



STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

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Item #11: ADA Access at Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Funded Sites

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Approved by the Director:

Proposed Action: Briefing

Summary

Achieving the best Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access in a development project can pose a challenge for project sponsors. The Recreation and Conservation Office accessibility specialist provides specific technical assistance to sponsors to address access and design issues for persons with disabilities and general park design.

RCO staff is presenting information about finished projects that achieved Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access while dealing with difficult issues such as permits, technical feasibility, natural terrain, cost overruns, and historical/cultural issues.

Background

Accessible features and elements are critical for ensuring that Recreation and Conservation Funding Board-funded sites are usable by everyone. Some estimates state that 25 percent of the population has a disability as defined under the ADA. Good accessibility benefits everyone who may use a site, especially when the aging population and number of people with temporary limitations are considered.



The RCO took a proactive approach to complying with ADA by hiring an accessibility specialist in 1994. This staff specialist provides technical assistance to all sponsors about complying with federal laws, local building codes and standards, and other civil rights laws relating to funded projects. Most grant sponsors do not have an ADA specialist on staff. Grant sponsors that do have expertise on staff mostly work on ADA-related work part time. They often do not have the ability to keep up with requirements for outdoor recreational facilities.

The RCO accessibility specialist supports sponsors with technical assistance during the planning, engineering, permitting, accessibility, and building process. This up-front assistance leads to better designed projects, fewer problems with accessibility on final inspection (and thus, fewer re-appropriations due to delays), and ultimately, improved access. It also has reduced risk to the State of Washington by noting inaccessible projects or elements, and helping sponsors to make them more accessible. RCO also has helped agencies defend their decisions when they could not design and build projects to meet all accessibility standards.

Presentation Overview

Staff will give the Board an overview of considerations in ADA compliance, the services that the RCO provides, and common mistakes we find in projects. In addition, staff will use specific projects to highlight ADA considerations in Board-funded activities. Sponsors proposed the projects based on public need, not by a specific need for ADA improvements. However, as a part of each project, we helped them to identify and solve ADA challenges to improve the result.