State Wildlife Policies in the United States

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Introduction:

During the Spring 2022 semester, I got the opportunity to work on a research project looking into different state wildlife policies throughout the United States, and how some states differ. This research will serve to inform politicians, landowners, and other stakeholders about the policies in their respective states.

The spreadsheet that I have been working in. The data from here, showing the designations of the programs for each state, will eventually be turned into maps to go onto a research paper.

Discussion:

There are many differing wildlife policies in the United States, and they are increasingly including wildlife and habitat conservation incentives in them. For example, public access hunting programs in Iowa and Indiana are now requiring wildlife habitat improvements to open land to public hunting and the incentives that the landowners receive from this. This shows how wildlife conservation and protection are starting to become more important to landowners, politicians, and the general public. One of the other major outcomes of this research is that there is major regional variation in these policies. Western states focus more on transferable hunting permits, while the Southeastern and Midwest states focus more on non-transferable permits and deer management.

Site Information:

Wye Research & Education Center (Virtual)

124 Wye Narrows Drive, Queenstown, MD 21658

Supervisor: Dr. Luke Macaulay

Site Mission: Conduct research on topics related to the agriculture and the environment.

Site Goals: Provide landowners and politicians information about private land related wildlife policies in each of the states in the United States.
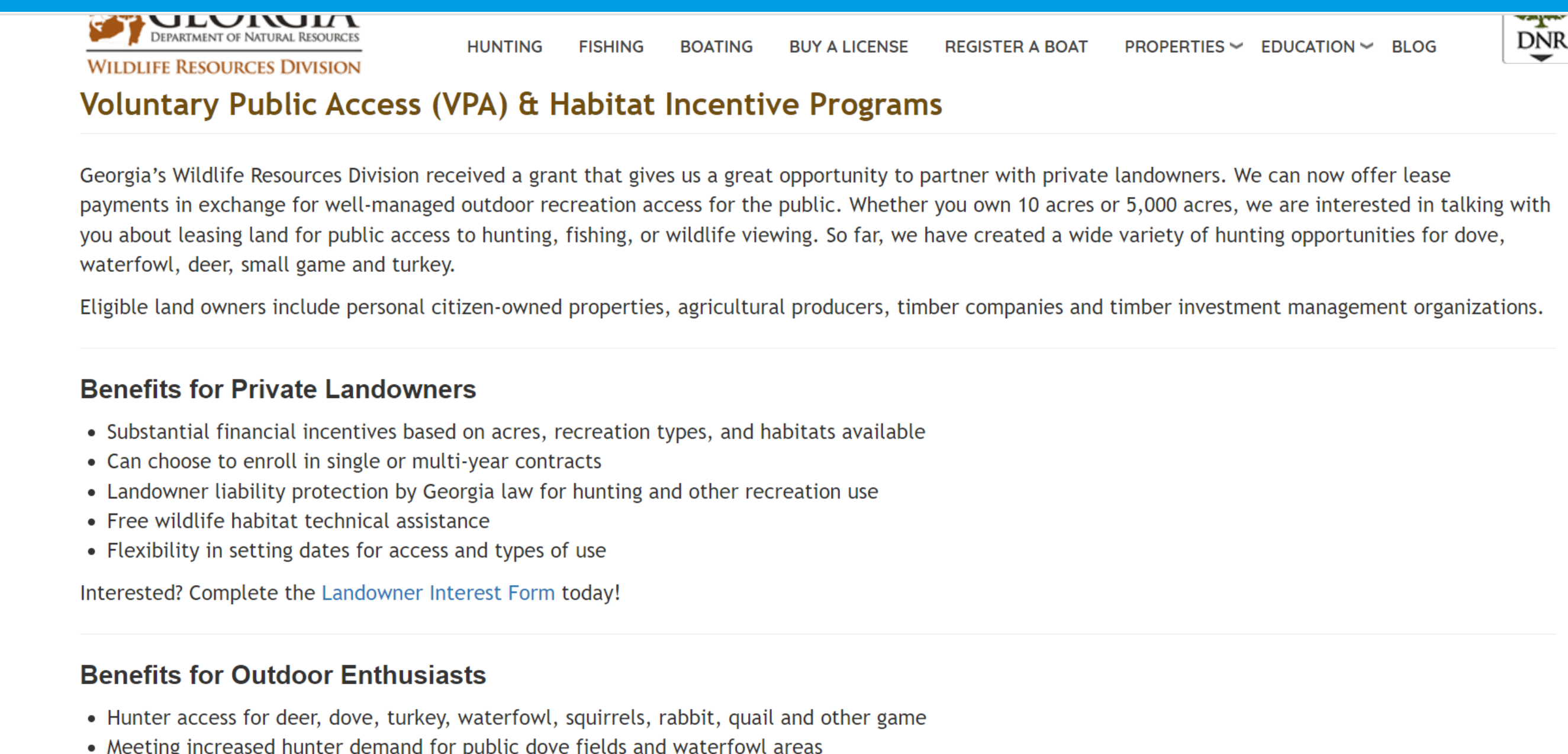
Materials:

This project was entirely web-based, so all of the materials that I used were also web-based. A majority of this was official government websites, as I was researching policies at the state level. Along with these, I also used the websites of organizations, such as the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, which have done research and compiled information about some of the various topics that we are researching.

Methods:

My research was conducted by doing a web-based search for sites that had information about the programs that I was looking for, refining these results by using specific keywords. For example, when searching for property tax exemption programs based on the usage of the land, I searched for all property tax exemptions in the given state and then narrowed down the programs to find ones that fit one of three classifications: agriculture, forestry, or conservation exemptions. Once this information was found, I entered a summarized description of the program, if one existed, made note of any key features (such as limitations, compensation, and connection to habitat improvement), and then classified it based on the type of program.

Results:

Due to the nature and timing of this project, there isn't any conclusive result that was achieved from this research yet. However, one of the biggest takeaways that I have from this project is that most of the states in the US have very different wildlife policies and that many states are starting to shift towards incentivizing or encouraging wildlife habitat improvements to ensure stable populations in the future.

An example of the government web pages that I used for finding the data and information about the wildlife policies. (https://georgiawildlife.com/VPA-HIP)

Acknowledgments:

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