

# **Evaluating the Economic Impact of a Dove Season in Michigan**

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The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban and  
The Humane Society of the United States

Authored by:  
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### Executive Summary

This November, Michigan voters will determine the fate of mourning dove hunting within their state. Proponents of the new dove season have asserted, but not demonstrated, that dove hunting will provide substantial economic benefit to the state of Michigan. However, our review of the available data and the experience of other states suggest that this estimate is vastly overstated. Instead, we find that:

- A dove season in Michigan will not attract new hunters to the sport or to the state;
- The State of Michigan will not sell additional small game hunting licenses;
- Non-residents will not visit Michigan for the purpose of pursuing doves;
- People that do elect to shoot doves will do so in lieu of pursuing other activities;

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- A dove season will likely further limit non-consumptive recreational opportunities and the associated economic activity;
- As a relatively low-cost activity, dove hunting cannot generate above average economic activity, as the National Rifle Association (“NRA”) claims; and,
- A new dove season will impose costs on the State that will be borne by taxpayers generally.

These findings suggest that there will not be any economic impact associated with restoring the dove shooting ban in Michigan.

## **Introduction**

Mourning doves are protected by the US federal government as migratory birds under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Act permits states to establish hunting seasons within management guidelines set by annual dove population surveys. Some states have elected to define and treat mourning doves as protected songbirds, while others treat them as small game and permit hunting. Most western and southern states have traditionally hunted mourning doves, while several states in the Midwest and New England have chosen to protect mourning doves for many decades. Recent efforts led by national hunting organizations have resulted in new dove seasons in Ohio, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Nationwide, an estimated 19.9 million doves are killed each year.<sup>3</sup>

In mid-2004, the Michigan legislature passed and Governor Jennifer Granholm enacted legislation designating mourning doves as a game species and establishing a

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<sup>3</sup> “Mourning Dove Fact Sheet,” Michigan Department of Natural Resources, available online at [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370\\_12145\\_12202-77390--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_12145_12202-77390--,00.html).

mourning dove season (Public Act 160 - "PA 160").<sup>4</sup> PA 160 requires mourning dove hunters to purchase a \$2 dove stamp, the revenue from which is directed to two state wildlife trust funds.<sup>5</sup> To shoot doves, hunters must also possess a valid small game license. The state of Michigan held the first dove hunt in 99 years during the fall of 2004 across six southern Michigan counties. According to the state's Department of Natural Resources ("DNR"), approximately 4,981 people purchased a dove stamp and of those, an estimated 3,068 actually hunted, collecting an estimated 28,139 birds.<sup>6</sup>

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban ("the Committee") formed to challenge the public policy change and submitted petitions bearing the names of more than 275,000 registered Michigan voters, which exceeded the number of signatures required by law to certify the referendum by more than 70 percent.<sup>7</sup> The state of Michigan certified the signatures and qualified the issue for the ballot. The dove season was suspended until voters in Michigan decide whether the ban on shooting mourning doves should be restored in the November 7, 2006 election.

Throughout the efforts to pass PA 160 (as House Bill 5029), pro-dove hunting advocates posited that dove hunting would bring economic benefits to the state. The NRA asserted that:

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<sup>4</sup> The text of PA 160 is available online at <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2003-2004/publicact/htm/2004-PA-0160.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> PA 160 also directed that funds raised by sales of the \$2 stamp be split evenly between the Nongame Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund and Game and Fish Protection Trust Fund.

<sup>6</sup> Frawley, Brian J., "2004 Mourning Dove Hunting Survey," Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Report No. 3428, February 2005.

<sup>7</sup> To certify a referendum for the upcoming election, Michigan law required the submission of 158,879 valid signatures submitted within 90 days of the final adjournment of the legislative session during which the law was enacted. See [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Ini-Ref-Pet\\_Website\\_77989\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Ini-Ref-Pet_Website_77989_7.pdf).

“[a] dove season will benefit all Michiganders by expanding tourism, increasing spending and creating jobs across the state. Establishing a dove season will bring an additional \$87 million to Michigan’s economy.”<sup>8</sup>

A legislative analysis summarized proponents’ arguments on this score as stating that “[i]n economic terms, the state only stands to gain from this (mourning dove hunting).”<sup>9</sup> And a Michigan-based, pro-dove hunting newspaper columnist has argued anecdotally that restoring the dove hunting ban would “hurt our economy.”<sup>10</sup>

The Committee has asked us to consider the merits of the opponents’ assertions – in the absence of any substantiation thereof – and provide additional information to aid Michigan voters as they consider the economic consequences of the referendum’s passage.

### **No New License Sales**

In its analysis of HB 5029, the Michigan DNR, which was officially neutral regarding the bill’s passage, estimated that 40,000 Michigan small game hunters would elect to hunt doves.<sup>11</sup> The DNR also indicated that they expected no budget or revenue impact at the department, state or local levels from implementation of a dove season, estimating that mourning dove hunting would not “result in additional sales of small

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<sup>8</sup> NRA-IL Press Release, “Michigan Dove Hunting Legislation Headed to Governor,” June 8, 2004, available online at: <http://www.nraila.org/NewSite/News/Read/Releases.aspx?ID=3822>. A follow up press release issued by the NRA when Governor Granholm signed HB 5029 stated that the \$87 million would be brought in during “this year’s” (2004) dove hunting season (NRA Press Release, “Governor Granholm Signs Michigan Dove Hunting Bill,” date unknown, available online at: <http://www.nracentral.com/dove-hunting-bill-governor-granholm.php>).

<sup>9</sup> House Legislative Analysis Section, Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Committee, “Hunting Mourning Doves,” First Analysis, November 4, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Gwizdz, Bob, “No dove hunt here will hurt our economy,” *Muskegon Chronicle*, September 11, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Bill Analysis, House Bill No. 5029, September 3, 2003.

game hunting licenses.”<sup>12</sup> What we infer from this is that the DNR anticipated that the 40,000 dove hunters would be comprised of those already purchasing small game hunting licenses. If these 40,000 people each purchased the \$2 dove stamp, at most, \$80,000 of “new money” would be generated each year for the two trust funds, as stipulated by PA 160.

During the 2004 hunt, the state sold a reported 4,981 dove hunting stamps at \$2 each, generating \$9,962 for the two trust funds.<sup>13</sup> Unless the dove season generated additional sales of small game licenses, there was no revenue generated to offset the administrative costs of marketing and administering the season.

The DNR did conduct a survey of hunters shortly after the close of the pilot season, but unfortunately they limited their sample to only those hunters who actually purchased dove stamps.<sup>14</sup> Had the DNR expanded their knowledge search and included among their survey sample small game licensees who did not purchase dove stamps, we would know more. It would have been helpful, for example, to query small game hunters as to their reasons for not pursuing doves. Additionally, it would have been more informative if the DNR had asked those people purchasing dove stamps if their small game license purchase was predicated on the interest in shooting doves. The DNR survey is simply inconclusive relative to the economic impact of a dove season in Michigan.

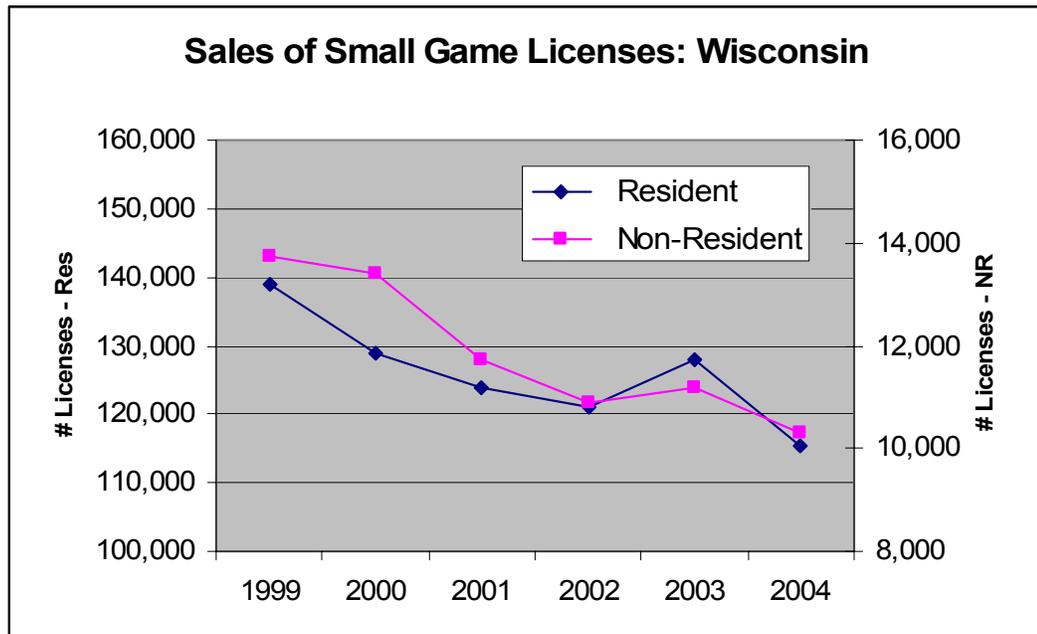
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<sup>12</sup> DNR did comment that the new season would “likely result in some additional hunting trips and the associated expenditures for travel, supplies, ammunition, etc.” but did not proffer any estimate. See State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Bill Analysis, House Bill No. 5029, September 3, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Frawley, Brian J., “2004 Mourning Dove Hunting Survey,” State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Report No. 3428, February 2005.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

It is, however, possible to look to the recent experiences of nearby states for some enlightenment. The state of Wisconsin, which implemented a mourning dove season one year earlier (2003) also predicted no increase in the number of hunting licenses sold.<sup>15</sup> While sales of small game licenses did increase slightly that year, by 2004 the long-term declining trend resumed, meaning that the addition of a dove season failed to revive lagging license sales.



Further, the absolute number of non-residents purchasing small game licenses declined much more during this time period, than did license sales to residents. Thus, the dove season did not cause any increase in the number of tourist hunters visiting the state or do anything to alter the status quo.

At the conclusion of its first dove season, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources sent a questionnaire to 6,000 small game license holders asking questions

<sup>15</sup> "Mourning Dove Fact Sheet," State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources, last revised March 16, 2006, online at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/hunt/dove/dove.htm>. Underlying data shown in Appendix, Table 1.

designed to identify which of the license holders pursued doves, and for those who did not, determine why not. Among the 2,221 small game hunters who responded to the survey, 91.6 percent elected not to hunt doves.<sup>16</sup> A clear majority – more than 79 percent – of the small game hunters surveyed indicated little interest – or belief – in participating.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore when asked to rate their satisfaction from dove hunting compared to other hunting types, across the board all other types are clearly preferred.<sup>18</sup>

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No time	557	28.7%
Busy hunting other concurrent seasons	500	25.7%
Do not believe in hunting doves	481	24.8%
Other	216	11.1%
Do not know how to hunt doves	71	3.7%
No doves in my area	61	3.1%
No place to hunt	57	2.9%

The state of Minnesota, which introduced a dove hunt for the first time in 2004, witnessed a 15 percent decrease in small game license sales after the first year. One news story commented that the new dove season “started with a dose of disinterest”

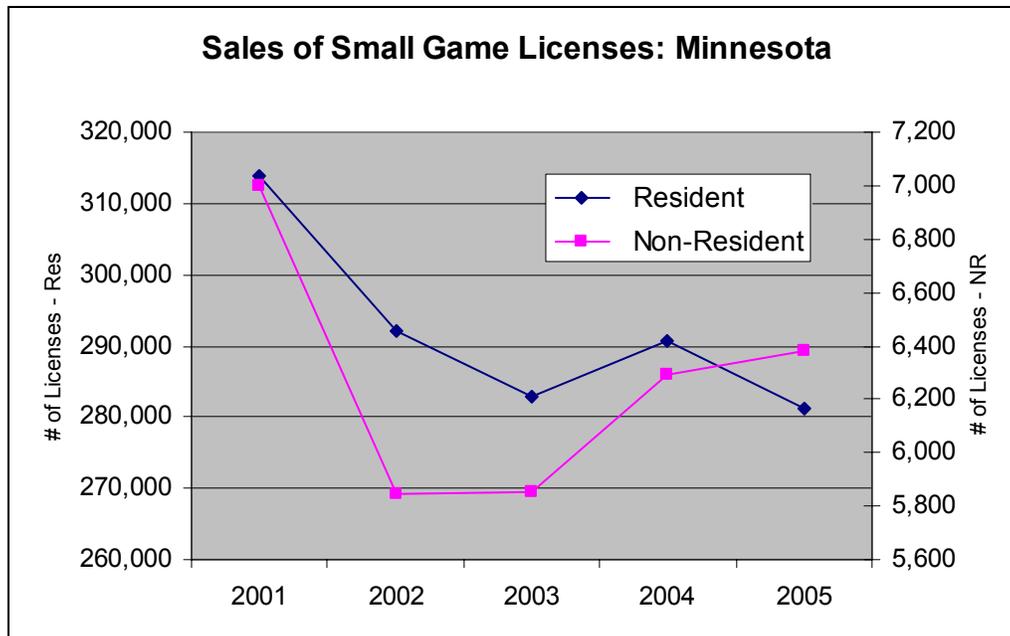
<sup>16</sup> Dhuey, Brian and Keith Warnke, “Mourning Dove Hunter Questionnaire 2003,” State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources, 2004, Question 1. “Did you hunt Mourning Doves during the 2003 season?”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, from Question 1a. “If NO, select the major (most important) reason for not hunting doves.” The top three selections account for 79.2 percent of all responses.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, from Question 8. “Compare your dove hunting satisfaction to other types of hunting you may have done.” For example, for waterfowl hunting, 33.5 percent indicated higher satisfaction with dove hunting compared to 50.9 percent who were less satisfied.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, from Question 1a. “If NO, select the major (most important) reason for not hunting doves.”

based on reports from DNR officers in some areas calling the season a “non-event” and stating that “dove hunting interest and success seemed low.”<sup>20</sup>



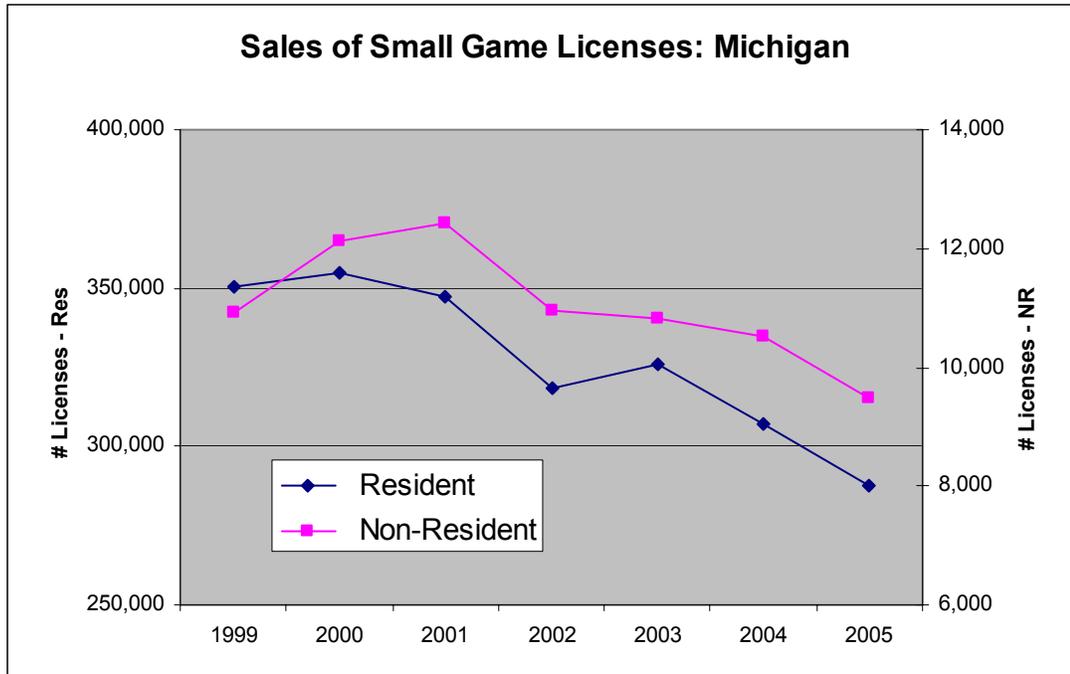
While sales of resident licenses recovered somewhat in 2005, this recovery is likely attributed to the implementation and marketing of a new youth license for the 2005 season. Non-residents were not attracted in any greater numbers owing to the new dove hunting opportunity, perhaps in part due to the growing number of states in the upper Midwest that have recently added seasons.<sup>21</sup>

The State of Michigan has been witnessing a steady decline in the number of small game hunters since 2001 – including a decline of 5.6 percent from 2003 to 2004 –

<sup>20</sup> Smith, Doug, “Dove hunting activity wanes,” *Star-Tribune* (Minneapolis), September 12, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Further context for the overall trend is found by consulting the 2001 US Fish and Wildlife Report for Minnesota. According to USFWS, in 2001 there were 249,000 small game hunters (including residents and non-residents) in Minnesota, suggesting that the decline between 2001 and 2005 has approached two-thirds (65.6 percent). US Fish and Wildlife Service, “2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreations: Minnesota,” Table 13.

the year that the pilot mourning dove season was held.<sup>22</sup> Sales of small game hunting licenses have declined nearly a quarter over the past five years with non-resident participation dropping from 3.5 percent in 2001 to 3.2 percent of all small game hunters in Michigan in 2005. Overall, there is no conclusive evidence that the State of Michigan will see increased licensing revenues from the new dove opportunity.



### No New Out-of-State Visitors Means Limited Economic Impact

The economic benefits created by activities like dove shooting derive from four main sources: (1) spending to prepare for hunting on guns, ammunition, clothing and other equipment; (2) fees paid to participate including hunting licenses, stamps, and payments to reserve owners; (3) spending before and after hunting on consumable items like meals, lodging or gas; and, (4) sales or other taxes paid to local/state

<sup>22</sup> Frawley, Brian J., "Small Game Harvest and Characteristics of Small Game Hunters in Michigan, 2004," Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Report No. 3449, December 2005, Table 2. Underlying data shown in Appendix, Table 1.

governments based on spending for these three categories. The spending in these four areas creates not only the initial income for the seller/government, but also has the potential to generate jobs for those providing hunting-related services or goods.

When evaluating the economic benefits that accrue to a given region (in this case, the state of Michigan), three important caveats must be considered. First, spending generated by the activity can only be considered a benefit to the state if the spending would not have taken place in the absence of the activity. Second, only that portion of the spending that stays in the local economy can be counted as providing a local benefit. Finally, all benefits must be weighed against the direct and indirect costs (including the opportunity costs) of holding the event. Any finding of economic impact of mourning dove hunting relies on an assumption that there is or would be nothing to fill the void left by the absence of a dove season.

While the economic activity generated by hunting in Michigan by residents of the state stays in the state, only that portion which would otherwise not be spent on recreation activities can be considered new economic activity that the state relies on hunting to provide. Given the low expectations for participation in mourning dove hunting and the well-established prohibition against it, it is hard to fathom a mass exodus of revenue-generating activities from Michigan to other states in the absence of a dove season.

Proponents argue that new money is in fact generated, creating jobs and tax revenue. This line of argument is problematic from the outset. How is this new money generated? Most people have recreation budgets, and the \$50 they would spend pursuing mourning doves is \$50 that they don't spend on other recreational pursuits –

hunting and otherwise. That \$50 gets spent in the state in any event, generating no new economic impact, but instead transferring it. Economists refer to this as the substitution effect, which in this case is a key driver. The only ways that the economy could be adversely impacted are: (1) if the response by residents who would otherwise have pursued mourning doves is to sit at home; or (2) if non-resident hunters would otherwise be drawn into Michigan, as tourists, to partake in the mourning dove season – and for no other reason. Both of these outcomes are highly unlikely.

Recreational opportunities – on the margin – do not generate new economic activity, but only redistribute the discretionary spending of individuals or families to different owners of capital. Regional recreational economic activity is generated by a combination of resident and non-resident use. Because of the plethora of leisure opportunities, new opportunities are more likely to divert spending from one activity to the new activity, without a significant increase in overall spending. Further, new economic activity must be generated by new spenders - either residents who are inclined to spend an increased total amount of their income and time on the new pursuit (and not switch from an alternative) or non-residents visiting from outside the local area. Without such spending, no additional tax revenue is generated and oftentimes local business owners who operate complementary or substitute efforts in other parts of the region will lose whatever the new venue gains – making it a wash for the region.

To imagine that the lack of a mourning dove season would force would-be hunters indoors, not electing to participate in any alternative activity or spending is absurd. Even where posited, the negative economic consequences of this implausible outcome would have to be netted against the positive impact of increased savings or

spending on alternative, potentially higher value products or activities. To the extent that people participate in mourning dove hunting, it will be as a substitute for other hunting or leisure activities. As such, a dove season will not generate increased economic activity.

The absence of a dove season is unlikely to suppress economic impact otherwise generated by visitors to the state. As has been the experience of most states, Michigan does not attract a significant proportion of non-resident hunters. Across all hunting in Michigan, the US Fish & Wildlife Service (“USFWS”) estimated in its 2001 survey that of 754,000 total hunters, approximately 48,000, or 6.4 percent, were non-residents.<sup>23</sup> More recently, of 297,034 small game licenses sold in Michigan during 2005, fully 287,566, or 96.8 percent were Michigan residents.<sup>24</sup> The DNR’s latest analysis also confirms that the non-resident hunting proportion has declined since the last USFWS report. As of 2002 only 3.3 percent of small game hunters and 3.9 percent of all hunters purchasing Michigan licenses were from out of state.<sup>25</sup> By 2005, DNR data reveals those numbers had fallen to 3.2 percent of small game hunters and 1.6 percent overall.<sup>26</sup>

There are several other facts which argue against an expectation of significant non-resident economic activity from a dove season in Michigan. First, all of the states that border Michigan now have mourning dove seasons. Hunters in nearby states have no need to travel into Michigan to hunt the birds. Second, because so few small game hunters actually pursue mourning doves, it is highly unlikely that Michigan’s season will

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<sup>23</sup> US Fish and Wildlife Service, “2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreations: Michigan,” Revised 2003, Table 14.

<sup>24</sup> State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Electronic license sales data, FOIA Request BSS00001, May 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Frawley, Brian J., “Demographics, Recruitment, and Retention of Michigan Hunters,” State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Report No. 3426, September 2004, Table 5.

<sup>26</sup> State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Electronic license sales data, FOIA Request BSS00001, May 2006.

be any sort of draw for tourist hunters. Third, a non-resident small game license costs considerably more than the resident license in bordering states. Non-resident fees in Michigan range from \$30 (for a 3-day permit) to \$69 (for an annual license) as contrasted with annual fees for residents of nearby states like Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin when fees of less than \$20 allow them to hunt within their own state.<sup>27</sup> The fact that non-residents face a 50-300 percent increase in fees alone (travel costs notwithstanding) to travel across state lines likely reduces the incentive to do so.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence that a dove season will not produce tourism activity for Michigan is the significant decline in participation seen nationwide. In just the past five years the number of mourning dove hunters has dropped by 8.4 percent. The number of hunting days is down nearly 12 percent and the

<b>Nationwide Mourning Dove Hunting Participation 2000-2005<sup>28</sup></b>						
	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>Five Year Change</b>
# Hunters	1,197,400	1,168,000	1,153,300	1,048,100	1,096,700	-8.4%
# Hunting Days	4,188,500	4,070,400	3,921,000	3,422,100	3,693,800	-11.8%
Birds bagged	25,419,600	23,221,200	22,713,300	18,332,800	19,990,200	-21.4%
Days/Hunter	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.4	-3.7%
Birds/Hunter	21.2	19.9	19.7	17.5	18.2	-14.1%

<sup>27</sup> State of Ohio, Department of Natural Resources, "2005-2006 Hunting Regulations," <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/regs/licenses&permits.htm>; State of Indiana, Department of Fish and Wildlife, "Purchase Hunting, Fishing, or Trapping Licenses – License Fees," <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/licenses/buylic.htm>; Illinois Department of Natural Resources, "2005-2006 Illinois Hunting Information," <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/admin/systems/Digest/Digest.pdf>; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, "2006 Resident Hunting, Fish and Other Outdoor Recreational Licenses," <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/cs/restypes.asp>; Michigan Department of Natural Resources, "2005-2006 License Fees," [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10363\\_14518-32241--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10363_14518-32241--,00.html).

<sup>28</sup> Dolton, D.D., R. D. Holmes and G.W. Smith, "Mourning dove breeding population status, 2001," US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2001; Dolton, D.D. and R. D. Holmes, "Mourning dove population status, 2002," US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2002; Dolton, D.D. and R. D. Rau, "Mourning dove population status, 2003," US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2003; Dolton, D.D. and R.D. Rau, "Mourning dove population status, 2004," US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2004; Dolton, D.D. and R.D. Rau, "Mourning dove population status, 2005," US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2005.

number of birds retrieved is down by 21.4 percent. Because the number of hunting days and birds killed are falling at a faster rate than the number of hunters, it is clearly the case that even those who continue to pursue doves spend less of their time on the activity and take fewer birds when they do go afield. What's more, this significant decline has occurred during the same time period when three states held their first and subsequent dove seasons (Wisconsin – 2003, 2004 and 2005; Minnesota – 2004 and 2005; Michigan – 2004). These six additional seasons produced only a limited reprieve from the downward trend and likely only changed the base from which that trend will continue henceforth.

### **Putting the Engine in Reverse?**

Of the nearly 5,000 dove stamps sold during Michigan's pilot season, the DNR has reported that only 61 percent of purchasers went into the field in pursuit of doves.<sup>29</sup> Of those, approximately 71 percent killed and retrieved mourning doves. Overall, then, of the stamps sold, only 44 percent were fully maximizing the field experience.<sup>30</sup> Thus, one cannot simply rely on the sales of dove stamps in Michigan as an indicator of participation in the "sport" of dove shooting. It is also telling that nearly one-third of

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<sup>29</sup> The DNR did not require the purchase of a small game license to purchase a dove stamp and also did not limit the number of stamps sold per individual. There is evidence that proponents encouraged people to purchase dove stamps whether or not they intended to hunt as a show of support for the hunting season itself. For example, Linda Gallagher, columnist for *Michigan Outdoor News* posted to a hunters' forum on the Internet on September 13, 2004 that "We HAVE to show our support for this hunt, folks, believe me, the antis are watching the dove stamp sales VERY closely... if we can't show them more than a handful of sales, they're going to use those numbers to say Michigan sportsmen and women don't support this hunt, so PLEASE buy a dove stamp, whether you intend to hunt or not. Consider it a donation for a VERY good cause, the future of hunting..."

<sup>30</sup> Frawley, Brian J., "2004 Mourning Dove Hunting Survey," State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Report No. 3428, February 2005.

those who participated in the dove season described their experience as neutral, poor or very poor.<sup>31</sup>

Considered in the context of the overall decline in hunting observed in Michigan and across the country over the past several decades, the State might be better served by creating more opportunities for recreation in sectors where growth in participation and appreciation are more likely.

To wit, Michigan is witnessing a growth in recreation among birdwatchers whose very opportunities are reduced if a dove season is added. Wildlife watchers outnumbered hunters in Michigan by more than 3 to 1, and their activities generated nearly 3.7 times more spending in Michigan by non-residents according to the most recent USFWS report.<sup>32</sup> If a dove season is instituted, then the Michiganders and non-residents who appreciate other forms of recreation will have fewer opportunities to enjoy nature and generate economic activity that has a higher probability of positive impact.

### **Some Context for the NRA's Math**

To date, we've not seen any substantiation for the NRA's estimate of \$87 million worth of annual economic impact created by the mourning dove season. Without knowing how this figure was calculated, it is difficult to know what assumptions are driving it. But it is possible to put the figure in some context, to allow for meaningful discourse and consideration.

To generate \$87 million, each of the estimated 40,000 hunters (including residents and non-residents alike) would need to create \$2,175 worth of new economic

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> USFWS, p. 5.

activity – solely owing to his/her pursuit of mourning doves. According to the USFWS “Economic Importance of Hunting” study, in 2001 each Michigan hunter (across all hunting types) generated \$891 per year worth of “economic impact” on hunting before accounting for any “ripple” effects, which the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) estimated create an additional \$809, generating a total of \$1,701 per hunter of annual “economic output” once gear, lodging and other spending is accounted for.<sup>33</sup>

Using the 2001 IAFWA data, the 2004 NRA estimate of \$87 million (which is conservatively assumed here to be the “economic output” figure, not “economic impact”) and the DNR’s estimate of the number of dove season participants, it is possible to calculate the “economic output” implied by the NRA’s \$87 million estimate.<sup>34</sup> As seen below, the NRA estimate implies that mourning dove shooters will be contributing nearly 30 percent more to Michigan’s economy than does the average Michigan hunter, even on the basis of raw hunting expenditures (sans “ripple” effect). This simply does not square with known costs associated with different hunting types since mourning dove hunting is among the least expensive both in terms of gear and travel.

	<b>All Hunting IAFWA estimate, 2001</b>	<b>Mourning Dove NRA estimate, 2004</b>
# Hunters	753,507	40,000
“Economic Output”	\$1,281,527,914	\$87,000,000
Per Hunter	\$1,701	\$2,175
“Economic Impact”	\$671,670,664	\$45,598,186
Per Hunter	\$891	\$1,140

<sup>33</sup> Southwick Associates, “Economic Importance of Hunting in America,” International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Animal use Issues Committee, 2002, pp. 6-8.

<sup>34</sup> By utilizing the multiplier for all hunting (which is likely higher than that for mourning dove hunting solely), the implied economic impact is likely understated, which for the purposes of this discussion is a conservative bias. If the multiplier applied to mourning doves were lower (e.g., more accurate), than the economic impact would have to be higher, indicating an even more absurd estimate of mourning dove hunter’s actual spending.

Furthermore, one must remember that the NRA's estimate is for *additional* or new spending by hunters. To think that those pursuing mourning doves will be spending an additional \$1,140 per year when the average hunter's overall hunting expenditures are only \$891 is absurd. This point is illustrated further by remembering that the DNR estimates no new license sales are being generated owing to non-small game hunters who will begin purchasing licenses to pursue doves. So, according to the NRA's logic, *existing* small game hunters will be responsible for generating more than \$2,000 worth of *new* spending each.

Even statements made by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs ("MUCC"), a leading proponent of the new dove season, suggest it will be of limited economic consequence. In an effort to promote the affordability of participation, a MUCC spokesman noted that because of "the inexpensive nature of the sport, since the birds are found almost everywhere in these states, hunters needn't travel far."<sup>35</sup>

Some additional Michigan figures to put the NRA's estimate in context:

- Licensing revenues for sales of *all* small game licenses, 2002 - \$4.1 million<sup>36</sup>
- Trip and equipment expenditures for *all* non-resident hunters, 2001 - \$31.9 million<sup>37</sup>
- Trip and equipment expenditures for *all* small game hunters, 2001 - \$100.3 million.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Michigan United Conservation Clubs, "Questions and Answers About a Mourning Dove Season for Michigan," <http://www.mucc.org/DoveHuntingQA.htm>.

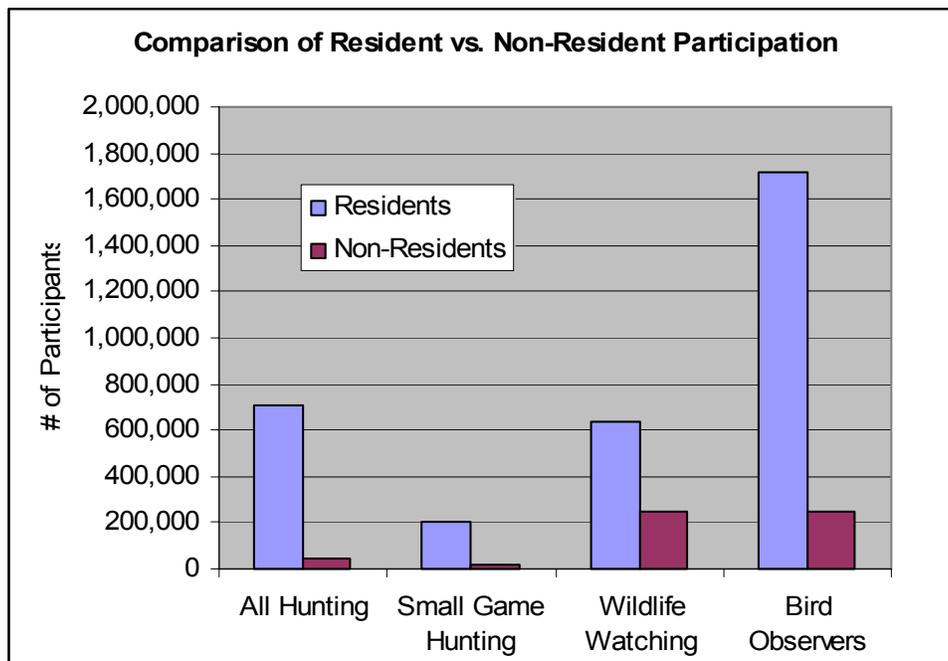
<sup>36</sup> State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources, Electronic license sales data, FOIA Request BSS00001, May 2006.

<sup>37</sup> USFWS, Table 21.

<sup>38</sup> USFWS, Table 18.

## Welcoming Dove Shooters: At What Price?

Michiganders should pause to consider the possibility that a dove season may create some negative impact on the state's economy. Increased hunting opportunities, such as the dove season provides, necessarily imposes more constraints on alternative recreational opportunities that otherwise would be enjoyed. Michigan's wildlife watching opportunities attract a far higher percentage of non-resident participation than does small game (or any) hunting. In 2001, the USFWS estimated that of 884,000 individuals enjoying wildlife watching away from their homes in Michigan, 250,000 or fully 28.3 percent were non-residents who had traveled to Michigan.<sup>39</sup> Nearly the same number of people enters the state simply to observe wild birds each year.



Put simply, people from around the world may travel to Michigan to enjoy the unique wildlife of Isle Royale National Park, but they're not likely to visit the state to

<sup>39</sup> USFWS, Tables 13, 25 and 30. Underlying data reported in Appendix, Table 2.

shoot mourning doves. With such a higher proportion of non-residents with a demonstrated interest in Michigan wildlife viewing, the state may be risking future revenue growth by making the state incrementally less “friendly” for such activities through the introduction of a dove hunting season. Trip and equipment related spending for wildlife watching outstrips similar expenditures for small game hunting by more than six to one and all hunting by nearly 1.5 to 1.

<b>Comparison of Hunting vs. Wildlife Watching Trip &amp; Equipment Spending, 2001<sup>40</sup></b>	
<b>(millions of dollars)</b>	
<b>All Hunting</b>	\$427.3
<b>Small Game Hunting</b>	\$100.3
<b>Wildlife Watching</b>	\$636.6

Two-thirds of the more than two million people who participated in wildlife watching in Michigan during 2001 did not engage in hunting activities.<sup>41</sup> On its face it seems apparent that more people (both residents and non-residents) want to observe and appreciate wild birds in Michigan than want to shoot them.<sup>42</sup> The economy, therefore, would be better off if more efforts were geared toward accommodating growth in wildlife tourism than adding a new mourning dove season.

Finally, the new dove season will not be costless to operate. The DNR must appropriate funds to administer the season, including annual effort and costs to print and sell stamps, promote and enforce the rules and regulations and measure and evaluate the population impact. Because the stamp sales generate only limited revenue which must be allocated between two trust funds, only the sale of additional small game

<sup>40</sup> USFWS, Tables 18 and 34.

<sup>41</sup> USFWS, Table 37.

<sup>42</sup> Further, if mourning dove hunting did result in a significant reduction in the overall songbird population; the economy could be affected negatively by reduced sales of bird feed and equipment.

licenses and sales tax revenue generated on trip and equipment sales *that absent the mourning dove season would not have been purchased* would create revenue for the government to offset the annual administration expenses.

As discussed herein, the likelihood of generating even nominal additional revenues is extremely low. Thus, while the DNR is already facing budget shortfalls owing to reduced revenues,<sup>43</sup> a new dove season stands only draw further resources from the state without contributing - requiring taxpayers to pick up the difference. Adding a dove season seems to fly in the face of current trends and risks further stagnation of revenue generated by enjoyment of Michigan's outdoors.

## **Conclusion**

Based on our review of available information, we find no plausible evidence to support proponents' assertion that a mourning dove season in Michigan will create million of dollars of annual economic activity through expanded tourism, increased spending and more jobs. On the contrary, we find compelling evidence that the addition of this new season will not create new economic activity of any kind – drawing no new participants to the sport, and bringing in few, if any, tourists to the state. Without such activity, there is no way that overall spending can increase or new jobs can be created. Further, to the extent that the new season brings with it both new costs and reduces the opportunities for non-hunting recreational opportunities, the State's economy may be harmed.

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<sup>43</sup> State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources, "DNR Unveils Proposed Reductions to Address Projected Deficit in Game and Fish Fund," Press Release, June 2, 2005 and "DNR Funds Facing Major Deficits," Michigan Information and Research Service, June 1, 2006.

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## Appendix

**TABLE 1**

**Sales of Small Game Licenses, 1999-2005<sup>44</sup>**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	% Change
Michigan	361,093	367,085	359,541	329,608	336,603	317,888	297,034	-17.7%
Resident	350,170	354,946	347,117	318,649	325,797	307,364	287,566	-17.9%
Non-Resident	10,923	12,139	12,424	10,959	10,806	10,524	9,468	-13.3%
Minnesota	N/A	N/A	320,862	298,055	288,729	296,939	287,725	-10.3%
Resident	N/A	N/A	313,861	292,212	282,877	290,648	281,340	-10.4%
Non-Resident	N/A	N/A	7,001	5,843	5,852	6,291	6,385	-8.8%
Wisconsin	152,606	142,369	135,733	132,000	139,109	125,600	N/A	-17.7%
Resident	138,871	128,946	124,005	121,112	127,907	115,290	N/A	-17.0%
Non-Resident	13,735	13,423	11,728	10,888	11,202	10,310	N/A	-24.9%

**TABLE 2**

**Comparison of Resident vs. Non-Resident Participation, 2001<sup>45</sup>**

	Residents		Non-Residents	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
<b>All Hunting</b>	705,000	93.6%	48,000	6.4%
<b>Small Game Hunting</b>	203,000	91.4%	19,000	8.6%
<b>Wildlife Watching</b>	634,000	71.7%	250,000	28.3%
<b>Bird Observers</b>	1,717,000	87.7%	244,000	12.3%

<sup>44</sup> Frawley, Brian J., "Small Game Harvest and Characteristics of Small Game Hunters in Michigan, 2004," Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Report No. 3449, December 2005, Table 2 (Michigan); Dexter, Margaret, "2004 Small Game Hunter Mail Survey," State of Minnesota, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Tables 6-7 (Minnesota); Response to email inquiry from Diane Crawford, "License Sales by County of Sale – 1999-2004," Department of Natural Resources, April 12, 2006 and June 1, 2006 (Wisconsin).

<sup>45</sup> USFWS, Tables 13, 25 and 30.