

# Indiana

## The measure of success: evaluating youth hunts

### SUMMARY

In 2003, Indiana received a HHP grant for \$59,750 to create a pilot program to increase participation among young hunter education course graduates with little or no social support for hunting.

<b>KEY AGENCY</b>	Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife
<b>EXTERNAL PARTNERS</b>	Sixteen stakeholder entities contributed as mentors, presenters, financial supporters and volunteers
<b>INTERNAL PARTNERS</b>	Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife tapped staff assistants, fish and wildlife area property managers and staff and regional district supervisors. The Division of Law Enforcement was critical to this effort by recruiting hunter education instructors and providing equipment.
<b>PROJECT DATES</b>	April 2003-December 2004
<b>CONTACT</b>	Mark Reiter, public lands program manager, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife, (317) 232-8129, mreiter@dnr.in.gov
<b>RESOURCES</b>	HHP final report

### BACKGROUND: Why this effort?

According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service figures, Indiana hunters decreased from 331,000 in 1991 to 290,000 in 2001. The Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife and its partners are interested in reversing this trend.

In this HHP-funded project, Indiana attempted a new approach by building a pilot project incorporating the "four phases of adoption." Research suggests that individuals go through four phases of development to become life-long hunters:

- Interest: A person becomes aware of the activity and is interested in it
- Trial: A person tries the activity
- Adoption: A person begins to think of him or herself as a hunter
- Continuation: A person becomes a permanent participant.

Indiana focused its efforts on youth already in the interest phase-those who have expressed an initial interest in hunting, but who expressed little or no social support to move toward the continuation phase.

### What was delivered?

The project focused on testing a mechanism to:

1. Identify kids who are interested in hunting but don't have social support for hunting in their immediate family

2. Pair them with hunting mentors at the 2004 Indiana Youth Pheasant Hunt and Workshop events
3. Provide opportunities for them to hunt again beyond this single-day event
4. Determine whether this process results in them becoming “regular” hunters over time.

Indiana completed the groundwork in 2003, but the majority of this project took place during the 2004 hunting season. The 2004 Indiana Youth Pheasant Hunt and Workshop events occurred in November.

## **KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS INCLUDE:**

**Survey:** Using a survey of 2001 to 2002 hunter education graduates, Indiana whittled a list of 3,298 survey responders (a 28 percent response rate) to 30 youth invitees. Survey results showed that these 30 youth had limited or no social support for hunting.

**Events:** Along with a parent or other approved adult, 27 youth took part in one of two 2004 Indiana Youth Pheasant Hunt and Workshop events. (Three invited youth didn’t show the day of events.) IDNR held the events on November 27, 2004, on Division of Fish and Wildlife properties in northern and southern Indiana. Indiana gave youth use of free equipment, accessories and instruction.

**Mentors:** Project leaders paired each child/adult with a hunter education instructor as mentors to guide them through this full-day event. Indiana provided gift certificates to mentors to take each interested child/parent hunting at a gamebird farm. More than half of youth involved received certificates to hunt at game farms with a parent and mentor.

**No cost:** Indiana provided a completely free youth hunt event for all participants. The agency provided firearms, ammunition, clay targets, food and beverages, youth hunting licenses and other accessories free of charge at this event. In addition, Cabela’s donated high quality blaze orange hats and vests to youth to outfit them for future trips afield. Several stakeholders provided one-year free memberships and other giveaways to youth/adults. As part of the program, Indiana developed resources and information on hunting techniques, wildlife, equipment, public and private hunting and other information for self-study.

## **SUCSESSES AND OUTCOMES**

The 69-page final report describes each aspect, from initial planning through evaluation. It features successes and recommendations. The report is available through Jodi Valenta at NSSF, (203) 426-1320, [jvalenta@nssf.org](mailto:jvalenta@nssf.org). Major successes from the day are detailed below.

Despite extremely rainy and cold conditions that could have dampened spirits, parents and youth ranked all aspects of events high on exit surveys.

- Of youth, 83.3 percent ranked the event as “great”, and 16.7 percent viewed it as “good.” Of parent/adults, an average of 91.7 percent ranked the event as “great,” and 8.4 percent ranked it as “good.”
- For youth, experiences of mentors ranked high. An average of 95.9 percent enjoyed time spent with mentors, and an average of 91.7 percent hoped to go hunting again with their mentor.

- Of parents, 100 percent expect to allow their children to go hunting again. All said they'd allow their children to participate in another hunting event.
- All youth said they wanted to go hunting again. The same number said they would like to try other types of hunting. An average of 91.7 percent said they would tell their friends about hunting.

Mentors ranked all aspects of events high on exit surveys.

- 92.3 percent of mentors ranked the overall event as "great," and 7.7 percent ranked it as "good."
- All mentors enjoyed the time they spent with youth; the same number said youth were respectful and attentive.
- The event inspired 89.9 percent to want to participate in another event with young hunters; 11.1 percent said they might participate as a result of their experience.
- Many participating mentors were excited to see a pilot program involving more than one day youth hunts. They were pleased that Indiana was making efforts to determine how best to recruit and retain youth.

## RESEARCH

Project leaders tapped existing research to build this effort, with the greatest emphasis on the 2000 NSSF document, "Meeting the Challenge to Increase Participation in Hunting and Shooting," listed on page X.

## EVALUATION

Two sets of surveys are part of the Indiana project. The first, called exit surveys, were given to youth, parents/adults, and mentors at the end of the events in November 2004. Results of these (listed above) were very positive. A second survey was due to take place at the end of the 2004 hunting season, to assess whether participants continued hunting beyond the initial event. Due to extenuating circumstances, the survey was delayed until January 2006; therefore the results aren't available at the date of publication.

## PARTNERS

Indiana contracted with D.J. Case & Associates (see resource listing on page X) to facilitate roles and partnerships among field staff and conservation organizations; design the evaluation component; conduct the surveys; and coordinate events.

Indiana solicited and involved 16 stakeholder organizations and businesses whose staff gave demonstrations, served as mentors, provided funding and gave free gifts, organization memberships, services, food and education information.

## CURRENT STATUS

The 2004 HHP grant allowed Indiana DNR to pilot test youth hunts on three state fish and wildlife properties. Based on the success of these pilot hunts, DNR expanded these efforts to six state properties in 2005 and is planning to expand them again to include all state fish and wildlife areas in 2006.