



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DNR Commissioner Places Priority on Outdoor Recreational Opportunities for the Mobility Impaired**

**Atlanta, GA (March 26, 2024)** – Under the leadership of Commissioner Walter Rabon, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced its renewed commitment to providing hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational opportunities for those with mobility impairments. More than 2.2 million Georgians have a disability, and of that, 14 percent of those are mobility related. Given the number of Georgians impacted, the Georgia DNR has put an increased focus on creating adaptive outdoor opportunities to people across the state.

As a space that has long been viewed as out of reach for those with mobility challenges, Georgia DNR's *Outdoors Beyond Barriers* adaptive program will provide tools, resources, and access points for all Georgians. "*Outdoors Beyond Barriers* seeks to educate, encourage, and empower Georgians with mobility impairments to connect with nature," said Walter Rabon, Commissioner of Georgia DNR. "With March being National Disability Awareness Month, we want to ensure everyone is aware of the efforts being made by our department to remove obstacles associated with getting outdoors for those who are mobility impaired."

Georgia DNR's *Outdoors Beyond Barriers* program will provide gateways for mobility impaired Georgians to enjoy hunting and fishing, while learning the skills and tools needed to become independent users of Georgia's natural resources. Georgia DNR plans to grow the program by hosting hunting and fishing events in each of the department's six regions around the state on public lands and fishing areas, while also providing additional opportunities in partnership with private landowners throughout Georgia.

"We're dedicated to expanding our offerings, giving people different opportunities from one side of Georgia to the other," said Rabon. "Public-private partnerships will be critical as we move forward, and we're thankful for the landowners who have already stepped up, volunteering to host events on their personal properties."

While the department looks to put a new emphasis on hunting and fishing, Georgia DNR will continue to offer free Action Trackchairs for those with mobility impairments thanks to the partnership with the Aimee Copeland Foundation's All Terrain Georgia initiative. This program has been a success, with over 250 reservations made in 2023 at 10 State Parks and Historic Sites Division locations, such as Sweetwater Creek, Fort Yargo, and Cloudland Canyon, with Skidaway Island State Park and Little Ocmulgee State Park to be added this spring. Those interested in reserving an Action Trackchair can visit <https://gastateparks.org/Accessibility/TrackChairs>.

Other currently accessible outdoor recreation offerings include the following:

- **Horseback Riding Access:** Accessible horse ramp at Don Carter State Park
- **Water Access:** Accessible kayak launch at Hard Labor Creek State Park

- **Specialty Hunts:** Allow mobility-impaired hunters dedicated public land access opportunities and early opportunity hunts on private land
- **Fishing Access:** All Georgia DNR Public Fishing Areas (11 areas around the state) offer ADA-accessible fishing piers and facilities, and all coastal public fishing piers are ADA-accessible
- **Birding and Wildlife Viewing:** DNR sites (Parks, PFAs, and Education Centers) offer multiple accessible piers and trails (such as on the Colonial Coast Birding Trail or the new ADA bridge connecting the City of Winder with the trails at Fort Yargo State Park)
- **Shooting Ranges:** Six ADA-accessible DNR public shooting ranges

In the current fiscal year, Georgia DNR has invested over \$2.2 million in accessibility improvements for their infrastructure and outdoor opportunities. Future investments into this program will continue to be a priority for DNR Commissioner Rabon as more accessible hunting, fishing, and outdoor opportunities are added in Georgia.

Those wishing to get more information on adaptive hunting and fishing opportunities should contact the DNR Wildlife Resources Division office in their region. Region office contact information can be found at <https://georgiawildlife.com/about/contact>.

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#### **ABOUT THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is to sustain, enhance, protect, and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices.

For more information, contact

Trevor W. Santos, Deputy Commissioner – 404-656-3505 – [Trevor.Santos@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:Trevor.Santos@dnr.ga.gov)