

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR IS...

The mathematical definition of the term “common denominator” is a shared multiple of the denominators of several fractions. Frankly, that’s somewhat of a mouthful for us non-math types. However, the broader definition of the term is refreshingly simple: a feature shared by all group members.

Hunters come in all shapes and sizes. Some may be glassing for wild sheep in the high country of an Alaskan mountain range. Others may be looking to kick a cottontail out of a hedgerow. In either case, those hunters needed a place where they could hunt.

That wasn’t much of a problem in 1950 when 40 percent of the U.S. population still lived in rural areas. That percentage has steadily declined over the years, however. Today, four out of every five Americans live in urban areas.

For decades, small family farms, especially east of the Mississippi, provided a treasure trove of hunting opportunities for family members and friends. Today, most farms, along with their hedgerows and woodlots, no longer exist. Out West, access to public land can be increasingly difficult.

Responsive Management, a widely recognized survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues, recently teamed up with the National Shooting Sports Foundation to assess the quality and availability of hunting and shooting access in the United States. The study points out that “access is essential to hunting and shooting participation, being more important than mentors, knowledge of regulations and licensing requirements and numerous other considerations. Without adequate access to places for

hunters and shooters to participate, even the most intensive recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts are destined to fall short.”

The study mentions that access encompasses physical aspects (actual land available) and social /psychological aspects (awareness of access options). The news isn’t good. Respondents noting excellent or good access (as opposed to fair or poor) fell nine percentage points between 2010 and 2021, dropping from 56 to 47 percent.

Nearly half of all hunters now agree that lack of access has caused them to hunt less than they would have liked. The main problems affecting access include crowding, leased land, posted land, access cost, and travel distance.

FROM THE EDITOR



Doug Painter
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

When you look at the numbers, it’s clear that the natural regeneration of our hunting base is lagging. “Best practices” R3 efforts need to pick up the slack and stimulate new and added participation in hunting and shooting.

As we seek to improve the pump, however, we cannot neglect the well.

Hope to see you down the trail. ■

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