

## The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban

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# Creating a Dove Shooting Season Will Provide No Economic Benefit in Michigan, Study Finds

*Study Debunks Myth That Dove Shooting Generates Revenue; Dove Shooting May Actually Hinder Economic Growth in Michigan*

LANSING - A new economic impact study released today concludes there is no evidence that creating a mourning dove shooting season will provide economic benefit to Michigan, despite claims to the contrary by dove shooting proponents. Proponents of the new dove shooting season have asserted that dove hunting would provide millions of dollars in annual economic benefit to the state of Michigan. This new study categorically refutes that claim.

"We asked the Humane Society of the United States to commission this study to evaluate some dove shooting proponents' outrageous claims of the economic benefits associated with dove shooting," said Julie Baker, Director of the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban. "The study found what we had suspected: that shooting doves does not provide any boost to Michigan's economy and that the dove shooting proponents' claims are completely unjustified. This study further proves our point: there is no good reason to shoot doves. Not only is there no economic benefit to shooting doves, but doves are not overpopulated, they do not harm people or property and they are not a viable human food source. Shooting doves is simply live target practice."

The study's authors point out that new economic activity can only be generated by new spenders—either Michigan residents inclined to spend more of their income on dove shooting or out-of-state residents visiting Michigan specifically to shoot doves. "After careful analysis, we found that both of these outcomes are extremely unlikely," said economist Jennifer Fearing, co-author of the study.

"People have fixed recreation budgets," said Michigan-based economist Donald Garlit, the study's other co-author. "Those who do choose to engage in the dove shooting season will do so instead of engaging in other forms of hunting or other recreational activities. Fifty-dollars they would spend hunting mourning doves is \$50 that they won't spend on other hunting activities, or other recreational pursuits. That \$50 gets spent in the state in any event, generating no new economic impact, but instead simply transferring it from one activity to another."

"And the idea that non-Michigan hunters will flock to Michigan to partake in a new dove season is also unlikely," continued Fearing. "The DNR reports that as of 2005 only 3.2 percent of small game hunters purchasing Michigan licenses were from out of state. Since many other states allow dove shooting, including Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin, Michigan will not see an increase in out-of-state hunters traveling to Michigan."

Fearing concluded, "It's clear that no new money would be spent on dove hunting by residents or non-residents—that means no positive economic impact."

The authors found that the state will not see any increase in revenue from an increase in small game hunting license sales with the creation of a dove season:

- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources reported that they expect no increase in small game license sales from implementation of a mourning dove season, resulting in no new state revenue.
- Other Midwestern states that recently have implemented dove seasons recently did not see an increase in small game licenses sold, and in fact the sales of small game licenses continued to decline.
- Nationwide, participation in mourning dove hunting is declining – during the last five years the number of hunters has dropped 8.4%. Those hunters who are shooting doves are spending less time afield (11.8%) and taking fewer doves (21.4%).
- The dove shooting season may negatively impact the state's budget because the administration and marketing costs are not covered by the sale of \$2 dove stamps. Those funds are earmarked for trust funds and can't be spent on administration. Without any new license sales to generate revenue, non-hunting taxpayers will pick up the season's tab.

The study found that the creation of a dove season could negatively impact Michigan's economy, pointing out that:

- Wildlife watching recreation in Michigan, whose participants already greatly outnumber hunters, is increasing in popularity.
- Trip and equipment related spending for wildlife watching brings more dollars into Michigan than hunting by a ratio of 3 to 2.
- Adding another shooting season reduces the opportunities Michiganders and non-residents have for bird and other wildlife watching and also makes the state appear less "watcher-friendly"—both factors that would likely harm the industry.

The economic impact study was co-authored by Donald Garlit and Jennifer Fearing. Mr. Garlit, who earned an MBA from the University of Michigan, is an economist and attorney with 25 years experience in finance, sales, information technology, program management and economics management for various corporations and non-profit organizations. Ms. Fearing, Director of Economic Research for the Humane Society of the United States, holds a Masters Degree in Public Policy from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and was previously employed as a professional economist for a national research and consulting firm specializing in legal matters involving government and commercial entities.

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban is a grassroots coalition of humane and conservation groups representing Michigan-based organizations that boasts thousands of Michigan residents, such as the Michigan Audubon Society, Michigan Humane Society, The Humane Society of the United States (which alone has 300,000 Michigan members), Michigan State Grange, and dozens of other sportsmen, farmers', religious and business groups. The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban seeks to continue Michigan's 100-year protection of mourning doves by urging Michigan voters to **vote 'no'** on the mourning dove referendum in the November 7, 2006 election. The group collected more than 275,000 petition signatures to place a referendum to stop the shooting of mourning doves on the November ballot.

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