



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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October 20, 2006

Memorandum

To: Directorate and Field Directorate
Park Superintendents

From: *(for)* Director /s/ *Steve Martin*

Subject: Audio-Visual Accessibility Initiative for Visitors with Disabilities

In the followup letter from me to the Chair of the House Subcommittee on National Parks following the Congressional Hearing on Disability Access in the National Parks held in May 2006, the National Park Service (NPS) indicated that it would continue to enhance efforts to provide accessible audio-visual programs for visitors with visual and hearing loss in our parks through a special emphasis initiative using fee revenue dollars in FY 2007. This memorandum has been developed in order to carry through with that commitment.

Recently, a series of official disability rights complaints and testimony received at a Congressional oversight hearing on disability access revealed that the NPS has many audio-visual programs that are not captioned or audio-described; assembly areas that are not equipped with assistive listening systems; and in some cases, captioning systems that are broken and have not been repaired. While the NPS has come a long way in providing structural and non-structural access for our visitors with disabilities over the past several years, there is still much to be done. One of the shortfalls of our past actions is that in many parks Servicewide, the NPS still does not provide accessible audio-visual programs for individuals with visual and hearing loss.

As Director, I believe we can create the opportunity for the NPS to complete one aspect of making the parks accessible. The goal is to complete projects over the next year so that all of the films and audio-visual programs presented in our parks provide three basic services:

- open captions,
- audio-description, and
- assistive listening devices available for those with hearing loss.

With funding from the Recreation Fee Program, this is an attainable goal. Recreation fees have funded more than \$11 million in films and audio-visual media at 83 parks over the past several years. Considering on-going and new starts on film projects, recreation fees have the potential to make 68 accessible films over the next year.

In order to reach this goal, all superintendents should evaluate their parks' existing audio-visual programs and venues to determine if the required services are provided and in working order. In all of their existing programs, in any film project in production, and in any planned in the future, the superintendent should ensure that these three elements are included. Deficiencies in these three basic services should be used to create a Project Management Information System (PMIS) project that requests funding in FY 2007. Parks should use their recreation fee or other revenues where possible. Low revenue and non-collecting parks should identify 20 percent Recreation Fee funds.

The regions should take steps to ensure that each park has conducted these evaluations so that the region can prepare an implementation schedule by December 1, 2006. The regions should assist the parks in identifying needs in PMIS during this Servicewide Comprehensive Call and adjusting ongoing projects to meet this goal. It is the goal of the NPS to have all park units show films that are captioned and audio-described, and all of their assembly areas equipped with assistive listening devices by January 2008.

If you need technical assistance or have contracting questions regarding captioning, audio-description or assistive listening devices, please contact the Harpers Ferry Center at 304/535-5050. Questions on the project development process and funding should be addressed to your Regional Recreation Fee Projects Manager. Questions on accessibility protocols should be addressed to Dave Park, Accessibility Management Program Coordinator, at 202/513-7027.

cc: Associate Regional Directors, Park Operations
Regional Accessibility Coordinators