



Lease Hunting

Lease hunting is a win-win option for everyone involved. Landowners win because it provides additional annual income, more control, and higher security. Some landowners use the extra income to improve their property, reconstructing poorly designed and eroding roads, fixing fences, putting in more food plots and wildlife ponds. Improved properties bring higher prices.

Lessees win in many ways. They control who and how many hunters they hunt with, and set game restrictions. Some groups are very serious and have penalties for members who overstep the line. This way they can promote the development of trophy bucks. If lessees can lease the same tract year to year they get to know game habits and they become comfortable in the setting. They often re-mark boundary lines, put in food plots, and even clean up trash that's not theirs. Some post signs with humorous names for their group, especially names that fit government agency abbreviations like FBI, CIA, ATF.

Local economies win when hunter's come to town to buy hunting and camping goods, gasoline and fast food, nights in a motel. The state wins by selling more hunting licenses and deer tags, especially if they are out of state hunters. Hunting, as a sport, has been declining over the last few years.

I'll have to admit that I've not always favored lease hunting. I don't want to see it become just a rich man's sport, excluding the average father and son or daughter. But in Missouri we have an abundance of public land for the general public to hunt. And I favor just about anything that will bring annual income from the land; the long periods between timber harvests promotes overcutting. As a professional forester it bothers me that forests are clear-cut and high-graded when they could grow bigger and better timber. I've also heard too many bad stories over the years from both landowners and

hunters. Landowners complain that hunter's troop across their land at will, even accusing the landowner of trespass! Hunters have told me of near misses by irresponsible shooters, interference from ATV's, of drunken and riotous behavior. Hunters need to have a good experience to pass on to future generations.

Obviously, landowners who hunt their land are not interested in leasing, unless they own large tracts or multiple tracts. But absentee owners and owners who no longer hunt certainly could benefit in many ways by leasing their land for hunting and recreation. Most tracts can be leased for at least \$5 per acre, and we've had some to go over \$20 per acre per year. What price can be achieved depends on the habitat, access, location, wildlife populations, local poaching conditions, and terms of the contract.

If you'd like to learn more about hunting leases give us a call at 573-223-7010.

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