

The world wide hunting Web

New site assists Ohio outdoor enthusiasts

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WATERVILLE, — Familiarity with the territory can't be underestimated when it comes to hunting and fishing.

However, knowledge of local fence rows, farm fields, or water depths often isn't enough. Awareness of such details as where to pick up an extra box of shotgun shells or a dozen fresh minnows, where exactly to put in, and who can provide insights into just what's been working where can also make or break an outing. Skimping on such upfront information-gathering to spend more time in the field or on the water often backfires.

A new Internet site has been launched to simplify the research and planning needed — and minimize the chance and guesswork — for recreational pursuits within Ohio's borders. The site is aimed at six activities: hunting, fishing, boating, camping, and soon, biking and golf.

Located at www.thenaturalresource.com, this tool provides the most comprehensive directory of businesses and resources — 4,000 and counting — serving Ohio's outdoor recreational community.

According to Eric Kraus, founder of **The Natural Resource, LLC**, and editor of the Web site, "So often, it's difficult for outdoorsmen and women to identify and locate the businesses and other resources needed

to enjoy their outdoor pursuits. With typical online search tools or telephone books, it's too easy to miss the neighborhood archery specialist, outboard engine repair shop, or local taxidermist. And while 'word of mouth' is an invaluable resource, it never fills in all the blanks, particularly for out-of-town excursions."

The Natural Resource is designed to enrich the outdoor experience in Ohio by providing quick and easy access to all the relevant businesses and resources that can turn an average trip into an exceptional one.

But it is the format of the directory, in large part, that sets The Natural Resource apart from other collections.

Rather than being organized alphabetically in a list, contact information and other helpful details for product and service providers and public access areas are accurately placed on Google-based road maps. U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps or U.S.G.S. "topo" maps, as they're commonly called — and detailed aerial photography can also easily be displayed on both a state and local level to add detail to a search. All visuals are interactive in that they can be enlarged, reduced, or moved by simply clicking the computer mouse.

By cross-referencing and filtering hundreds of outdoor-related directories and databases, The Natural Resource has

developed an extensive collection of otherwise hard-to-find information.

The business and resource listings and maps of thenaturalresource.com fall under six main subject headings — Hunting, Fishing, Boating, Camping, Biking, and Golf. Each of these in turn consists of numerous more specific subcategories.

"If people can more easily find and utilize the businesses supporting Ohio's outdoor recreation, that's good for the outdoor enthusiast, good for the outdoor industry, and good for the state of Ohio," Kraus said.

So whether it be game check stations, shooting clubs, gundog breeders, canoe dealers, marine equipment suppliers, private campgrounds, wildlife areas, or any of the other 30 subcategories currently included on thenaturalresource.com, awareness is key.

"We want to help visitors to the site spend more time outside — in their element — rather than wasting precious time flipping through a phone book, struggling with a generic Internet search engine, or driving around aimlessly looking for a bait shop that hopefully can provide all the answers," Kraus said.

"The goal of 'free time' for an outdoor lover, after all, is to hunt, fish, boat, or camp, not to watch the hours pass thinking about how much fun it would be if only you could get outside."

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