

MINUTES OF MEETING OF July 10, 2024

Hampton Beach State Park Accessibility Feasibility Study
Focus Group – Adaptive Equipment / Events

DATE PREPARED: July 15, 2024

LOCATION: Virtual

ATTENDEES: Johanna Lyons NH DNCR State Park Planning & Development Specialist
 Daniel Santos NE Passage Accessibility Specialist
 Kelly Walsh Adaptive Sports Partners
 Cayla Hammaker Move United Sport
 Ralph Fatello Wounded Warriors- Hit the Beach
 Nicole Rogers GPI

PURPOSE: Focus Group – Adaptive Equipment / Events

GPI led the discussion following a detailed Agenda. The meeting started with introductions followed by a project debrief and an open discussion period. The following topics were raised:

Discussion Topics:

1. Identifying Accessibility Barriers:

- **Kelly Walsh:**
 - Emphasized the importance of accessible website information and clear signage.
 - Suggested creating an "Accessibility" tab on the website with comprehensive details on accessible features and locations.
 - Mentioned a State Park near Plymouth, NH, that is popular due to its beach wheelchair accessibility, highlighting the need for such features.
- **Cayla Hammaker:**
 - Stressed the need for public awareness through social media, press releases, and collaborations with organizations like Northeast Passage.
 - Highlighted that awareness efforts should include clear information on accessibility improvements to draw more visitors.
- **Daniel Santos:**
 - Discussed the availability of beach wheelchair rentals (from third party organizations) to reduce reliance on a first-come, first-serve basis. However, need to better broadcast that option/
 - Noted the importance of adaptive equipment for the aging population and individuals with disabilities.
 - Mentioned various types of beach wheelchairs (e.g., Debug, Sand Rider, Hippocampe) and their suitability for different needs. (See last page for additional information)

2. Transfer Equipment and Staff Training:

- **Daniel Santos:**

- Suggested portable transfer equipment, like motorized tracks or Hoyer lifts, to facilitate safe transfers from everyday chairs to beach wheelchairs.
- **Kelly Walsh:**
 - Recommended disability awareness training for staff to ensure appropriate language and interactions.
 - Stressed the importance of creating welcoming environments for individuals with disabilities.
- **Cayla Hammaker:**
 - Introduced "Inclusive Sport Fundamentals," a guide developed by Move United, covering disability knowledge, adaptive sports, and staff training.

3. Event Accessibility and Logistics:

- **Daniel Santos:**
 - Highlighted successful partnerships with other state parks (Bear Brook – archery, Odiorne – kayak/paddling) and local organizations (local retirement homes or aging facilities – adaptive cycling, etc.) for adaptive sports event
 - Emphasized the importance of inclusive event planning and accessibility considerations.
- **Kelly Walsh:**
 - Shared the successful partnership model with Cannon Mountain, involving accessibility training, resources, and equipment.
 - Explained how funds raised through specific events are used to improve accessibility, benefiting both the general public and adaptive athletes through the Cannon Infrastructure Fund

4. Innovative Solutions and Best Practices:

- **Daniel Santos:**
 - Mentioned advanced adaptive equipment like the Terrain Hopper and Hippocampe chairs for all-terrain use.
 - Suggested evaluating the suitability of various adaptive devices for different users.
- **Nicole Rogers:**
 - Proposed creating an accessibility facilitator or coordinator role to manage resources, partnerships, and communication.
- **Kelly Walsh:**
 - Emphasized the importance of universal design for accessibility, making all areas accessible for everyone, not just those with disabilities.
- **Cayla Hammaker:**
 - Emphasized the importance of using adaptive sports networks to spread the word

5. North Beach Events:

- **Ralph Fatello:**
 - Highlighted the importance of maintaining clear access points and the challenges posed by seaweed accumulation.
 - Suggested that “granite stairs” be reconstructed
 - Suggested implementing more accessible ramps at North Beach, specifically at the 12th St access point. This would be incredibly beneficial for Surfing with Smiles Event which operates from this access point due to its central location on North Beach. Additional accessible spaces would be beneficial here as well.
 - Noted the effectiveness of the 18th St ramp for the Wounded Warriors event. Use viewing platform for staging / equipment holding. Ramp could be widened.
 - Discussed the feasibility of clearing seaweed before events to ensure accessible pathways.

Recommendations Summarized:

- **Additional Accessible Ramps:**
 - Consider implementing accessible ramps at North Beach, particularly at the 12th St access point, similar to the effective 18th St ramp.
 - Acknowledge potential environmental and engineering challenges, such as storm surge and seawall integrity, in planning and construction.
- **Website and Public Awareness:**
 - Enhance the website with a dedicated "Accessibility" tab containing detailed information on accessible features and locations. Include Sites, Facilities, and "what to know before you go"
 - Use social media and press releases to increase public awareness of accessibility improvements and available resources.
 - Partner with Adaptive Sports Organizations and similar agencies to help spread the word
- **Partnerships and Training:**
 - Explore partnerships with adaptive sports organizations for equipment provision, staff training, and program development.
 - Utilize existing resources like the "Inclusive Sport Fundamentals" guide to train staff on disability awareness and adaptive sports.
- **Adaptive Equipment and Reservation System:**
 - Evaluate the feasibility of a reservation system for adaptive equipment to ensure availability and reduce the reliance on a first-come, first-serve basis.
 - Investigate funding opportunities for acquiring advanced adaptive equipment suitable for various users, including children and older adults.
- **Operations and Maintenance:**
 - Implement proactive maintenance strategies to address issues like seaweed accumulation before major events.
 - Coordinate with event organizers to ensure accessibility requirements are met, including clear pathways and equipment availability.
- **Action Items:**

 - Nicole to follow up with meeting notes and additional questions for participants who were unable to attend.
 - Participants encouraged to share the survey within their networks for broader feedback.

These minutes constitute our understanding of the discussions and conclusions reached. Please advise us within ten (10) days, in writing, of any exceptions or corrections.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Rogers
Project Manager

cc: Robert White, GPI
Travis Pryor, GEI
Alison Brady, GEI

Beach Wheelchairs: Types and Features

1. Debug Chair:

- **Design:** Features four large balloon tires for better stability and maneuverability on soft sand.
- **Seating:** More upright seating position, which is suitable for users who prefer or require a seated posture that offers good visibility and comfort.
- **Headrests:** Typically includes headrests and additional support options to enhance user comfort, especially for those with limited upper body strength.

2. Sand Rider Chair:

- **Design:** Three balloon tires (two in the back and one in the front), making it easier to maneuver over uneven surfaces.
- **Seating:** Offers a more reclined seating position compared to the Debug Chair, which may be beneficial for users who need to distribute their weight more evenly.
- **Headrests:** May include headrests and adjustable seating angles to accommodate different user needs and preferences.

3. Hippocampe Chair:

- **Design:** Known for its all-terrain capabilities, including large balloon tires that can be equipped for use in both sand and shallow water.
- **Seating:** Typically features a more flexible seating design that can be adjusted for different angles and positions.
- **Headrests and Accessories:** Includes options for headrests, harnesses, and additional support features, making it versatile for users with varying mobility needs. The chair is designed to prevent buoyancy issues, ensuring safety in the water.

4. Terrain Hopper:

- **Design:** Features four large wheels and a motorized system, allowing it to traverse rough and sandy terrain.
- **Seating:** Equipped with hand controls or a joystick for independent operation, providing a high degree of mobility and freedom.
- **Headrests and Support:** Offers customizable seating with headrests and harnesses, tailored to users who require significant support and stability.

Considerations for Selecting a Beach Wheelchair:

- **User Needs:** The choice of beach wheelchair should be based on the specific needs of the user, including their mobility level, the need for upper body support, and personal preferences for seating position.
- **Terrain Compatibility:** Different chairs offer varying degrees of compatibility with sand and water. For instance, the Hippocampe and Terrain Hopper are better suited for all-terrain use, while the Debug and Sand Rider are ideal for beach-specific use.
- **Independence vs. Assistance:** Some chairs, like the Terrain Hopper, are designed for independent use, allowing users to control the chair themselves. Others may require assistance from another person, particularly in navigating more challenging terrain.
- **Comfort and Support:** Features like headrests, harnesses, and adjustable seating angles are crucial for ensuring user comfort and safety, especially during prolonged use.