

Attention landowners! Dollars for you, Land for the hunters.

HAP, The Hunting Access Program, is a financial opportunity for landowners that also provides public hunting opportunities in southern Michigan. It can also help control deer damage or nuisance wildlife.

In 1977 the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) created the Public Access Stamp Program through Public Act 373 of 1976, with the purpose of leasing private lands to provide public access for hunting. The DNR places a high priority on providing hunting access on public and private land. Statewide, 21% of Michigan is public lands. The southern portion of the Lower Peninsula is where 89.7% of the states' citizens live and only comprise 3% of public land.

Clinton Conservation District is working in cooperation with Michigan DNR to assist landowners with applications for lease agreements in the Hunting Access Program (HAP). The District will appraise the applicants' property for hunting purposes to determine habitat quality and post signs furnished by the DNR on property boundaries. Parcels must contain a MINIMUM of 20% grassland, wetland and/or forest habitat. Lease rates to landowners can be up to \$25.00 per acre per year based upon quality of habitat.

Currently new HAP leases are for two (2) years and run September 1 to May 31. Landowner payments are made after hunting seasons are completed in May. HAP does not pay for any land within a safety zone. Safety zones are established by law because of potential liability. A safety zone is 450 feet from an inhabited dwelling. A full 360 degree safety zone is approximately 15 acres, a 180 degree safety zone is 7.5 acres, and a 90 degree safety zone is four (4) acres.

The DNR will provide a mailbox and Hunter Access Program sign at the farm headquarters. The mailbox will hold the hunting tags and a binder with a map of the hunting boundary and a sign-in sheet. Landowners can require the hunter to check-in with them each day of the hunting season or just sign-in at the mailbox.

A minimum of 40 acres after considering a safety zone around buildings will provide 35 acres for hunting which must be included in the lease. Again, the program does not pay for any property within a safety zone. Payment is based upon amounts of specific habitats, quality of habitat and hunting options chosen by the landowner. Availability of hunting permits is based on the following: preferred habitat – one (1) hunter per 10 acres; cropland – one (1) hunter per 20 acres. This number can be reduced at the DNR or landowners' discretion.

Landowners may choose from the following hunting options: All Hunting, Youth and Apprentice Only, Small Game Only, Deer Only and Turkey Only. Youth and Apprentice hunting includes one (1) youth and up to two (2) accompanying adults. Landowners may choose more than one (1) option.

Contact the Clinton Conservation District, 2343 N. US-27, St. Johns, MI, 48879; phone (989) 224-3720 ext. 3 if you are interested in enrolling your property in the Hunting Access Program. For information about the Hunting Access Program go to www.michigan.gov/hap.