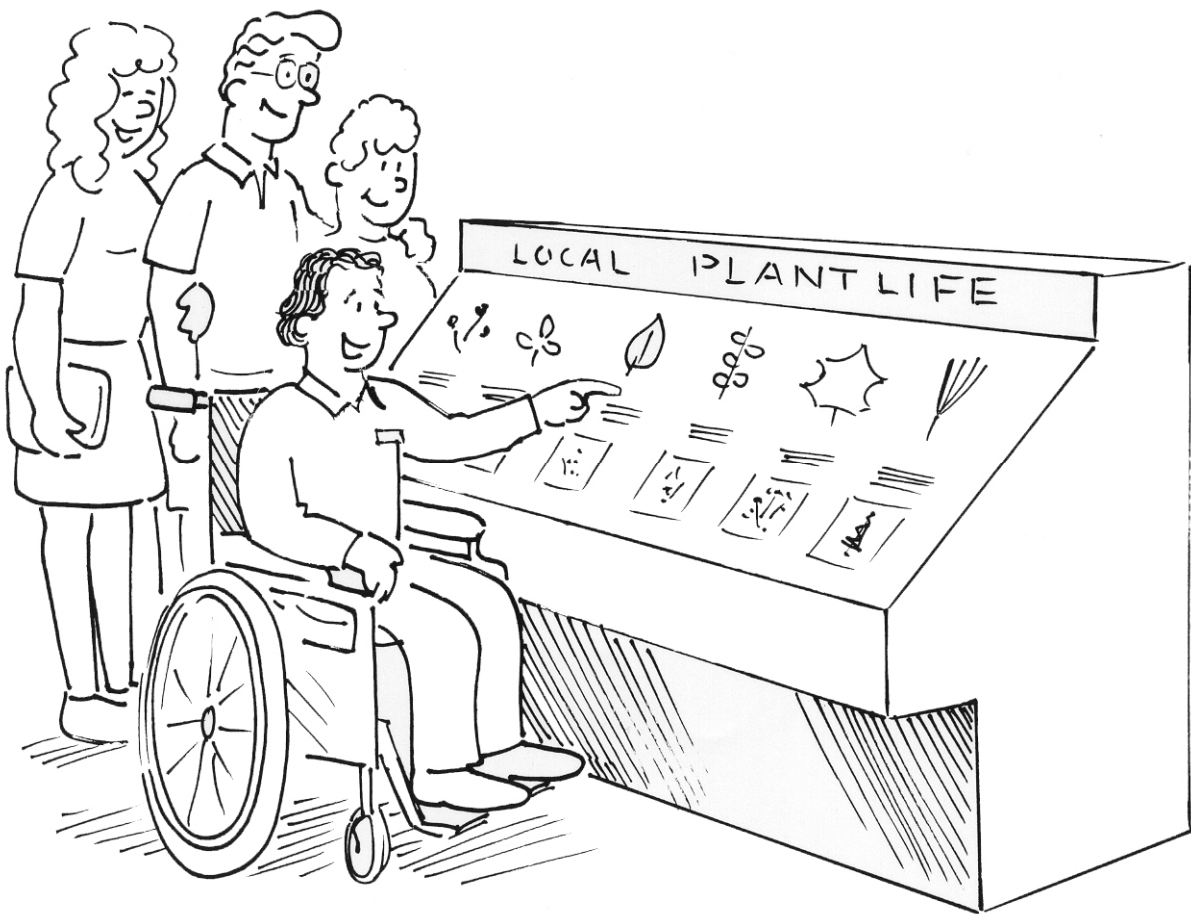


Interpretive Facilities



Overview

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, the California Department of Parks and Recreation is required to make all facilities accessible to people with disabilities. Steps should be taken to make sure that visitors have:

- Access to facilities from public sidewalks, parking, or public transportation. Adjustments may include adding ramps, additional accessible parking spaces, widening entrances and replacing hardware such as door openers that require tight pinching, twisting, or grasping.
- Access to the goods and services offered in the facility. Adjustments may include rearranging the layout of the exhibits or display areas, lowering counter heights, and providing Braille or large-print signage.
- Access to restroom facilities. Adjustments may include widening doorways, providing accessible signage, and installing grab bars.
- Access to any other privileges, advantages, or accommodations provided by state parks.

Newly constructed buildings and facilities must be free from architectural and communication barriers that restrict access or use by individuals with disabilities. Also, any alterations to an existing building must be made accessible.

California State Parks must meet requirements delineated in Title II of the ADA, which applies to public agencies. Title II states that accessibility requirements must be met, with two exceptions: When compliance would result in a “fundamental alteration” of the program or service or when “undue financial or administrative burden” would be created. An example of fundamental alteration might be viewed in the creation of a backcountry trail into a wilderness area. In order to make such a trail accessible, significant alteration would likely need to be accomplished; this then would destroy the intended purpose of the trail—providing a wilderness experience. As it applies to California State Parks, the exemption based on undue financial/administrative burden could be extremely difficult to justify, as we are a branch of the State of California government.

If accessibility requirements cannot be met, alternative steps must be taken to make the park resources, interpretive displays, or services of state parks accessible. These could include providing services at the door or outside, relocating exhibit objects or merchandise to accessible shelves or spaces, and providing activities in accessible locations. **Facilities and programs accessible to people with disabilities should be identified with the proper symbols of accessibility.**

All accessible entrances need to display the International Symbol of Accessibility. Refer to the *Publication Guidelines* on page 169 for information regarding access symbols.

Two levels of accessibility regulations exist—federal and state. At each level, there is considerable legislation regarding accessibility. At this time, most dominant from the federal level is *The United States Department of Justice 2010 ADA Standards*, which is

a combination of guidelines previously contained in the *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, (ADAAG) and the *Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards*, (UFAS). At the state level, technical requirements for providing accessibility are primarily contained in the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, California Building Code. In those instances where differences exist between the federal and state laws, the most stringent of the two must be followed. A consolidated resource regarding most issues influenced by both federal and state legislation is the *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines* (CSPAG), available on the California State Parks website (www.parks.ca.gov/accessibility). In some cases, the Department may recommend more than what the law currently requires because accessibility to many outdoor areas is an emerging concept and certain technical standards are still under development.

For the purposes of this handbook, this section will focus on interpretive facilities, including amphitheaters and campfire centers; historic structures and sites; interpretive trails; and visitor centers, interpretive centers, museums, and the exhibits displayed in them. The information provided in this section is intended to give the reader guidance on improving accessibility to our interpretive facilities. However, it is by no means comprehensive. **For complete information on compliance with departmental requirements in relation to facilities, park staff should always consult *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines* or Accessibility Section staff.** References to specific sections in the *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines* are made throughout the following sections.

Amphitheaters and Campfire Centers

Amphitheaters and campfire centers can be very effective interpretive facilities. They provide space for day or evening talks, workshops, demonstrations, audio-visual programs, dramatic presentations, puppet shows, Junior Ranger programs, and special events.

These facilities and the routes to them need to be physically accessible to visitors using wheelchairs and other assistive mobility devices. At campfire centers and amphitheaters, the programs themselves need to be accessible to all visitors, including those who may have hearing, learning, intellectual, or mobility impairments.

The following suggestions and requirements are provided to assist park staff in assessing and designing amphitheaters and campfire centers to assure access to all visitors, including those with disabilities. However, this is not a comprehensive list. For specific information on facility requirements, see the *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, the *2010 Accessibility Standards*, and *California State Accessibility Standards*.



Hearing Impairments

- Provide an assistive listening system, like those described in the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 17. When this equipment is made available, the International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss (shown here) should be displayed. Receivers for assistive listening systems shall be provided at a rate of 4 percent of the total number of seats, but in no case less than two receivers.
- If the campfire center or amphitheater seats a large audience, use an amplification system for programs.
- If the listening system serves individual fixed seats, these seats should be located within a 50' viewing distance of the stage or playing area, with a complete view of the performance space.
- Remember, service animals such as hearing guide dogs are allowed in all park facilities.
- Amphitheaters and campfire centers should be located in areas with minimal background noise.



Mobility Impairments

- Evaluate the route from the parking area to the amphitheater or campfire center. The path should be accessible to people using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. Stairs, curbs, steep slopes, and slippery surfaces may prove difficult for visitors with mobility impairments. A route with ramps may be necessary. Campfire centers may have a paved trail that directs visitors from accessible parking to the campfire center. Space may be provided near the front of the campfire center for people using wheelchairs. See *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 33, for detailed information.
- Walkways, corridors, aisles, slopes and handrails have specific measurement requirements that must be met. See *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 8, for information on these requirements.
- *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 8, also contains detailed information about seating requirements.
- The ground or floor of the wheelchair space should be level, firm and slip-resistant. (2010 ADA Standards 302.1) Wood chips and gravel are not recommended as a surface for campfire centers, as they can be extremely slippery. Concrete, asphalt, or a hard-packed dirt surface, resistant to forming puddles when wet, work best.
- An accessible route should connect wheelchair seating spaces with the performing area and backstage areas used by performers. (2010 ADA Standards 206.2.6) Some state parks provide ramps leading to the stage of the campfire center, so visitors with mobility impairments are able to participate in skits.
- Remember, service animals are legally permitted in all facilities.

Visual Impairments

- The amphitheater or campfire center should be bright and evenly lit during the time when visitors are entering or exiting the facility.

- On at least one side of the trail to the campfire center, a distinctive edge should be provided to serve as a cue for visitors with visual impairments. This edge should differ from the surface texture of the trail, as well as the textures outside the trail. Refer to the *Interpretive Trails* section on page 135, for more information.
- Walkways and aisles should be free from protruding objects. Refer to *CSPAG*, Section 33, for specific requirements regarding protruding objects.
- Refer to *CSPAG*, Sections 8, and 35 for detailed requirements regarding signage.
- Stairways must be designed according to specific standards. Refer to *CSPAG*, Section 38, for detailed information.
- Remember, service animals assisting people with disabilities are legally permitted in all park facilities.

Historic Structures and Sites

Historic structures are preserved as they were in their original state or are reconstructed structures of a particular period. In state parks, they are used to house museums, visitor centers, museums, interpretive centers, concessions, park offices, and storage. Historic structures are often distinguished by features such as narrow hallways and entryways, steep or monumental stairways and steps, and heavy doors. These elements not only pose difficulty for people with disabilities, but also may form actual physical barriers that make some historic structures inaccessible. Historic sites are locations of historical importance.



How do you make historic buildings or sites accessible to people with disabilities without threatening or destroying their historic significance? This question is often very difficult to answer. *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 22, which deals with historic buildings/sites, states, “The same access code requirements as those for non-historic buildings shall apply to historic structures unless compliance with regular code threatens historical significance or character-defining features. In other words, the accessibility requirements outlined in other CSPAG sections on buildings, doorways, elevators, lifts, ramps, restrooms, routes of travel, etc., should be applied before” alternatives are considered. Staff must fully understand that a decision to use alternative access is not to be taken lightly. Serious consideration must be given to various descending levels of creating access as outlined in the California State Historical Building Code, Chapter 8-6, Accessibility. Ultimately, documentation must be developed, and sign-off at headquarters—not within the District—will be necessary.

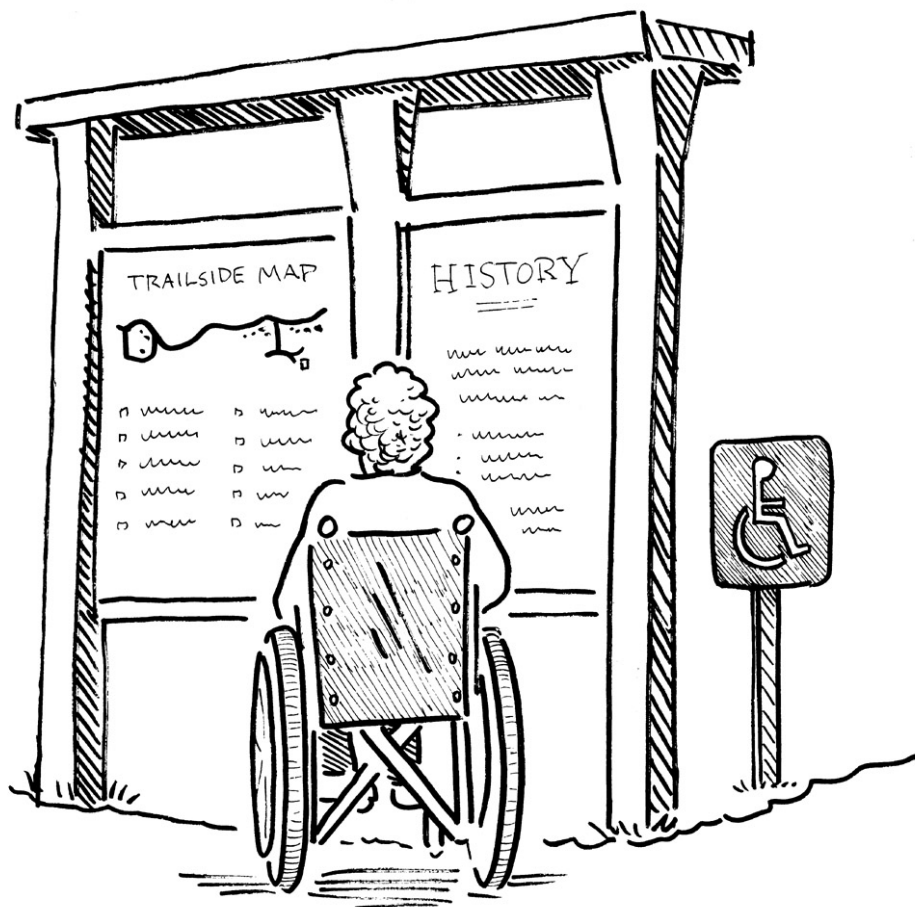
Examples of alternative measures include:

- Providing audio-visual materials and devices to show the areas of the historic structure or site that are inaccessible. These could include: films, video, slide shows, photographs, or taped audio description of the areas.
- Arrange for interpretive staff to guide individuals with disabilities into or through inaccessible areas of the building or site. **Do not** carry a visitor with a mobility impairment through an inaccessible area. The only time park staff may carry a visitor is when it is requested by the visitor and the park staff person is specifically trained on how to do so, or in the case of an emergency.
- Provide accessible, portable restrooms if those inside the historic structure cannot be modified to meet ADA requirements.
- Relocate programs and services to accessible locations.

Interpretive Trails

Trails can effectively interpret the quality and extent of an area's cultural development or of its natural life forms, forces, and elements. Resources located on the trail can be interpreted through brochure descriptions keyed to numbered posts or recognizable landmarks, audio versions of brochure text, trail panels, visitor-activated message repeaters, or park staff. Self-guided trails also can serve large numbers of users at their own pace. They should provide physical access to park areas, as well as effectively interpret the park's resources.

Trails should be designed for all visitors. People with disabilities do not particularly want a "special" or separate trail. For example, trails providing signage or printed guides in Braille are encouraged, but they should not be labeled as "Braille Trails." Keep in mind that trails made accessible to people in wheelchairs are also convenient for visitors using baby strollers, crutches, or walkers.



A variety of obstacles can make maneuvering on a path or trail difficult or impossible for visitors with disabilities. These obstacles may include large rocks, protruding roots, overhanging branches or vines, soft trail surfaces, erosion channels, ice, and stream crossings. Attempts should be made to keep paths and trails clear of such hazards.

Understandably, not all outdoor areas are capable of being wheelchair accessible, just like you cannot build roads in places with rocky cliffs or steep, rugged mountain sides without significantly altering the natural environment. State park trails need to be as accessible as possible, but sensitive to the natural landscape. A multidisciplinary team of trail designers and resource specialists shall address trail accessibility per the Federal Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas. This process will determine to what extent the trail can be made accessible while protecting the resources of the area.

The Department has specific standards for paths and trails published in the *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 41. Refer to this publication, as well as guidelines for “Walks” in *California State Accessibility Standards, Title 24* and “Accessible Routes” in the *2010 ADA Standards*.

The following suggestions will assist park staff in designing and operating trail systems, so they can be made accessible to all visitors, including those with disabilities. The requirements are indicated with the section of the law (in parenthesis) that applies to the situation.

Hearing Impairments

- Make available a transcript of any verbal trail information provided through visitor-activated message repeaters.
- Trail panel text should follow the easy-to-read format, as described in the *Publications Guidelines* section on page 167.
- Remember, leashed service animals are allowed on trails.

Learning Disabilities

- Provide interactive wayside exhibits. Some parks offer “adventure packs” to visitors using self-guided trails. Included in these packs are magnifying glasses, field guides, and other tools useful for self-guided interpretation.
- Trail panel text should be grouped in an organized fashion, following the easy-to-read format described in the *Publications Guidelines* section on page 167.
- Information presented in trail signage should be in basic terms that avoid abstractions.
- Provide trails with varying lengths and degrees of difficulty. Some visitors with learning disabilities have shorter attention spans, and trails which take 20-30 minutes to complete may be preferred. Signs located at trail heads may state the trail length and difficulty. Approximate time to complete trail is not currently required on accessible signage.
- Trail signage should include illustrations to supplement the printed text.
- Record trail signage in common downloadable audio formats such as MP3, and make players available for loan to visitors who may be unable to read. Many state

parks offer free audio tours and information on their California State Parks webpages, as well as self-guided trail brochures available at certain trail heads.

Intellectual Disabilities

- Trails should be easy to follow. Clearly mark trail routes with directional signs, especially when separate trail paths cross.
- Offer park visitors a trail map to use while they are on their walk. Indicate on the map the trail's route and cultural or natural features that can be seen along the way. This stimulates curiosity and piques visitor interest.
- Provide interactive wayside exhibits. Examples of bark, leaves, or needles of the different trees in the area, could be made available for visitors to touch as they read about them. These may not only provide tactile and olfactory stimulation, but also will help keep visitors on the trail who might otherwise veer off to feel the textures of trees, or to smell the scent of a Douglas fir.
- Trail panel text should be grouped in an organized fashion, following the easy-to-read format described in the *Publications Guidelines* section on page 167.
- Information provided on trail signage should be presented in basic terms.
- Offer trails with varying lengths and degrees of difficulty. Some visitors with intellectual disabilities have shorter attention spans and could easily become distracted or bored. A trail that takes 20-30 minutes to complete may be preferred. At the beginning of the trail, be sure to state the length and difficulty rating of the trail.
- Trail signage should include illustrations to supplement the printed text.
- Make audio recordings of trail signage and have them available for visitors who may be unable to read.

Mobility Impairments

- Refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 41, for specific requirements regarding physical accessibility to trails.
- Signs should be positioned at the beginning of the trail, indicating the accessibility of the trail, obstacles which may be encountered on the trail, and trail distance. The time it may take to complete the trail is not currently required on accessible signage. Trails considered to be entirely physically accessible should display the "International Symbol of Accessibility" at the beginning of the trail and on trail maps.
- If possible, trails should be designed in a circular fashion and end where they began.
- When designing the trail, take into consideration the water run-off of the area, and make sure the trail has a hard-packed surface, free from exposed roots, holes, and rocks. Trail surfaces should be firm and slip-resistant. Concrete, asphalt, and other paved pathways meet these criteria, although they could be aesthetically unpleasant. Crushed stone, such as decomposed granite or compacted roadbase, can form an accessible surface when properly designed and constructed. Wood decking may be used as an accessible surface; however, this can be expensive, and warpage must be controlled. Other materials, such as polyethylene, are also being manufactured, and work well for trail decking systems. Brick or other paving materials set in sand are not recommended because they can easily shift, causing

irregularities in the surface. Do not use wood chips or loose gravel, as they can be extremely slippery. Untreated soil is not recommended unless soil conditions permit. When wet, it may create a slippery surface or can be eroded. Some soils can be treated with a hardener, making the route easier for wheelchairs and strollers to negotiate while keeping the trail natural.

- Provide all-terrain wheelchairs for visitors to use on sandy or rocky trails.
- Wide and level rest areas must be provided at certain intervals depending upon the steepness of the trail.
- Rest areas should include benches with armrests and backs in addition to adjacent clear spaces, so users of wheelchairs can sit next to their companions. Rest areas should also be positioned so visitors can enjoy an interesting feature as they rest.
- At rest areas, consider providing shelter from the hot sun or rainfall. Some visitors with mobility impairments may have difficulty controlling their body temperatures and could suffer from heat-related ailments. These visitors will especially appreciate the availability of shade in the warmer regions of the state.
- If possible, provide accessible restroom facilities and drinking fountains along the trail. The lack of restroom facilities often inhibits people with mobility impairments from venturing out onto park trails. Be sure to indicate the location of these facilities at the beginning of the trail and on trail maps.
- Any facilities located on the trail, such as restrooms, drinking fountains, and picnic tables, should follow *2010 ADA Standards, California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, and *California State Accessibility Standards*.
- Trail panels and wayside exhibits should be placed so they can be easily read by visitors in wheelchairs. Refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 18, for specific information on exhibits.
- Be careful not to “over-design” for accessibility. The trail should be kept as natural as possible. Use native materials for railings, curbs, etc.
- Remember, leashed service animals are allowed on trails.

Visual Impairments

- Position signs at the beginning of the trail to indicate its accessibility, obstacles that may be encountered on the trail, trail distance, and the difficulty rating of the trail.
- Trails should have a hard surface, free from obstructions, such as exposed roots, rocks, large holes, etc.
- Provide a distinctive edge on at least one side of the trail to cue visitors with visual impairments. This edge should differ from the surface texture of the trail, as well as textures outside the trail.
- Trails, walkways and aisles should be clear from protruding objects. Refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Sections 33 and 41, for specific requirements.
- Offer a handout in Braille or in large print of the trail signage text.
- Record audio descriptions of trail signage and make them available for loan to visitors with visual impairments.
- Distinctive cane-detectable surface texture changes should be installed in the trail tread surface to alert visitors to the presence of interpretive displays and other site amenities.

- Interpretive trails can be outlined with rope to provide access to people with visual impairments. Rope outlines are not required. For some visitors with disabilities, ropes are even considered insulting.
- If, for some unavoidable reason, the trail crosses a road, there should be a change in surface texture beginning 5' before the trail meets the road, and extending to the road.
- A curb or a railing should be installed whenever there is danger of falling off the trail. Be careful not to “over-design” for accessibility. The trail should be kept as natural as possible. Use native materials for railings, curbs, etc.
- Provide interactive trail exhibits that involve all the senses. Do not label these as “for the blind” or “blind trail.” Encourage all visitors to use the interactive exhibits.
- Remember, leashed service animals are allowed on trails.

Limited English Proficiency

- Develop handouts of the trail signage in an easy-to-read English format, as well as in different languages. For more information, refer to the *Publications Guidelines* section on page 167. Some Parks offer trail brochures in German, French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and Dutch.
- Trail signage should include illustrations to supplement the printed text.
- If possible, provide brochures or handouts of interpretive panel text in multiple languages.
- Provide visitor-activated message repeaters on the trail in different languages.

Older Adults

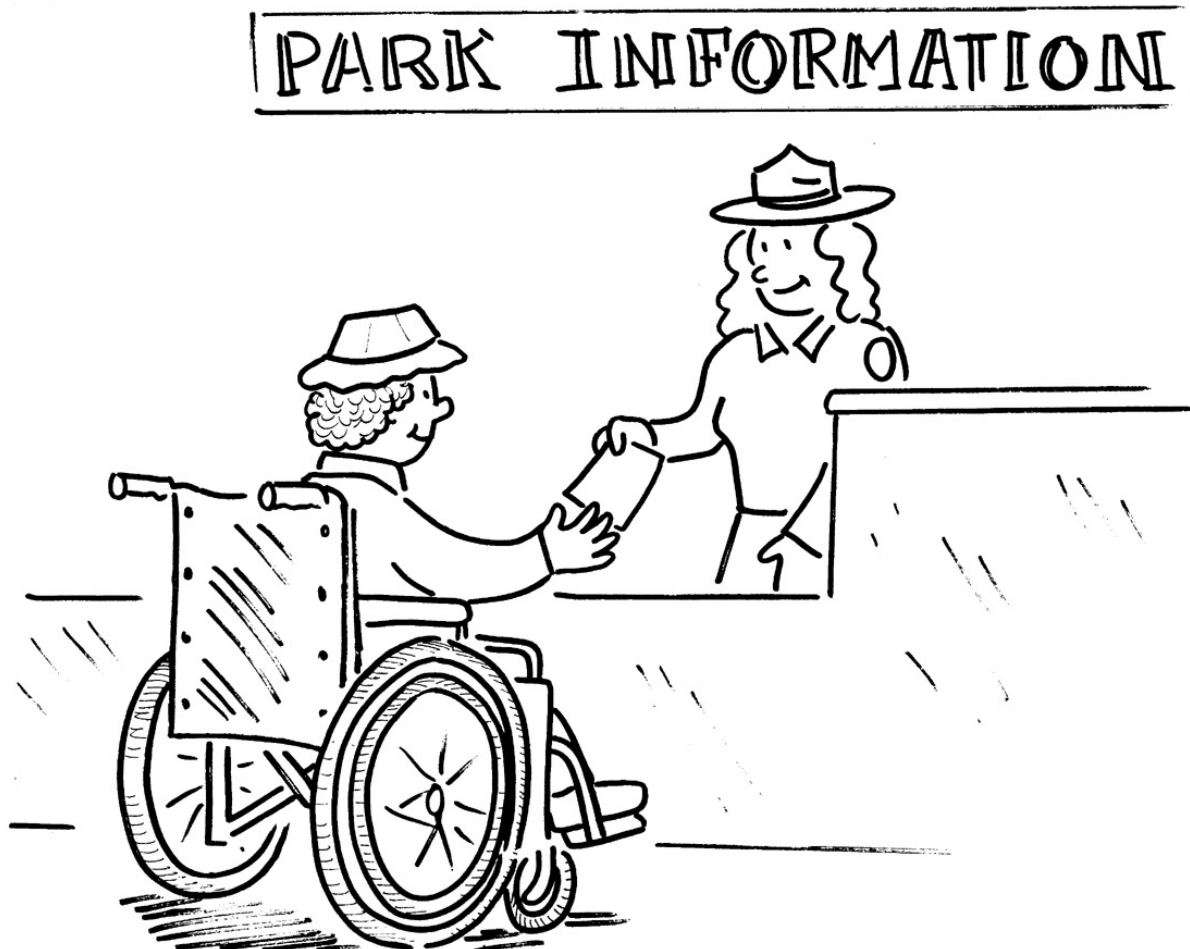
Older adults may have one or more of the disabilities previously mentioned, or none of them. The following are additional considerations for older adults:

- Some older adults need extra time to allow their eyes to adjust to drastic changes in light levels. Others may have difficulty seeing in dimly lit areas. For trails that pass through areas of poor lighting, such as a densely forested area, or that have extreme changes in light levels, signage should be placed before entering the area to warn visitors. Also, any obstacles should be removed. If most of the trail is in low-level light, you may want to instruct visitors to carry flashlights.
- If possible, provide accessible restroom facilities and drinking fountains along the trail. The lack of restroom facilities often inhibits older adults from venturing out onto park trails. Be sure to indicate the location of these facilities at the beginning of the trail and on trail maps.

Visitor Centers, Interpretive Centers and Museums

Visitor centers, interpretive centers, and museums are major attractions in state parks. Most visitors will go into a park's interpretive facility to orient themselves to their surroundings, to learn about the park's natural or cultural history, or to simply use the restroom. It is imperative that these structures and the exhibits and services they contain be accessible to all visitors.

Visitor centers are staffed facilities that help individuals become oriented to the area they are visiting. Often, they are the visitor's first stop in the park. Many centers provide a comfortable space where individuals can also relax and refresh themselves after their trip to the park. Most visitor centers include restrooms, drinking fountains, telephones, and first aid resources, along with an information area. Some visitor centers also contain interpretive exhibits and sales areas.



Interpretive centers and museums offer the comfort and information services of a visitor center, with a strong focus on park interpretation that highlights relevant themes. Many of the facilities have indoor and outdoor exhibits that include dioramas, artifacts, and plant and animal specimens, as well as replicas. Audio-visual programs may also be provided, allowing visitors to relax and watch a short film or slide show before (or after) exploring the park's natural and cultural features. Often, a visit to the interpretive center or museum becomes the highlight of a visitor's park experience.

Historic structure museums, also known as historic house museums, differ from other park museums. These facilities are also required to be accessible, but may, in some cases, follow alternate minimum requirements. More information is provided in the *Historic Structures and Sites* section on page 133.

The following requirements and suggestions are provided to assist the process of assessing and redesigning interpretive facilities to better accommodate all park visitors. This is not a comprehensive list of requirements. Refer to the *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines* for detailed information.

Hearing Impairments

- Provide an assistive listening system to aid communication between park staff and visitors, and/or to supplement audio exhibits. Refer to the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 17 for more information. Where this equipment is offered, be sure to display the International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss (shown here).
- All informational and interpretive signage should follow an easy-to-read format and display the proper access symbols. Refer to the *Publications Guidelines* section on page 167 for more information.
- Display a plan of the facility and/or a map of the park. This will help visitors find their way around, without having to ask. It will also aid the park staff giving directions or descriptions of the area.
- Emergency alarms should be visual, as well as audible. For information on alarms, refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 1.
- Remember, service animals are allowed in all park facilities.



Mobility Impairments

- Evaluate the route from the parking lot to the interpretive facility. The route must be accessible to people using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. Stairs, curbs, steep slopes, and slippery surfaces may prove difficult for visitors with mobility impairments. It may be necessary to develop a route with ramps.
- If the interpretive facility is considered historic and is not readily accessible, such as a house museum, refer to the *Historic Structures and Sites* section on page 133 for special requirements and make sure that the programs and services offered within are also available in an accessible location.
- For information on information and sales areas, refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 42.

- Sales items, such as books, maps, and souvenirs, should be easily reached by visitors using wheelchairs. See the diagram below for forward and side reach ranges of people using wheelchairs, and refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 42.
- Visitor flow through the facility should be smooth. If possible, create a circular route to avoid situations where visitors must back up or turn around to get out.
- Ground and floor surfaces along accessible routes and in accessible rooms and spaces including floors, walks, ramps, stairs, and curb ramps, shall be stable, firm, and slip-resistant. (2010 ADA Standards 302.1)
- Refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines* for detailed information on measurements for walkways, corridors, ramps, slopes, etc.
- Seating with backrests and armrests should be provided in the interpretive center, visitor center, or museum. Seating provided outdoors should be located in areas with shade.
- Restrooms, drinking fountains, telephones, and other services provided at a visitor center need to be wheelchair accessible. Refer to US DOJ *2010 Accessibility Standards*, *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, and *California State Accessibility Standards* for requirements and guidelines.
- Remember, service animals are legally permitted in all facilities.

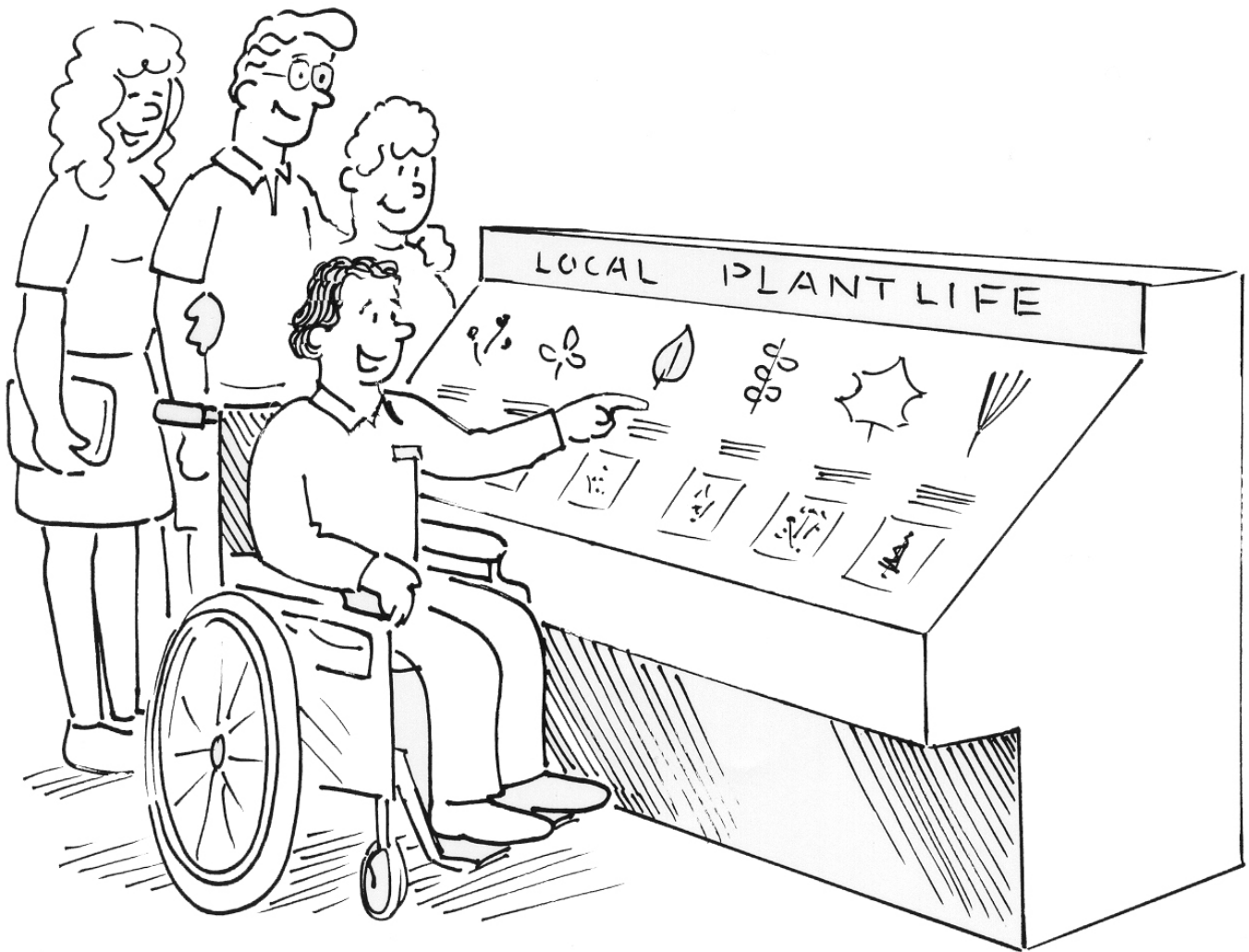
Visual Impairments

- Provide a tactile or talking map of the interpretive facility and/or surrounding park areas, illustrating trails, roads, restrooms, and points of interest.
- Signage must follow the guidelines specified in *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 35.
- If a trail serves as the main route to the interpretive facility, then a distinctive edge should be provided on at least one side of the trail, to serve as a cue for visitors with visual impairments. This edge should differ from the surface texture of the trail, as well as the textures outside the trail. Refer to the *Interpretive Trails* section on page 135 for more information.
- The interpretive facility should be bright and evenly lighted.
- Walkways and aisles should be clear from protruding objects. Refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 33, for more information.
- For specific information about stairway requirements, refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 38.
- Remember, service animals are legally permitted in all park facilities.

Exhibits

The main purposes of interpretive exhibits are to inspire visitors to explore, to learn, and to protect the area's natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Exhibits use many media, including encased objects, touchable objects, interactive games, natural history dioramas, models, historic setting vignettes, three-dimensional maps, text and computer programs, environmental monitors (weather, tides, earthquakes, etc.), microscopes, live animals and plants, and more.

Listed in this section are suggestions on how to make exhibits accessible and more enjoyable for people with disabilities. For specific information on exhibit requirements refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 18.



Hearing Impairments

- Provide exhibits that involve all the senses. For example, consider having samples of dried foods pertaining to the time period or theme for visitors to smell.
- Provide an assistive listening system and transcripts of exhibits containing audible information. Refer to the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 17.

Learning Disabilities

- Interactive, touchable, and sensory exhibits are popular with all visitors. These exhibits can help reinforce written or audible information. A simple example is a display of local rocks for visitors to touch and feel, along with a printed description of each one.
- Exhibits should be well organized; visually and structurally.
- Assistive listening devices, such as hardwire or infrared systems that translate the exhibit text, can be helpful to visitors who may be unable to read. Refer to the *Assistive Listening Systems* section on page 17, for more information.
- Exhibit text should follow an easy-to-read format, as described in the *Publications Guidelines* section on page 167.
- Ask interpretive staff to demonstrate interactive exhibits or respond to questions.
- Avoid using fonts that may be difficult to read, such as script or ornate lettering. If using these fonts, also provide the text in an easy-reading sans serif font. Refer to the *California State Parks Access Guidelines* Section 18, II for more information.

Intellectual Disabilities

- Interactive, touchable, and sensory exhibits are popular with all visitors. Parks can easily provide objects such as cones, foliage, and footprint casts for visitors to touch and inspect.
- In some situations, it may be necessary to remind visitors which of the exhibits may or may not be touched, or use a barrier to protect artifacts that may not be touched.
- Ask interpretive staff to demonstrate interactive exhibits and respond to questions.
- Exhibit text should be easy to read, and a handout of exhibit information in an easy-to-read format should be supplied. Refer to the *Publications Guidelines* section on page 167 and the *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 18.
- Avoid using fonts that may be difficult to read, such as script or gothic; provide an accompanying text using an easy-reading sans-serif font.

Mobility Impairments

- Provide a captioned film, slide show, or photographs of exhibits that cannot be made accessible, such as historic buildings with multiple floors.
- For specific information on viewing zones, labels, horizontally mounted displays, and space for wheelchair access, refer to *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 18.
- Be aware of the types of fixtures used on interactive exhibits. Knobs, levers, handles, dials, etc., should be designed so they can be easily used by people with limited arm and hand movements.

- Take into consideration the forward and side reach of visitors in wheelchairs and adjust interactive exhibits accordingly. See *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 42.

Visual Impairments

- Tactile and sensory exhibits are especially helpful for visitors with visual impairments. A “touch table” with materials pertaining to the park can be an easy and fun exhibit to provide. Another idea is to arrange various objects (e.g., furs, rocks, bones, etc.) in “discovery” boxes. Then, invite visitors to explore with their hands in the boxes to try and guess the items they are touching. By lifting the lids, they could find the answers. The answers could also be provided in Braille for visitors who are visually impaired.
- Consider the lighting conditions of exhibits. They should be well and evenly lit. Reflective surfaces, glazed artwork, and shiny objects should be coordinated with appropriate lighting to allow exhibits to be viewed or read without glare.
- Exhibit text should follow the guidelines specified in *California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines*, Section 18.
- Provide examples of textures portrayed in paintings or photographs, such as straw, granite, or cloth, for visitors to touch and feel.
- Display a tactile relief map or make one available to visitors on request. This will assist visitors in orienting themselves to the park environment. A 3-D molded map can allow visitors to touch, feel, and better understand the mountains, valleys, and rivers.
- Keep magnifiers handy for visitors to examine photographs, signs, artifacts, fossils, and mounted specimens in the exhibits.
- Provide touchable models, either life-size or to scale, of rare or fragile objects that may not be touched. If the object is very large, reproduce a part of it so visitors can get an idea of its relative size.
- Enlarge photographs to allow visitors to see more detail. Use non-glare glass or a matte finish on the photographic paper.
- Arrange to have interpretive staff near the exhibit area to answer questions, to read aloud exhibit titles, or to guide visitors with visual impairments through the exhibits. Refer to *The Sighted Guide Technique* on page 31.
- Be familiar with techniques used to describe historic and natural settings and objects. Prepare written descriptive scripts for the most popular park attractions so that any staff member or volunteer can provide audio description as requested. Use these to characterize the exhibits for visitors. Refer to the *Methods of Description* section on page 31, for more information.
- Make an audio recording of exhibit display information in a common audio file format, such as MP3. Audio files could be given to visitors on CD, provided on a personal player available for loan at the exhibit, or made available for download to a visitor’s own personal player.
- Providing compact discs that contain written interpretive information stored in a common format, such as an Adobe PDF or Microsoft Word document, can also be helpful. Many people with visual disabilities have audible screen reading software that would allow them to listen to this interpretive information at home.

- Exhibit text and labels should be offered on request in large print (18-point font or larger) printed format.
- Offer additional informational resources in a reading list that pertains to an exhibit's theme. In this way, visitors may be able to take their park experience home through books in Braille, large print, or talking books available at local libraries.

Limited English Proficiency

- Provide audio explanations of the exhibits in English and other languages. Some parks offer audio tours in multiple languages.
- Printed copies of exhibit text should be offered in languages other than English.
- Arrange to have interpretive staff near exhibits to answer visitor questions.
- Whenever possible, develop exhibits that rely more on graphics and objects, rather than on text, to convey interpretive messages.
- A closer look or opportunity to feel an object may be more effective than verbal descriptions or printed explanations.

Older Adults

Older adults may have one or more of the disabilities previously mentioned—or none of them. In addition to some of the tips already mentioned, here are additional considerations for older adults.

- Remove potential barriers, which may cause accidents in areas with extreme changes in light. Some older visitors need time to allow their eyes to adjust to drastic changes in light.
- Cool colors, like green and blue, are not easily seen by some older visitors with increased eye lens density. Glare also can become a problem, as edges of counters seem to blend in with their background and make them hard to distinguish. Using contrasting colors on edges and large print signs printed on matte backgrounds will assist older individuals with this type of visual impairment.