

Title of Nomination: Game and Fish Online Service Suite

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Game and Fish Online Service Suite Executive Summary

We are taking the hassle out of hunting and fishing, while restoring the convenience of living in a state with an abundance of wildlife and a sportsman-friendly environment. You can spend your time hunting game instead of hunting a location selling hunting or fishing licenses. Once you've experienced the thrill of a successful hunt you also no longer have to search for a wildlife check station.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission online License and Permit suite offers one-stop service delivery for hunting and fishing needs and recreational opportunities in the state of Arkansas. Resident and non-resident sportsmen can renew, purchase a new license, print hunting or fishing licenses, apply for permits, receive notification of permit awards, fulfill permits purchased, and upon successfully harvesting animals, check game online without visiting a wildlife check station in the field. Imagine the time, effort and expense saved by not only Arkansans but especially out-of-state sportsmen, plus the system is good for the environment because it reduces the need for paper.

45,000+ sportsmen obtained licenses online – 65% increase over 2001

65% of all permits were obtained online

17,000+ game checked online – 54% increase over 2001

Estimated savings for license fulfillment only – over \$70,000

Testimonials

- *“I just wanted to thank you for this service. It took a little over 2 hrs to get the doe back to the parking lot. I then found that the local check station in Cabot had stopped providing the service and couldn't really help me. I'd seen the note on the website and figured this was the best way.
I was able to spend the time dressing out the deer rather than driving around trying to find a check station. This let me keep the meat from spoiling.
p.s. I was dead tired most of the day”*
- *“Thanks for the new way to check the game out in Arkansas, I have been hunting in Arkansas for ten yrs and this is the easiest way I have ever done it, thanks again and keep up the good work!”*
- *“As a new Arkansas resident, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you for such a helpful site! I already feel like a native of this beautiful state.”*

Description of the Project:

Background - Prior to online availability, hunting and fishing licenses and renewals in Arkansas could only be obtained one of two ways — either at a storefront or over the phone. The drawback to purchasing the license at a sporting goods or discount store was the time and effort it took to locate and then travel to the merchant. Another disadvantage to purchasing a license in person was the fact that most outlets were only open certain hours of the day, making it inconvenient for some consumers to obtain the credential. The other alternative is purchasing a license via the telephone. While this is readily more convenient than storefront purchases, the convenience comes at a price. Once the license has been purchased, the sportsman must wait for the license to be delivered by mail, which can take up to a week depending on their location. Additionally, fulfilling the orders for the licenses using either of these methods takes agency manpower and tax dollars. Then, once the sportsmen had their license and were able to get out into the great outdoors and harvest a deer or turkey, they were required to seek out a licensed check station. Once located, the sportsmen would load up their game, drive to the check station that was open, and then wait in line for their game to be checked. This often turned out to be an all day affair.

Solution - The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission partnered with the Information Network of Arkansas, to develop a suite of online services that would help the Commission increase productivity, save limited public resources, and improve the quality, timeliness and ease with which the Arkansas sportsman transacted their business. Today, sportsmen are able to purchase or renew their hunting or fishing license from the comfort of their own home, print out the license on their personal printer and head to the woods, lakes or rivers without having to search or visit a license dealer. If purchasing a new license, they may choose from a resident or non-resident license type. They are then given the choices of the 16 resident or the 63 non-resident license types available for purchase. They are able to choose one or more of the options and then pay with a credit card. The license is printed from their personal printer in the comfort of their own home. In the year 2002, online licensing increased by 300% over the previous two years. Non-resident licenses made up 57% of the online licenses obtained.

Sportsmen also have the ability to apply and pay for quota and permit hunts online. **65% of all permits were obtained online in 2002.** These include turkey, elk, deer, and waterfowl. Permits are awarded through e-mail providing a link for the sportsmen to visit the website and purchase their permits with a credit card. In the 2002 season, the Game and Fish opened Waterfowl Rest Areas to the public for permit hunts. These hunts were applied for and awarded only through the online service. Also developed were permit status searches for the public and administrative web tools for Game and Fish officers in the field to verify permits.

After the sportsman has obtained his license or permit and has harvested an animal, they are able to check that game online from their own home computer without having to locate a wildlife check station in the field. Two checking options are available, the basic online check and a voluntary bio-data online check. The voluntary bio-data check helps the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission gather important biological data that assists the tracking of wildlife in the state. Once the sportsman chooses the type of check to submit,

they are asked to provide a piece of identifying information such as driver's license number or social security number. The user is then asked if the animal was harvested in a wildlife management area. Next, the user is asked to provide some information on his harvested prey: method of the harvest, weight, age, sex, zone of the hunt, etc. A verification screen is then presented to the sportsman to make sure all their information is correct. Submission is instant and the sportsman gets a receipt that can be printed from their home computer as proof that they have indeed legally checked their game.

As well as being convenient for the sportsmen, online game checking also increases efficiency for AGFC in managing the state's wildlife resources by providing an instant method to collect wildlife bio-data. AGFC is able to collect this data from the sportsman instantaneously where as in the past checkstations sometimes took months to report data to the commission. *More than 17,600 deer and turkey were checked online during the last season which is a 54% increase from the year before.*

The online system is an entirely web-based system that runs on the current web portal environment. No additional purchases were made. This environment includes an APACHE web server running on Sun Solaris, PHP programming language, and MySQL database software.

Length of time in operation:

The development of the suite began in 2000 with subsequent services added to date. Below is a breakdown of the implementation:

New Licensing: 6/00
Elk Permits: 4/01
Deer Permits and Payments: 5/01
Waterfowl Permits: 11/02
License Renewals: 8/02
Turkey Permits: 1/01, Payments: 1/02
Online Game Check: 10/02

Significance to the improvement of the operation of government:

The suite of applications was developed not only to better service the population of sportsmen that choose to get their information and transact their business through the Internet, it was also created to provide a more efficient means with which the agency is able to deliver a service to their constituents. The Commission greatly benefits from these services because they reduce the amount of manual data entry from paper forms, allowing those resources to be utilized in other areas. Costs are also reduced due to the reduction of paper products and postage needed to send the forms and licenses out in the traditional postal system. The savings to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for the reduction in manual processing, paper products and postage for the 2002 season is estimated at well over \$70,000. These numbers accounted for a 65% growth from the

previous season. The time, effort and expense saved by sportsmen is also significant and the reduced need for paper is environmentally-friendly.

Benefit realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state:

Sportsmen are able to access information, buy licenses, obtain permits, and check game instantly as opposed to the inconvenience of locating a licensed dealer or check-station during conventional working hours. Sportsmen print their license from their computer and visit the outdoors immediately. Increased convenience also reduces the temptation of hunting or fishing without a license or skipping the wildlife check station.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission also greatly benefits from these services in that they reduce the amount of manual data entry from paper forms allowing those resources to be utilized in other needed service areas. Costs are also reduced, which benefits taxpayers, the agency and the state, due to the reduction of manual license fulfillment, paper products and postage needed to send the forms and licenses out in the traditional postal system.

This suite of services was developed under a self-funded model for which no state appropriations are required. AGFC partnered with the Information Network of Arkansas, which is managed by the Arkansas Information Consortium (AIC), a wholly owned subsidiary of the eGovernment firm NIC, Inc. AIC manages the state portal and develops sites and services free for agencies. This model directly benefits taxpayers, agencies and the state.

Return on investment, short-term/long term payback (include summary calculations):

There is *no* cost to the Commission for the delivery of this web-based suite of services. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission partners with the Information Network of Arkansas, the State's portal provider, and operates under the self-funded model of NIC Inc. Development is funded through transaction fees collected on various portal services.

In 2002, there were over 45,000 licenses sold online in which the Arkansas Game and Fish collected over \$1.1M dollars. The savings to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for the reduction in manual license fulfillment, paper products and postage for the 2002 season is estimated at well over \$70,000. These numbers accounted for a 65% growth from the previous season.