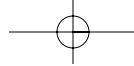


Mercury Marine is one of Stillwater's largest employers and is just one example of the many companies in the state that are successful because of people's passions for the outdoors.

THE OUTDOORS IS BIG BUSINESS IN OKLAHOMA

By Micah Holmes



In small towns and big cities across the state, Oklahomans are working diligently to supply sportsmen around the world with all the products they need for their adventures afield. From high-end shotguns to saltwater fishing reels to sophisticated electronic equipment, there is no doubt that Oklahoma is fertile ground for outdoor-related business.

Not only do these companies produce quality products, they also support quality jobs for thousands of Oklahomans. Companies like Mercruiser in Stillwater or G&H Decoys in Henryetta rank at or near the top of the list of private enterprises in their communities. These companies, supported nationwide by hunters and anglers, are important anchors in their towns. The ripple effects produced by these companies through salaries and tax bases are

felt for miles around.

They are an important and vital segment of our state's economy, pumping millions of dollars into communities around the state. It's no wonder these companies are so successful considering a recent study revealed that America's hunters and anglers spend over \$70 billion dollars a year in pursuit of their pastimes. In Oklahoma alone, sportsmen spend \$801 a year million, which is more than twice the cash receipts from the state's wheat crop (\$344 million). Over 38 million Americans enjoy the outdoors, twice the number of labor union members, and sportsmen support 1.6 million jobs, more than Wal-Mart, the country's largest employer.

We hope that you will look for opportunities to support these home-grown businesses both large and small. And pat yourself on the back next time you open your wallet to purchase a new piece of hunt-



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Ron Ludwig first began making Prune Picker Slabs as a hobby. Now Ron produces and sells thousands of the striper baits around Lake Texoma and beyond.

ing or fishing equipment - you're making Oklahoma's economy thrive.

