield's hay and grain fields for forage and habitat at different times of the year. Barney estimates that about 450 head of elk winter in the area. Although they do not spend all of their time on private lands, they have caused problems with losses in the hay stacks and damage to new alfalfa seedings. Even with panels and feeding provided by the Fish and Game Department, one stack of 200 tons of alfalfa was "donated" to the elk herd during the winter of 1985-86. Elk usually spend spring through fall on the public lands east of the ranch. Deer numbers on the ranch also fluctuate by season. Barney and the Fish and Game Department

both estimate, however, that the resident deer herd numbers about 150 head. A migratory herd also comes through the area during winter months. This was particularly evident in the hard winter of 1985-86.

B. J., with knowledge of business gained at the University, has been pushing his family to consider getting involved in some type of enterprise to take advantage of this outdoor recreation situation. Since he is also an avid hunter and is looking for a part of the operation that he can manage when he completes his degree, he takes it upon himself to prepare some alternatives for the family to consider. He has settled on either selling access permits to the ranch or providing fully guided big game hunts for elk and deer.

B. J. estimates that access permits can be initially offered to 12 hunters during the hunting season. After visiting with members of the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, he feels that \$200 per hunter would fall within the market potential for this activity. He estimates that they will have an additional expense of \$250 for more complete posting and patrolling of the property. His insurance agent suggests that they budget an additional \$125 per year for increased liability insurance. B. J. also decides to budget 3 percent of the gross income for overhead as a contingency for some of the uncertainties surrounding insurance and other startup costs. He also budgets \$500 per year on habitat improvement projects on private and public lands on the ranch property.

He applies the partial budget analysis to the access fee situation and determines that it would be a profitable venture. Revenues exceed costs by about \$1,450 per year. They would need to charge \$79 per hunter or attract five hunters (at \$200 apiece) to break even. This analysis is presented in Table 3.

As an alternative to the access fee situation, B. J. also prepared similar information concerning guided hunts. This was done in hope of generating additional income to support his return to the ranch. He figures that the resource could support 16 hunters and budgets them at \$1,200 per hunt. Hunters will be on the ranch for an average of 5 days and will be handled in parties of two. He determines that he will need to provide 40 days of guide service and calculates that guides will cost \$100 per day. Food and supplies are calculated at \$40 per hunter day and vehicle operation and maintenance at \$50 per hunter day. Insurance is projected to be \$425 per year, habitat improvement is again budgeted at \$500 per year and overhead at 3 percent of the gross income. B. J. allows \$225 and plenty of time to apply for an outfitter's license. At the same time, he applies to the Forest Service for a special use permit to take hunters onto the adjacent public lands.

Analysis of this situation reveals that it would again appear to be a profitable venture, with revenues exceeding costs by \$6,500. Breakeven levels would be a price of \$794 with 16 hunters or 11 hunters at \$1,200 apiece. This analysis is contained in Table 4.

Table 3. Partial budget of B. J. Oldfield big game hunting enterprise, property access provided only.

	\$/hunter	Total	Your value
Increased income:			
Added returns:			
12 hunters	\$200	\$ 2,400	_____
Total		\$ 2,400	_____
Reduced costs:			
Total reduced costs		0	_____
Total increased income		\$ 2,400	_____
Decreased income:			
Added costs:			
Signs and patrol		\$ 250	_____
Overhead (3% of gross income)		\$ 72	_____
Insurance		\$ 125	_____
Habitat improvement		\$ 500	_____
Total added costs		\$ 947	_____
Reduced returns:			
Total reduced returns		0	_____
Total decreased income		\$ 947	_____
Net change		\$ 1,453	_____
Breakeven analysis:			
Total cost estimate		\$ 947	_____
Total number of hunters		12	_____
Breakeven (cost divided by number of hunters)		\$ 79	_____
Breakeven (number of hunters at \$200 per hunter per year)		5	_____

Case Study: Ranch Vacation

Bob and Betty Ferguson are ranchers in their mid-50's. They own 1,000 acres of deeded ground adjacent to a mountainous area of Idaho. A scenic state highway abuts their property and leads to a resort area less than an hour's drive from their gate. Bob and Betty's children have grown and left the ranch, and a son is now a partner in the operation. With fewer direct ranching responsibilities, a big interest in meeting new people and three empty bedrooms in their spacious home, Bob and Betty are interested in starting a bed and breakfast operation.

They are especially interested in hosting families who want to learn more about ranching in the West and will stay more than one night. Guests will be able to watch and learn about the ranching operation, fish in one of several trout streams, hike, picnic or travel to nearby hot springs. The Ferguson's do not intend to actively entertain their guests, however. They anticipate host-

ing hunters in the fall and guests in winter who will want to snowmobile or cross-country ski on groomed trails in the adjoining national forest.

Table 5 represents the Ferguson's initial attempt at a budget. They conservatively estimate that they will only have one party staying with them at a time and allow for occupancy of 150 nights of the year. Summer may be busier, but March and April may be nearly vacant. Their prices of \$50 per adult and \$30 per child may seem high, but they will be providing three home-cooked meals per day, plus access to the recreational use of their land. A lower rate is contemplated for overnight guests who leave after breakfast. Anticipated income is \$20,280.

Food costs of \$10 per guest per day have been allocated, which will allow generous use of high-quality meats and fresh vegetables. Supplemental bed and breakfast liability insurance can be obtained for \$50 per bed, or \$200.

An allowance of \$250 has been made for new towels, linens and miscellaneous hospitality items. Betty has decided to pay a local woman to do heavy cleaning in the weeks guests stay, in order to free more time for cooking and hospitality. An additional \$1,000 per year is budgeted for repairs and improvements that are expected from increased use of the house, for reducing ranch hazards and for improvements that may be revealed from experience with guests.

Finally, \$1,000 (5 percent of gross revenue) is allocated for advertising and membership in bed and breakfast and ranch vacation associations. In the first year, the Ferguson's will print a brochure and join the Idaho Bed and Breakfast Association. The brochures will be distributed to the nearby resort, local restaurants and the Chamber of Commerce. The Ferguson's will also send reservation confirmations, thank you notes and Christmas cards to all guests.

The anticipated costs total \$8,880, leaving \$11,400 as a return to their property, labor and management effort. They must still investigate one area of uncertainty carefully, however. It relates to the specific recreation options offered and the degree of involvement by the hosts. Extended liability coverage for a traditional bed and breakfast may not be sufficient for more active recreation like horse riding or assisting in ranch operations. A requirement for insurance may be that guests be accompanied by the host or an employee on certain activities. This, in turn, would likely require an outfitter's license.

So the Ferguson's must carefully consider the recreation package they will offer with their accommodations. A true ranch vacation may require substantially higher insurance costs, \$225 for a 3-year outfitter's license, possibly a special use permit and additional labor requirements for horse care and accompanying guests. These expenses may be necessary to attract guests at the price they would like to charge and to offer the quality experience the Ferguson's have in mind.

Table 4. Partial budget of B. J. Oldfield big game hunting enterprise, guided hunts.

	\$/hunter	Total	Your value
Increased income:			
Added returns:			
16 hunters	\$1,200	\$ 19,200	_____
Total		\$ 19,200	_____
Reduced costs:			
Total reduced costs		0	_____
Total increased income		\$ 19,200	_____
Decreased income:			
Added costs:			
Vehicle operation and maintenance (\$50/hunter day)		\$ 4,000	_____
Food and supplies (\$40/hunter day)		\$ 3,200	_____
Labor guides (1 per 2 hunters @ \$100/day)		\$ 4,000	_____
Overhead (3% of gross income includes licenses)		\$ 576	_____
Insurance		\$ 425	_____
Habitat improvement		\$ 500	_____
Total added costs		\$ 12,701	_____
Reduced returns:			
Total reduced returns		0	_____
Total decreased income		\$ 12,701	_____
Net change		\$ 6,499	_____
Breakeven analysis:			
Total cost estimate		\$ 12,701	_____
Total number of hunters		16	_____
Breakeven (cost divided by number of hunters)		\$ 794	_____
Breakeven quantity of hunters at \$1,200 per hunter per year		11	_____

On the other hand, they may discover other costs of maintaining their existing home are reduced. Similarly, using their home for a business will have income tax benefits, and the increased revenue will have a possible tax liability.

Marketing Your Recreation Enterprise

There is no county elevator or saleyard to which you can deliver your recreation service, so marketing is extremely important. Marketing involves more than simply advertising and selling your enterprise. You will also need to define your product carefully, to know your targeted customer, to treat customers so that they will want to return and to price your service correctly. The successful entrepreneur will spend considerable time researching and planning a marketing strategy. Some resources for your use in this endeavor are listed in Appendix 2.

Learn from Your Competition

The single best marketing lesson would be to visit one or more operations that offer recreation similar to what you are planning. Several things will be accomplished. Most important is that you will experience the customer's point of view. This may help you understand what it is you are selling. You can also observe someone else's hospitality and how they create an image. If you explain directly why you are visiting, most experienced farm recreation hosts will be happy to share information with you on the advertising, pricing and business management aspects of their operation. They know that competition in recreation does not have to be cutthroat. It can make this young industry grow.

Define Your Product

For successful marketing, you must have done the rest of your planning so that you know what service you are offering. Now compare your service to your competition in order to determine your marketing edge. Is your location more accessible or remote than most? Is your area ordinary or especially scenic by western standards? How do your accommodations rank? How good is the hunting? Are any off-farm attractions truly unusual? This process is called positioning. The better you understand where your service lies in relation to others in the market, the better you will be able to price and promote your enterprise.

Target Your Customer

After looking closely at yourself and what you are offering, you must examine your potential customers. Who are these individuals and what do they want? With some research you should be able to describe your intended customers in some detail — age, sex, family size, occupation, income level and interests? Where do they live? Are they passing through or is your place their destination? How long will they usually stay and what

do they want to do? Are they seeking a unique experience, adventure, rest and relaxation, solitude or a chance to meet genuine ranchers? You cannot effectively promote your recreation if you don't know your targeted customer.

Advertising and Promotion

Having defined your product and your customer, the next task is to get the word out. Broad-scale advertising is quite expensive, so promotion must be done carefully and creatively. A good first step is to get a good name and logo for your operation that communicates the image you want. Stationery and business cards are inexpensive and essential places for the new logo. An advertisement in the telephone directory may also be worthwhile.

The next expenditure for all but the smallest operation is apt to be an informative brochure. It should include your services, attractions, rates, location and directions. Avoid being too wordy, and include photos. Don't be afraid to ask for help on this special task, because there is a knack to creating an attractive brochure.

At this point, much can be done for free. Brochures can be left where tourists (or hunters) go, in cafes, motels, sport shops and at the Chamber of Commerce. Free publicity can also be gained by exploiting the human interest angle of your new venture. Many newspapers, radio or TV stations would be interested in learning about a new farm recreation enterprise and the people who started it. Travel editions of metropolitan newspapers could even be invited for a free sample of your hospitality. The Idaho Department of Commerce lists all bed and breakfasts and ranch vacations in its Idaho Vacation Planner, which is distributed to hundreds of thousands of potential tourists.

Hospitality

Put yourself in your customer's shoes and think through all aspects of his or her visit. Remember everything you do contributes to an image and the total recreational experience. First impressions are important. Were you courteous in taking the phone reservation? Is your entrance neat and pleasing to the eye? Is there a sign for easy identification? Try to always be cheerful and friendly both on the phone and in person. Bring in friends or relatives and ask them for their impressions. The customer is there to enjoy himself, not to hear your problems. Your job is to fulfill the customer's wants. For instance, some customers will be tired from traveling when they arrive and may prefer a hot bath to the grand tour and rules of the premises. Or they may prefer to go to town one day, rather than do the activity you have offered. Be attentive and cordial, but not too forward.

Another suggestion is to remember that you represent your community. Be positive and don't run it down. A general knowledge of the geography, history and at-

tractions in the area will be most useful. You should also know where other services can be found, such as banks, stores, repair shops, golf courses, churches, movie theaters, laundromats and the post office.

Another idea is to remember that marketing Idaho can help make your place special. Serving Idaho-grown foods and a glass of Idaho wine, or selling local handicrafts as souvenirs all help create lasting memories. You could even take your customer's picture against an Idaho backdrop or on a horse. A Christmas card of an Idaho scene is a good way to rekindle fond memories.

Finally, ask each customer on the last day what they would like to be different the next time they come. These suggestions for improvement can be invaluable. Repeat customers are extremely important to any farm recreation enterprise. Word of mouth is the best form of advertising for good hosts.

Pricing

Setting a price on a recreation service is difficult because each is unique and much of the cost may be in the time and effort of your family. The partial budgets you create should offer an idea of breakeven prices and cost per customer for some level of demand. The cost-plus approach can be used for pricing, but be sure to include all costs and allow for risk of failure. Experts say many farmers tend to undervalue their services because they do not realize the value of their families' surroundings to middle and upper class outsiders. On the other hand, it is better to build up customers and gradually increase the price than it is to price yourselves out of the market initially.

A good suggestion for pricing your service is to visit other similar operations. The following price ranges are broad generalities but are offered for information:

- Bed and breakfasts: \$30 to \$100 per room/night
- Ranch recreation with all meals: \$40 to \$85 per person per night
- Dude ranches: \$60 to \$175 per person per night with 1 week minimum stay
- Bird hunting leases: \$1 to \$5 per acre

- Upland bird or waterfowl daily permits: \$20 to \$200 per hunting day
- Deer hunting trespass fees: \$100 to \$400 per season
- Guided big game hunt: \$1,000 to \$4,000 per 5 days

Remember your breakeven levels determined in the budgeting exercise. These should set your price floor and allow comparison with other recreation enterprises.

A technique called peak load or differential pricing can help you spread the demand for your service and maximize income. For instance, you may want to charge a higher price for weekends or opening day of the season in the case of hunting. A lower price might be offered in the "shoulder" seasons for tourists, spring and fall. A higher price could be charged for trophy bucks. Prices for fee hunting could be two-tiered with lower rates for local sportsmen who help protect your property. You may want to favor or discourage families with your pricing for children. Longer stays can be encouraged with special weekly rates, or 4 nights for the price of 3. Think of pricing as a way to regulate the demand for your recreation service.

Conclusion

This bulletin has offered a lengthy overview of farm and ranch recreation. We have tried to communicate the potential for supplemental income and list many of the considerations that should be part of a decision to enter this business. We have outlined issues in planning a compatible type of recreation service, how to analyze the benefits and costs of a recreation enterprise, the many dimensions of marketing and steps in the process of beginning a recreation business in Idaho.

Any of the topics in this bulletin can be expanded in much more detail. Contacting any of the resource people mentioned is recommended, should you have more specific questions. Farm and ranch recreation is new to Idaho. With communication and cooperation the recreation resources of the state's farms and ranches can be recognized and developed to yield new income opportunities for agriculture.

Other Sources of Information

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Appendix 1

Farm and Ranch Recreation Inventory

(Adapted from Powell and Bahr, 1988)

Checklist of Farm and Ranch Recreation Enterprises:

Wildlife (presence, numbers, habitat grade and potential)

Big Game

- _____ Antelope: _____
- _____ White-tail deer: _____
- _____ Mule deer: _____
- _____ Elk: _____
- _____ Moose: _____
- _____ Bighorn sheep: _____
- _____ Mountain goat: _____

Trophy Game

- _____ Black bear: _____
- _____ Mountain lion: _____

Small Game

- _____ Cottontail rabbit: _____
- _____ Snowshoe hare: _____
- _____ Red, gray and fox squirrels: _____

Game Birds

- _____ Chukar: _____
- _____ Turkey: _____
- _____ Sage grouse: _____
- _____ Blue grouse: _____
- _____ Ruffed grouse: _____
- _____ Sharp-tailed grouse: _____
- _____ Quail: _____
- _____ Pheasant: _____
- _____ Mourning dove: _____

Fish

- _____ Warm water: _____
- _____ Cold water: _____
- _____ Native: _____
- _____ Stocked: _____
- _____ Streams: _____
- _____ Ponds: _____

Waterfowl

_____ Geese: _____
_____ Ducks: _____

Predators, Rodents, Others (No license; game predation; calling; trapping; cover)

_____ Coyotes: _____
_____ Skunk: _____
_____ Porcupine: _____
_____ Jackrabbit: _____
_____ Raccoon: _____
_____ Red fox: _____
_____ Ground squirrels: _____
_____ Rock chucks: _____

Furbearers (Trapping License)

_____ Beaver: _____
_____ Mink: _____
_____ Muskrat: _____
_____ Badger: _____
_____ Bobcat: _____
_____ Marten: _____
_____ Weasel: _____

Other Birds

_____ Big birds (eagles, hawks): _____
_____ Little birds (songbirds): _____
_____ Pests: _____

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species (Animals and Plants)

Non-Wildlife Activities

- Hunting, predator/ground squirrel shooting, trap and skeet range, archery, practice trapping
- Fishing, fly fishing clinics, fly tying
- Swimming
- Boating, tubing/ water ski, cross-country ski, snowmobiling, snow sledding, ice fishing
- Concession stands (homebased businesses)
- Grocery (meat, vegetables, fruit)
- Hiking
- Lodging
- Meals
- Arrowhead hunting, rock collecting
- Historical aspects
- Cabin building, barn board sale
- Rock-climbing
- Spelunking
- Camping, picnicking
- Ranchwork (roundup; haying; fencing)
- Ranch skills (horseshoeing, leatherwork, camp cooking)
- Habitat improvement (brush piles)
- Horseback riding, pack trips, wagon trains
- Rodeo (on-ranch, in-town)
- Festivals (on-ranch, in-town)
- Photography, painting
- Bird watching, people watching
- Sundeck, reading, sleeping, drinking
- Tomahawk throwing, horseshoes, volleyball, square dancing
- Wildflowers (floral arrangements)

Appendix 2 Getting Further Assistance

General Information and Referral

Idaho Department of Agriculture
2270 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho 83712
(208) 334-3240

Business Planning

Extension Economists
University of Idaho
SW Idaho R&E Center
16952 S. Tenth
Caldwell, Idaho 83605
(208) 459-6365

University of Idaho
District 3 Office
1330 Filer Avenue, East
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301
(208) 734-3600

University of Idaho
District 4 Office
1776 Science Center Drive
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83402
(208) 529-8376

University of Idaho
Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural
Sociology
Agricultural Science Building
Moscow, Idaho 83843
(208) 885-6335

Small Business Development Centers

Idaho Small Business Development Center
Business Building
Boise State University
1910 University Drive
Boise, Idaho 83725
(208) 385-1640

Idaho Small Business Development Center
7270 Potomac Drive
Boise, Idaho 83704
(208) 323-1154

Idaho Small Business Development Center
P.O. Box 880
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814
(208) 667-1556

Idaho Small Business Development Center
Lewis-Clark State College
8th Avenue and 6th Street
Lewiston, Idaho 83501
(208) 799-2465

Idaho Small Business Development Center
Idaho State University
427 N. Main, Suite A
Pocatello, Idaho 83204
(208) 232-4921

Idaho Small Business Development Center
P.O. Box 1844
Twin Falls, Idaho 83306
(208) 734-6587

Home-based Business of Idaho

2002 Nez Perce
Boise, Idaho 83705
(208) 336-3617

Regulation

Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board
1365 N. Orchard, Room 372
Boise, Idaho 83706
(208) 376-5680

Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association
P.O. Box 95
Boise, Idaho 83701
(208) 342-1438

Division of Health
Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Statehouse
Boise, Idaho 83720
(208) 334-5938

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
600 S. Walnut
Boise, Idaho 83707
(208) 334-3700

Idaho Department of Lands
Statehouse, Room 121
Boise, Idaho 83720
(208) 334-3280

Bureau of Land Management

Boise District Office
3948 Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705
(208) 334-1582

Burley District Office
Route 3, Box 1
Burley, Idaho 83318
(208) 678-5514

Idaho Falls District Office
940 Lincoln Road
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401
(208) 529-1020

Salmon District Office
P.O. Box 430
Salmon, Idaho 83467
(208) 756-2201

Shoshone District Office
P.O. Box 2-B
400 West F Street
Shoshone, Idaho 83352
(208) 886-2206

Coeur d'Alene District Office
P.O. Box 1889
1808 Third Street
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814
(208) 765-1511

Idaho Forest Service Recreation Contacts

Boise National Forest
1750 Front Street
Boise, Idaho 83702
(208) 334-1516

Caribou National Forest
250 S. 4th Ave., Suite 282
Federal Building
Pocatello, Idaho 83201
(208) 236-7500

Challis National Forest
P.O. Box 404
Forest Service Building
Challis, Idaho 83226
(208) 879-2285

Payette National Forest
Box 1026
McCall, Idaho 83638
(208) 634-8151

Salmon National Forest
P.O. Box 729
Salmon, Idaho 83467
(208) 756-2215

Sawtooth National Forest
2647 Kimberly Road, East
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301
(208) 737-3200

Targhee National Forest
420 P.O. Box 208
St. Anthony, Idaho 83445
(208) 634-3151

Clearwater National Forest
Highway 12
Orofino, Idaho 83544
(208) 470-4541

Idaho Panhandle National Forest
1201 Ironwood Dr.
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814
(208) 765-7223

Nez Perce National Forest
Route 2, Box 475
Grangeville, Idaho 83530
(208) 983-1950

Habitat Improvement

Local Extension Agent
Local Soil Conservation Service office
Local Soil Conservation District
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Idaho Soil Conservation Commission
801 Capitol Boulevard
Boise, Idaho 83720
(208) 334-3865

(ask about ACP program for cost sharing)

(see above)

(ask about Resource Conservation and
Rangeland Development low interest loans)

Advertising Directories

Division of Travel Promotion
Idaho Department of Commerce
Hall of Mirrors
Boise, Idaho 83720
(208) 334-2470

(for free listing in Idaho Vacation Planner)

Idaho Bed & Breakfast Association
Idaho Heritage Inn
109 W. Idaho Street
Boise, Idaho 83702
(208) 342-8066 or 336-5174

Off the Beaten Path
109 E. Main Street
Bozeman, Montana 59715
(406) 586-1311

(uses farm and ranch recreation in
planning vacations for customers)

The Complete Guide to Ranching
Vacations in North America
P.O. Box 7041
Tahoe City, California 9573
(916) 583-6926

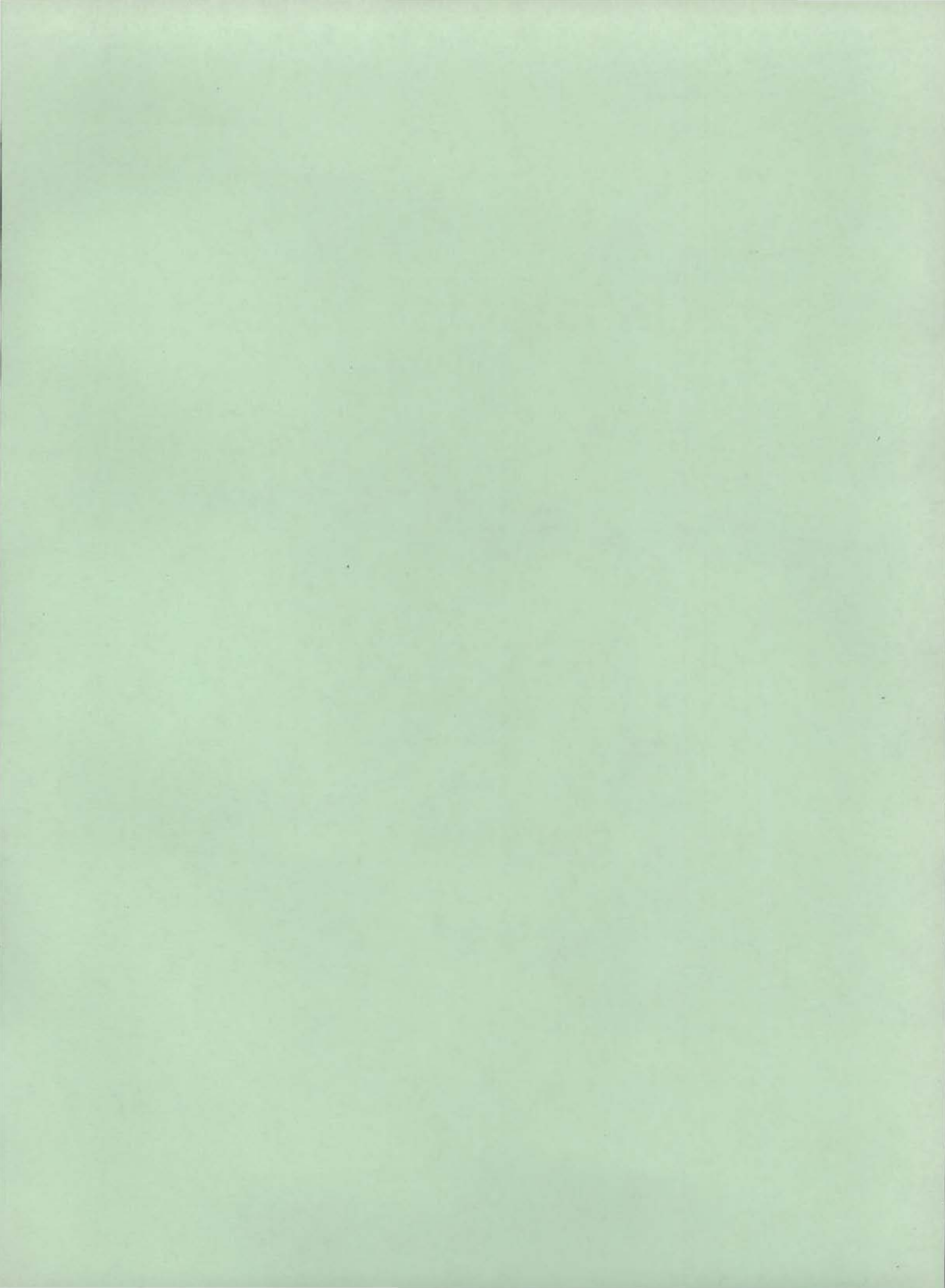
(for possible listing)

Ranch Recreation Directory
Latigo Press
4633-6E
Via La Paloma
Orange, California 92669

(for possible listing)

Idaho Outfitters and Guides
Association Directory
P.O. Box 95
Boise, Idaho 83701
(208) 342-1438

A Place to Go to Hunt in Idaho
C. & J. Sapp Publishing Company
P.O. Box 9365
Fort Meyers, Florida 33902





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