



United States Department of the Interior


NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Director's Order No. 42: Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities

Approved: 
Director, National Park Service

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I. BACKGROUND

In 1979, the National Park Service (NPS) decided to approach the issue of accessibility in a comprehensive, organized way, rather than on a project-by-project basis. The primary goal of the program was to develop and coordinate a System-wide, comprehensive approach to achieving the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable, while ensuring consistency with the other legal mandates of conservation and protection of the resources we manage. Since 1980, the NPS has been working with accessibility coordinators in each regional office, and in parks and program offices, to: (1) assess the level of accessibility of various parks; (2) identify the barriers to accessibility; (3) develop policies and guidelines regarding appropriate methods and techniques for improving access; and (4) provide technical assistance and in-service training on effective approaches and program implementation.

Through this coordinated effort, the NPS has been recognized as a leader in opening opportunities to people with disabilities. While accessibility policies apply to both employees and visitors, this Director's Order focuses on visitors, and Director's Order 16A focuses on employees.

There are two primary reasons why the NPS has initiated its present accessibility efforts: (1) there are various legal mandates that require all government agencies to make facilities and programs accessible;

and (2) it simply makes good sense to employ principles of “universal design” in providing facilities for everyone, rather than for only a portion of the population. While there are sanctions that can be brought for non-compliance with the legal requirements, it is the second reason that, in the long term, is the most significant for accessibility in the parks. It is estimated there are over 54 million persons in our country today who meet the legal definition of a person with a disability. This includes those who have significant degrees of mobility, sensory, or cognitive limitations. Further, when we consider the growing percentage of our population that is age 65 or older; those with invisible disabilities, such as cardiac and respiratory problems; those who have temporary disabilities, such as broken arms or legs; parents with strollers and wheeled devices, and the families and friends who will be traveling with these individuals, a majority of our nation's population can benefit from accessible facilities and programs.

When facilities and programs are "universally designed" to serve all people, accessibility is generally enhanced for everyone. This is certainly not the case in non-accessible design. In addition, research has shown that, if accessibility is provided at the design stage, the extra cost is negligible. Studies show that the additional cost of making a building accessible is on average 0.5 percent more, and rarely more than 1.0 percent of the total cost. This incremental cost is modest, relative to the large percentage of the population that benefits.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

It is the goal of the NPS to ensure that all people, including the estimated 54 million citizens with disabilities, have the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable to our programs, facilities and services in conformance with applicable regulations and standards. Accordingly, the NPS will seek to provide that level in the planning, construction, and renovation of buildings and facilities and in the provision of programs and services to the public and to our employees. In most instances, the applicable rules, regulations and standards do not require access if it would change the fundamental nature of the activity. In conforming to the appropriate standards, the level of accessibility will be largely determined by the nature of the area and program, and will be consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park experience. The procedures in this Director's Order give detailed guidance based on the minimum requirements set forth in laws, rules, and regulations. However, one fundamental principle of this Director's Order is that the NPS will seek to provide the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable, and not simply provide the minimum level that is required by law. Consequently, managers are encouraged to exceed the requirements for visitor accessibility through innovative techniques and partnerships whenever possible and reasonable.

The five objectives of this Director's Order are to:

1. Incorporate the long range goal of providing the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable for people of all abilities in all facilities, programs, and services, instead of providing “separate” or “special” programs.
2. Implement this goal within the daily operation of the NPS, its policies, organizational relationships, and implementation strategies;
3. Provide further guidance and direction regarding the NPS interpretation of laws and policies;
4. Establish a framework for the effective implementation of actions necessary to achieve the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable; and,
5. Ensure the implementation of “universal design” principles within the national park system.

III. DEFINITIONS

This Director's Order makes reference to legal terms and other concepts that are critical to understanding NPS responsibilities. Most of the following definitions are taken from the Department of the Interior regulation entitled "Enforcement of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Department of the Interior Programs" (43 CFR Part 17.501-17.570).

- **Applicable Rules, Regulations and Standards** in the context of this Director's Order means the laws, rules, regulations and standards that have been promulgated in connection with disability rights legislation in this country. That includes the authorities, implementation regulations, and official standards developed by the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, and the U.S. Access Board, as outlined in Section 4.
- **Architectural Accessibility** means the design, construction and/or alteration of a building or facility that is in compliance with officially sanctioned design standards, and that can be entered, and used by individuals with a disability. Because of the creation of the official design standards for accessibility, this term carries a legal definition. Buildings or facilities that are not in compliance with official standards are not considered to be "accessible." This term is used in concert with the concept of "program accessibility." (UFAS, Section 3.5)
- **Auxiliary Aids** means services or devices that enable persons with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, programs or activities conducted by the agency. (43 CFR Part 17.503)

Some examples of auxiliary aids include:

- Readers for visually impaired individuals
 - Brailled materials
 - Audio recordings
 - Assistive listening devices
 - Telephone handset amplifiers
 - Telephones compatible with telecommunication devices for deaf persons
 - Interpreters
 - Note takers
 - Written materials
 - And other similar devices
- **An Individual with a Disability** is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment. (43 CFR Part 17.503)
 - **Major Life Activities** are functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. (43CFR Part 17.503)

Physical or Mental Impairment is any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genitourinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. (43 CFR Part 17.503)

- **Program Accessibility** means that the programs, activities and opportunities provided to visitors and/or employees will be provided in conformance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. This means they will be provided in such a way that individuals with disabilities are not excluded from, nor denied the benefits of, that program or activity. This term is used in concert with the concept of “architectural accessibility.” (43 CFR Part 17.549)
- **Qualified Interpreter** means a sign language interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary. (28 CFR Part 35)
- **Reasonable** means not only capable of being accomplished, but also within the bounds of common sense and sound judgment when considering other factors such as costs, benefits, the nature of the environment, and NPS responsibilities toward protecting park resources and values.
- **Self-evaluation** is the evaluation required in 43 CFR Part 17. That section states that the agency shall evaluate, with the assistance of interested persons, including persons with disabilities, its current policies and practices, and the effects thereof, that do not or may not meet the requirements of nondiscrimination on the basis of disability; and to the extent modifications of any policy or practice is required, the agency shall proceed to make the necessary modifications. (43 CFR Part 17.510).
- **Transition Plan** is the action plan that is developed to identify the actions to be taken to correct deficiencies that are identified in the self evaluations. The transition plans must include: (1) the obstacles that limit the accessibility of programs or activities; (2) the detailed methods that will be used to make the facilities accessible; (3) the schedule for taking the steps necessary to achieve compliance; (4) an indication of the official responsible for the implementation of the plan; and (5) identification of the persons or groups who assisted with the plan’s preparation. (43 CFR Part 17.550)
- **Universal Design** is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The universal design concept simplifies life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by more people at little or no extra cost. The universal design concept targets all people of all ages, sizes and abilities. (The Center for Universal Design, North Carolina State University)

IV. AUTHORITY FOR THIS DIRECTOR’S ORDER

Authority to issue this directive is found in 16 USC 1 through 4 (the NPS Organic Act), and the delegations of authority contained in Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual.

V. APPLICABLE LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND STANDARDS

There are several Federal laws that require us to make programs, facilities, and services accessible; Department of the Interior regulations that outline how those laws should be implemented; and Federal standards that define how facilities must be designed and constructed in order to comply with those laws and regulations.

A. Laws

1. The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-480) requires all buildings and facilities built or renovated in whole or in part with Federal funds to be accessible to, and usable by, physically

disabled persons. Since 1968, official standards for making buildings accessible have been developed and the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board has been created to monitor and enforce compliance with the law.

2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112), as amended, is more encompassing than the Architectural Barriers Act. While the Architectural Barriers Act requires physical access to buildings and facilities, Section 504 requires program accessibility in all services provided with Federal dollars. The act itself is very brief. It states:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by Federal Financial Assistance or by any Executive Agency.

This means the NPS not only has to be concerned with enabling people with disabilities to have access to parks and facilities but, once there, the NPS also needs to do everything feasible to enable them to receive as close to the same benefits as those received by other visitors. This also means our obligation extends to individuals with visual impairments, hearing impairments, and cognitive impairments, as well as those with mobility impairments.

3. Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all employment practices within the Federal Government. Director's Order 16A deals with reasonable accommodation for NPS employees.

4. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that all Federal agencies ensure that when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology; that, it is accessible to employees with disabilities. It also requires that individuals with disabilities who are seeking information or services from Federal agencies have access to and use of all information provided. Electronic and information technology is expansively defined. It includes computers (such as hardware, software, and accessible data such as web pages), facsimile machines, copiers, telephones, and other equipment used for transmitting, receiving, using, or storing information.

5. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 technically does not apply to the Federal Government. This Act essentially extends the coverage of the Architectural Barriers Act and Sections 501 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to all state and local governments and to most of the private sector. Indirectly, the ADA has had, and will continue to have, an enormous impact on all public agencies. The high visibility of the law has generated a wide range of public interest in the issue of access for individuals with disabilities, and has increased the pressure on Federal agencies to bring their facilities and programs into compliance. The law has also resulted in the development of a set of more comprehensive design standards for buildings and facilities, which by policy have been adopted by the Department of the Interior. Finally, Section 507 relates specifically to the use of wheelchairs in the Federal Wilderness Preservation System.

B. Regulations

1. Enforcement of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Department of the Interior Programs (43 CFR 17.501-17.570). This regulation requires that the Department of the Interior operate all its programs and activities to ensure nondiscrimination against qualified persons with a disability. It sets forth standards for what constitutes discrimination on the basis of disability, and establishes a detailed complaint process for resolving allegations of discrimination. This regulation is issued under the authority of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

C. Standards

1. Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). This document presents uniform standards for the design, construction, and alteration of buildings so that individuals with disabilities will have ready access to and use of them in accord with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. UFAS was published in the Federal Register on August 7, 1984, and became the design requirement of the Department of the Interior when it was adopted by the General Services Administration in 41 CFR 101-19.6 on that same date. All new and altered buildings and facilities must be designed and constructed in conformance with these standards unless otherwise exempt.

2. Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). This document sets guidelines for accessibility to places of public accommodation and commercial facilities by individuals with disabilities. These guidelines are to be applied during the design, construction, and alteration of such buildings and facilities to the extent required by regulations issued by Federal agencies. ADAAG is more comprehensive than the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard, and therefore a process is underway to amend UFAS to bring it into conformance. A 1992 Department of the Interior directive instructed all Bureaus to begin to utilize ADAAG in current construction and alteration projects, except in the few instances where UFAS provides a higher degree of accessibility.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To achieve the goals and objectives of this Director's Order, the NPS will implement the following strategies: (1) NPS will increase employee awareness and technical understanding of accessibility requirements; (2) All new and renovated buildings and facilities, and all new services and programs--including those offered by concessioners and by interpreters, will be "universally designed" and implemented in conformance with applicable regulations and standards; (3) Existing programs, facilities and services will be evaluated by programs and park units to determine the degree to which they are currently accessible to and usable by people with disabilities; (4) Barriers that limit access will be identified and incorporated into the NPS Assets Management Program; (5) Each unit will develop action plans identifying how, where feasible, those barriers will be removed; and, (6) Actions will be taken, on a day-to-day basis to eliminate the identified barriers, utilizing existing operational funds or other funding sources or partnerships. Projects requiring large expenditures of funds will be identified and entered into the Project Management Information System (PMIS) so special attention can be given to them in setting regional and national funding priorities.

VII. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE POLICIES

Effective policies are key to National Park Service compliance with the applicable laws, regulations, and standards, and to a successful implementation strategy. Visitor accessibility policies were first addressed in Special Directive 83-3, issued in 1983. Those policies were subsequently updated in the NPS *Management Policies*. The relevant sections from various chapters of *Management Policies* are compiled below, for the convenience of NPS managers.

A. Cultural Resource Management (Management Policies, Chapter 5)

The National Park Service will provide persons with disabilities the highest feasible level of physical access to historic properties that is reasonable, consistent with the preservation of each property's significant historical features. Access modifications for persons with disabilities will be designed and installed to least affect the features of a property that contribute to its significance. Modifications to some features may be acceptable in providing access, once a review of options for the highest level of access has been completed.

However, if it is determined that modification of particular features would impair a property's integrity and character in terms of the Advisory Council's regulations at 36 CFR 800.9, such modifications will not be made. To the extent possible, modifications for access will benefit the greatest number of visitors, staff, and the public, and be integrated with, or in proximity to, the primary path of travel for entrances and from parking areas. In situations where access modifications cannot be made, alternative methods of achieving program access will be adopted.

B. Interpretation and Education (Management Policies, Chapter 7)

The NPS will ensure, to the greatest extent reasonable, that persons with disabilities receive the same interpretive opportunities as non-disabled persons. Interpretive and educational programs, exhibits, audiovisual programs, publications, and all other interpretive media will comply with Departmental regulations 43 Part CFR 17, Subpart E, and with standards required by the 1968 Architectural Barriers Act. Accordingly, the Park Service will ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, all programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate. Additionally, the Service will take all feasible steps to ensure effective communication with individuals with hearing and visual impairments by providing appropriate auxiliary aids, where necessary, in order to afford them the opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, NPS programs and activities. These steps should include but not be limited to providing sign-language interpreters for visitors with hearing impairments, and providing audio, Braille, and large-print versions of printed materials for those with visual or cognitive disabilities.

C. Use of Parks (Management Policies, Chapter 8)

All reasonable efforts will be made to make NPS facilities, programs, and services accessible to and usable by all people, including those with disabilities. This policy reflects the commitment to provide access to the widest cross section of the public, and to ensure compliance with the intent of the Architectural Barriers Act and the Rehabilitation Act. The Service will also comply with section 507 of the ADA (42 USC 12207), which relates specifically to the operation and management of federal wilderness areas. Specific guidance for implementing these laws is found in the Secretary of the Interior's regulations regarding enforcement of non-discrimination on the basis of disability in Department of the Interior Programs. (43 CFR Part 17, Subpart E).

One primary tenet of disability rights requirements is that, to the highest degree reasonable, people with disabilities should be able to participate in the same programs and activities available to everyone else. In choosing among methods for providing accessibility, higher priority will be given to those methods that offer programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate. Special, separate, or alternative facilities, programs, or services will be provided only when existing ones can not reasonably be made accessible. The determination of what is reasonable will be made only after careful consultation with persons with disabilities, or their representatives. Any decision that would result in "less than equal opportunity" is subject to the filing of an official disability rights complaint under the Departmental regulations cited above.

D. Park Facilities (Management Policies, Chapter 9)

The NPS will design, construct, and operate all buildings and facilities so they are accessible to, and usable by, persons with disabilities to the greatest extent reasonable, in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and standards. This means that all new and altered buildings and facilities will be in conformance with the appropriate design standards. It also means that a sufficient number of existing buildings and facilities will be modified to ensure that programs can be provided in an accessible location.

Accessibility will be provided consistent with preserving park resources, visitor safety, and providing a high-quality visitor experience. In most instances, the degree of accessibility provided will be proportionately related to the degree of human-made modifications in the area surrounding the facility, and the importance

of the facility to people visiting or working in the park. Accordingly, most administrative offices, some overnight visitor accommodations, some employee housing, and most interpretive and visitor service facilities will be accessible. Undeveloped areas, such as those outside the immediate influence of buildings and roads, will not normally be modified, nor will special facilities be provided for the sole purpose of providing access to all segments of the population. Accessibility to facilities in threshold areas will be determined on the basis of the nature of the topography, the significance of the attraction, the amount of physical modifications being made to the environment and the modifications necessary to ensure programmatic accessibility.

Transportation systems in parks, including water transportation will have a sufficient percentage of fully accessible vehicles or watercraft to provide effective services to persons with disabilities. In the case of existing systems, the necessary vehicles will be provided on a replacement or retrofit basis. Until the transportation system has been made fully accessible, a separate accessible vehicle will be provided, or disabled persons will be allowed to drive their personal vehicles on otherwise restricted roadways.

In meeting the goal of accessibility, emphasis will be placed on ensuring persons with disabilities are afforded experiences and opportunities along with other visitors, to the greatest extent reasonable. Separate facilities for people with disabilities are not a substitute for full accessibility to other park facilities, but they may be allowed where the need for specialized services is clearly demonstrated.

E. Commercial Visitor Services (Management Policies, Chapter 10)

Concessioners share the National Park Service's responsibility to provide employees and visitors with the greatest degree of access to programs, facilities, and services that is reasonable, within the terms of existing contracts and agreements. New contracts will reflect (1) regulations issued under the authority of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (43 CFR, Part 17), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities conducted by federal executive agencies; and (2) the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, which requires physical access to buildings and facilities. Where there is no specific language regarding accessibility in an existing concession contract, the NPS will address the issue of compliance in the annual concession operating plan.

F. Wilderness Management (Management Policies, Chapter 6)

The National Park Service has legal obligations to make available equal opportunities for people with disabilities in all programs and activities. This requirement includes the opportunity to participate in wilderness experiences. Management decisions responding to requests for special consideration to provide wilderness use by persons with disabilities must be in accord with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended in 1978) and section 507 (c) of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (42 USC 12207(c)). Such decisions should balance the intent of the access and wilderness laws, and find a way of providing the highest level of protection to the wilderness resource.

Section 17.550 of the Secretary of the Interior's regulations regarding the enforcement of non-discrimination on the basis of disability in Department of the Interior programs (43 CFR Part 17, Subpart E) states that agencies are not required to take any actions or provide access that would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a program or activity. However, the agency has the burden of proving that compliance would result in a fundamental alteration. This concept is also found in section 507 of ADA.

VIII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of the NPS has the responsibility of ensuring that the goals and objectives of this Director's Order are achieved. Implementation responsibilities are delegated to the Associate Directors, the Regional Directors, and to the individual Superintendents. However, since access encompasses virtually every program and activity provided to the visiting public as well as to our employees, it is every employee's responsibility to be aware of the requirements for equal accessibility and when and where

possible to take steps to ensure the needs of persons with disabilities are accommodated. Ensuring access to programs, facilities and services provided by the NPS is a broad based and shared responsibility. Specific roles and responsibilities for the organization, management, coordination, and implementation of action is outlined as follows:

A. Park Superintendents

Park superintendents are responsible for all activities related to the day-to-day operation of their park, including those provided through concessioners, cooperating associations, and volunteers.

Superintendents ensure all of their programs, facilities, and services are accessible, in conformance with applicable laws, regulations, standards and policies. Each superintendent ensures all new programs, facilities and services are designed, constructed and delivered in compliance with accessibility requirements. They are also responsible for conducting a comprehensive evaluation of existing programs, facilities and services to determine the degree to which they are equally accessible to all people with disabilities and for the development of transition plans to correct deficiencies as outlined in 43CFR 17.510. They are also responsible for taking all possible actions, on an on-going basis, to ensure the corrective actions are taken in an appropriate way and within an appropriate time period.

Each superintendent will be responsible for appointing a site accessibility coordinator and for providing the support and direction needed to develop and implement a park or site strategy to accomplish Service-wide goals and objectives regarding accessibility. A site accessibility coordinator may service more than one park or unit. The coordinator may be the same accessibility coordinator as appointed in Director's Order #16A: Reasonable Accommodation for Employees. Personnel issues may require that an individual from the Human Resources program be appointed to assist in the implementation of reasonable accommodation, in addition to the site access coordinator.

Park or Site Accessibility Coordinator - The park or site accessibility coordinator will be responsible for the coordination, planning, and monitoring of park-wide activities concerned with architectural and programmatic accessibility for people with disabilities, including technical assistance and training. Programs and activities should be closely coordinated with the regional accessibility coordinator to ensure actions taken conform to applicable laws, regulations, standards and policies. These programs and activities should also be closely coordinated with the Chiefs of Maintenance, Interpretation, Concessions Management and other program heads to ensure appropriate implementation. It is the responsibility of the park or site accessibility coordinator to advise park staff, with the approval of their supervisor and the superintendent, on actions necessary to achieve the goal of providing the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable within the park.

It is the responsibility of the park or site coordinator to work with their supervisor and the superintendent, in determining how best to achieve these duties for the benefit of the entire park.

B. Regional Directors

Regional directors have responsibility for the oversight, monitoring and coordination of all activities relating to the operation of the parks within their region. They ensure all areas are in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, standards and policies, including those related to accessibility. They ensure that all new buildings or facilities, built or altered under its direction are designed and constructed in compliance with applicable rules, regulations and standards. Each regional director will be responsible for appointing a regional accessibility coordinator and providing the support and direction needed to develop and implement a regional strategy to accomplish Service-wide goals and objectives regarding accessibility.

Regional Accessibility Coordinator - The regional accessibility coordinator is responsible for the coordination, planning, and monitoring of all regional activities concerned with architectural and programmatic accessibility for people with disabilities, including technical assistance and training. Programs and activities should be closely coordinated with the Washington Office AMP to ensure actions taken conform to applicable laws, regulations, standards and policies. The regional accessibility coordinator will represent the region on the Service-wide Accessibility Coordinating Committee.

It is the responsibility of the regional accessibility coordinator to work with regional staff, with the approval of their supervisor and the regional director, on actions to achieve the goal of providing the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable within the entire region.

C. Washington Office

1. Associate Director, Park Operations and Education

The Associate Director for Park Operations and Education, has primary responsibility to provide guidance and direction to ensure that accessibility is incorporated as an integral component of each service-wide operational function. This includes developing strategies that will assist the NPS to ensure that (1) all new programs, facilities, and services are designed and implemented in conformance with applicable laws and regulations; (2) existing programs, facilities and services are evaluated to determine what barriers to access currently exist; and (3) actions are planned and implemented that will bring the programs, facilities and services into compliance with applicable policies and regulations. Certain divisions and programs reporting to the associate director have specific responsibilities.

(a) Park Facility Management Division - This division is responsible for the overall management and coordination of the NPS Service-wide Maintenance Program. This division provides guidance and direction to ensure that, as existing facilities are repaired and renovated, modifications are made to bring the facilities into conformance with all applicable laws and regulations. It does this through the activities of the Accessibility Management Program as described below.

Accessibility Management Program (AMP) – The AMP is a program area within the Park Facility Management Division. The primary goal of the AMP is to develop and oversee a Service-wide strategy to assist the NPS to ensure the nation’s 54 million citizens with disabilities have access to the full range of opportunities and experiences provided by the NPS to other individuals, while at the same time, ensuring adherence to other legal mandates of preservation and protection of the resources we manage. The AMP works with the Service-wide Accessibility Coordinating Committee, which is comprised of representatives from each of the regional offices and other NPS units to: (1) assess the current level of accessibility of our various parks; (2) identify the barriers to accessibility; (3) develop policies and guidelines regarding appropriate methods and techniques for improving access; and (4) provide technical assistance and in-service training on cost-effective approaches and program implementation.

The National Center on Accessibility - The Park Facility Management Division also serves as the NPS liaison with the National Center on Accessibility (NCA) which was created through a formal cooperative agreement between the NPS and Indiana University's Department of Recreation and Park Administration. One primary purpose of NCA is to work with the NPS AMP in accomplishing its goal of ensuring that the NPS, in its entirety, is as accessible as is reasonable to people with disabilities in conformance with applicable laws, rules and regulations. The NCA works with the AMP to provide nationwide training to park and recreation professionals on how to: (1) provide accessible programs,

facilities, and services; (2) stimulate, coordinate and conduct research that will identify more effective ways of providing equal opportunity for citizens with disabilities to enjoy outdoor recreation opportunities; and (3) develop technical assistance programs to assist park and recreation professionals in better meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

The Service-wide Accessibility Coordinating Committee - In 1997, the Associate Director for Park Operations and Education, established the Service-wide Accessibility Coordinating Committee comprised of representatives from each of the regional offices, the Denver Service Center (DSC), and the Harpers Ferry Center (HFC). This committee is an advisory committee and a working group established to assist the NPS in implementing its responsibilities regarding accessibility throughout the National Park System. In addition to advising the Associate Director, the committee also provides advice to the NPS Park Facility Management Division.

(b) Interpretation and Education Division - This division is responsible for the overall management and direction of the NPS Interpretation and Education Program and works to ensure accessibility is incorporated to the highest level that is reasonable into all aspects of the Service-wide interpretation program. This includes ensuring that new interpretive programs and services provide effective communication to all persons with a disability. It also means all existing interpretive programs and services, including those provided by cooperating associations, are evaluated to determine the degree to which they are accessible to all visitors; and that actions are taken to bring those programs and services into compliance with the applicable laws and regulations.

(c) Concession Management Division- This division is responsible for the overall management and direction of the NPS Concession Management Program. This division takes all possible steps to ensure that the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable is incorporated into all aspects of the Service-wide concessions program. This includes ensuring all new concession programs and services are accessible to and usable by all persons with a disability. It also means all existing concession programs and services are evaluated to determine the degree to which they are accessible to all visitors, and modifications are made to ensure those programs and services conform to applicable laws and regulations.

(d) Harpers Ferry Center - The HFC is responsible for the overall management and direction of interpretive media and technology throughout the NPS. The HFC works to ensure that the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable is incorporated into all aspects of interpretive media, planning, design and construction. This includes ensuring that all new interpretive media are provided in such a way as to be accessible to and usable by all persons with a disability. It also means all existing practices and procedures are evaluated to determine the degree to which they are currently accessible to all visitors, and modifications are made to assure conformance with applicable laws and regulations.

2. Associate Director, Professional Services

The Associate Directorate for Professional Services, has responsibility for the overall direction and coordination of the NPS planning, design and construction program, and ensures that the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable is appropriately incorporated into all aspects of these programs. Primary responsibilities within Professional Services for accessibility reside in the following units.

(a) Park Planning and Special Studies - This division has the overall responsibility for the NPS's comprehensive planning process. This division ensures the General Management Plans and Statements for Management broadly support the legal requirements for accessibility and NPS policy regarding providing the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable. The Development Concept

Plans, the Comprehensive Design Plans and the Interpretive Prospectus then shall identify the specific ways in which the facilities and programs will be made accessible in conformance with appropriate rules, regulations and policy.

(b) Denver Service Center (DSC) - The DSC is responsible for the overall planning, design and construction of most major new construction projects throughout the NPS. The DSC ensures all new buildings or facilities, built or altered under its direction are designed and constructed in compliance with applicable rules, regulations and standards. The DSC is also responsible for ensuring that all designs done under its supervision conform to appropriate design standards.

3. Associate Director, Administration

The Associate Directorate for Administration, has responsibility for the overall direction and coordination of all administrative activities within the NPS and ensures accessibility is

appropriately incorporated into all aspects of these programs. Primary responsibilities within Administration for accessibility reside in the following units.

(a) Office of Human Resources – The Office of Human Resources has the responsibility for the operation of all personnel related functions within the NPS. This office ensures that people with disabilities are appropriately served in all functions including recruitment, hiring, retention, employee development and advancement, in conformance with appropriate rules and regulations. This office also has primary responsibilities for the provision of "reasonable accommodation" for employees with disabilities, in compliance with EEOC directives and regulations and with NPS Director's Order #16A.

(b) Training and Development Division - The Training and Development Division has the responsibility for the Service-wide employee in-service training program, and ensures accessibility is incorporated in all aspects of that program. This division ensures that the Service-wide Employee Development Program includes the necessary components to assist all employees in fulfilling their responsibilities regarding accessibility. They also ensure that employees with disabilities have equal access to the training and development activities provided, and appropriate auxiliary aids are provided as part of that training.

4. Equal Opportunity Program

The NPS Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) has the Service-wide responsibility for the oversight, advocacy, and enforcement of all programs related to civil rights, including legal requirements for accessibility for visitors and employees. The EOP helps all NPS managers understand the relevant laws, and the methods and techniques for complying with them. The EOP plays an integral role in working with the AMP in establishing strategies to ensure all parks and programs are in compliance with applicable laws, regulations and standards. This includes managing the official disability rights complaint process, as set forth in Departmental Regulations 43CFR 17.570, and providing Service-wide interpretive guidance on equal opportunity access issues.

D. Department of the Interior - Equal Opportunity Program

The Department of the Interior, Equal Opportunity Program, has the responsibility to monitor compliance with Section 501 and 504 within the Department of the Interior. Departmental regulations for implementing Section 504 in programs receiving Federal Financial Assistance were published in 1982, and those for Federally Conducted Programs were published in 1987. These regulations place very strict timelines for compliance; give guidance for providing programmatic access; require all agencies to

conduct self-evaluations of the degree to which their programs are currently accessible; develop transition plans for correcting identified barriers; and set forth a formal complaint review process.

IX. ACCOUNTABILITY

Federal statutes and regulations require that all programs, facilities, and services are accessible to persons with disabilities. Guidance on how to accomplish this is provided through official design standards and regulations, and by NPS policy. These documents are outlined in Section V of this Director's Order. Everyone must understand that adhering to these statutes is a requirement and not an option! This Director's Order outlines the roles and responsibilities of a wide spectrum of NPS managers. Each manager will be held accountable for meeting those responsibilities and for ensuring the individuals they supervise are held accountable for performing their roles and responsibilities.

As stated in section I of this Director's Order, the primary reason for making the NPS accessible is because it is the right thing to do. It simply makes good sense to employ the principles of "universal design" in providing facilities and programs that are accessible to and usable by every one. Failure to do so denies the opportunity for over 54 million citizens with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to enjoy their national parks. The penalties for non-compliance can be significant in terms of the cost associated with having to remove features that have been constructed inappropriately and replacing them. The costs in terms of denying persons with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy the grandeur and educational values of a national park experience is also significant, even though they are not measurable.

The laws and regulations contain compliance enforcement procedures. The U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board has enforcement responsibility for compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act, and the Department of Justice has responsibility for the enforcement of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Both of these entities can determine that the NPS is in noncompliance with the statutes and can order corrective actions to be taken. They have taken such action in the past with regard to complaints filed against the NPS. One purpose of this Directors Order is to establish a strategy to enable the NPS to make the changes and modifications needed in a positive and proactive way, rather than being ordered to do so as a result of the complaint process.

In the final analysis, the ultimate measure of accountability will be the degree to which persons with disabilities can visit the national parks, receive the same services, and access the same opportunities as other visitors.

X. SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

National Center on Accessibility (NCA)

www.indiana.edu/~nca/nca.html

Provides information on: access for individuals with disabilities to park and recreation areas and programs; training programs and opportunities; technical assistance for park and recreation professionals; and research and demonstration projects.

U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (U.S. Access Board) www.access-board.gov

Provides information on: current status of accessibility standards and proposed accessibility guidelines; future meetings of the Access Board and minutes to previous meetings; Access Board newsletter and other publications; Information on activities of ongoing projects.

U. S. Department of Justice- ADA Home Page
www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahoml.htm

Provides comprehensive information on the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities act, updates on new developments, and technical assistance information.

U.S. Census Bureau
www.census.gov/hhes/www/disable.html

Provides information on the Office on Statistics and on disability population statistics.

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)
www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/index.html

Provides information on NIDRR projects, publications, and other disability and rehabilitation resources.

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers
www.ncddr.org/urllist/adatech.html

Provides information on technical assistance for entities covered by Title II and III of the ADA; listings of Regional Centers; and the most frequently asked questions on the provision of access for people with disabilities.

International Disability Access Symbols
www.gag.org/das/

Provides information on international symbols organized by the Graphic Artists Guild Foundation; and, symbols for downloading, including audio description, volume control, sign language interpretation, closed captioning and others.

Abledata
www.abledata.com

Provides information on: national on-line database of assistive technology and lists for products, manufacturers, and organizations.

Center for Universal Design
www.design.ncsu.edu:8120/cud/

Provides information on: principles of Universal Design and the concept of designing products and environments to be usable by all people.

Trace Research and Development Center
www.trace.wisc.edu/index.html

Provides information on interdisciplinary research, development and resource materials on technology and disability and recommendations for designing accessible web pages.

National Center on Accessible Media (WGBH-Boston)

www.wgbh.org/wgbh/index.html

Provides information on research and development for accessible media; Rear-Window movie captioning system; and recommendations for accessible web pages.

Project ACTION

www.projectaction.org/

Provides information on technical assistance programs promoting accessible transportation systems within communities throughout the US.

Beneficial Designs

www.beneficialdesigns.com/

Provides information on rehabilitation engineering and design and the innovative Universal Trail Assessment Process for mapping levels of difficulty for trails.

Wilderness Inquiry

www.wildernessinquiry.org

Provides information on outdoor adventures for people of all ages and abilities.

TransCen, Inc.

www.transcen.org

Provides information on accessibility standards, training programs and opportunities, and additional accessibility resources.

-----End of Director's Order-----