



Accessibility in State Park Interpretive Programs and Facilities

Sixth Edition





# **All Visitors Welcome**

**Accessibility in State Parks  
Interpretive Programs and Facilities**

**Sixth Edition**

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# Preface to the 6th Edition

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Welcome to the sixth edition of *All Visitors Welcome: Accessibility in State Park Interpretive Programs and Facilities*. This book has been designed as a handy reference to help park staff plan and deliver public programs that provide improved accessibility for all visitors. The three purposes of this handbook are:

- 1) to educate park staff about the most common disabilities—thereby improving their understanding of, and their ability to effectively communicate with—the entire audience;
- 2) to provide suggestions for making existing park interpretive programs more accessible to people with disabilities, so they can participate in and enjoy them together with their families and friends; and
- 3) to inform park staff of state and federal facility access requirements, along with additional suggestions applicable to park interpretive facilities.

Since the first edition was published in 1994, the field of accessibility has experienced many changes. As new laws are passed and terminology changes, California State Parks' Interpretation and Education Division updates and revises *All Visitors Welcome* to provide the field with the most current information. This helps ensure that our parks will continue to be welcoming and accessible for all visitors.

Each time this handbook is updated; it must also be reviewed by the Accessibility Section of the Acquisition and Development Division. For this sixth edition, we thank Wendy Martin and Jason Spann of the Accessibility Section for their extensive input.

What's new in this edition:

- The term Intellectually Disabled is increasingly being used to describe those who were previously referred to as "Mentally Retarded." This shift in terminology more accurately describes the condition, is less offensive, and is more commonly accepted by all stakeholders in America and in other countries, and many other reasons.
- This edition includes the addition of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and heart conditions to the section on mobility impairments, as they affect a person's mobility to the same degree as the other common disabling conditions described in the same section.
- In September 2010, the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) adopted new standards. The new standards, known as the 2010 ADA Standards, are a combination of Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). Mandatory compliance with the new standards is not required until March 2012. However, in most cases the Department is obligated to use these most recently revised standards immediately. For more information, see: Tucker Consent Decree ([http://www.dralegal.org/cases/public\\_entities/tucker\\_v\\_ca\\_parks\(1-26-06\).php](http://www.dralegal.org/cases/public_entities/tucker_v_ca_parks(1-26-06).php)) and the ADA 2010 Revised Requirements ([http://www.ada.gov/revised\\_effective\\_dates-2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/revised_effective_dates-2010.htm))

- The passage of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 now requires movie theaters to provide audio descriptive services. This requirement may be extended to other venues in the future. Therefore, to keep cost and technical requirements at a minimum, the Department encourages staff and partners of California State Parks to incorporate audio description when planning or creating visual media.



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**California Department of Parks and Recreation:** Kenneth Jones, Park Stewardship; Theodore Crane, Park Services Division; Ray Ann Watson, Human Resources Office; Karen Collins, Marketing and Public Affairs; Cherilyn E. Widell, Office of Historic Preservation; Clifford Glidden, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Division; Keith Demetrak, Planning, Acquisition and Local Services; Patricia Morris, Park Services Division; Valerie Bradshaw, Park Services Division; Philip Carey, Environmental Design Division; Emerson D. Mills, Environmental Design Division; Steve Radosevich, Northern Service Center; Larry Martz, Marketing and Public Affairs; Patricia Turse, Gold Rush District; Karen Beery, San Simeon District; Bob Lennan, San Simeon District; Shannon Harmon, San Simeon District; Jerry Howe, San Simeon District; Phillip F. Fish, Calaveras District

**Other Agencies and Organizations:** Charles Horel, California Department of Forestry; Robert Garrison, California Department of Fish and Game; Susan Peterson and Alice McGill, Nor Cal Center on Deafness; Eric Murray, Alta California Regional Center; Don O'Hare, Sacramento Society for the Blind.

—Erika Porter, 1994



# Introduction

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For more than a century, millions of visitors have come to California's state parks to enjoy this state's diverse natural and cultural resources. Many come to participate in our parks' educational and recreational programs—even though they may have difficulty understanding what is said, seeing what is discussed, and accessing the facilities. Unfortunately, thousands more have missed viewing scenic areas or experiencing cultural and historical sites because they feared, often justifiably, that such areas or facilities would be inaccessible to them.

The policy of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to meet the recreational needs of all the people of California. The Department should provide an accessible environment where all visitors to the State Park System are given the opportunity to understand, appreciate, and participate in the state's cultural, historical, and natural heritage. Parks that offer visitors physical access to interpretive facilities and resources cannot be considered totally accessible unless the staff can also effectively communicate with visitors who have disabilities. Access to both facilities and programs is equally important.



In 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law. It directed that people with disabilities must be allowed to participate in regular programs and could not be discriminated against or treated separately because of their disabilities. In compliance with this law, state parks may not refuse to allow a person to participate in a service, program, or activity simply because the individual has a disability. Programs and services must occur in an integrated setting, unless separate or different measures are necessary to ensure equal opportunity. If a separate program is offered, individuals may still choose to participate in the standard program. Also, state parks must furnish auxiliary aids and services upon request. Although not considered disabled, persons with limited English proficiency and older adults are discussed in this handbook because they too can benefit from simple modifications or additions to interpretive programs and facilities.

It is important to keep in mind that the Department must view each program (including site access) in its entirety and make every reasonable attempt to ensure each program is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Where the burden to create accessibility would fundamentally alter the nature of a program, the decision for non-compliance must be made by the head of the public entity. Non-compliance decisions must be accompanied by an on-file written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion. California State Parks must then create a suitable alternative that will nevertheless ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the benefits or services provided (film, slide show or photographs, for example). When making a decision for non-compliance, or when selecting a suitable alternative, consultation with a District Accessibility Resource Group (DARG) is recommended.

Please take the time to review and understand this handbook's recommendations and use them at every opportunity. As a volunteer, seasonal, or permanent employee, making interpretive programs and facilities accessible is your responsibility. Through your efforts, all visitors will be welcome and given the opportunity to have an enjoyable and satisfying park experience.

# How to Use This Book

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In order to derive the most benefit from the information presented in this book:

- Read the *Types of Disabilities* section to become more familiar with the most common disabilities.
- When planning a specific program, review the suggestions offered in the Interpretive Programs section.
- Refer to the *Interpretive Facilities* section to evaluate and improve access to the program's site.

For example, when preparing a campfire program, first review the *Types of Disabilities* section, then read about Campfire Programs, and familiarize yourself with the suggestions offered. In addition, read the section in *Interpretive Facilities* on Amphitheaters and Campfire Centers. Understand and evaluate the level of accessibility of the area, and, where possible, make necessary adjustments.

Suggestions are often repeated throughout the *Types of Disabilities* and Interpretive Programs sections because they may apply to more than one type of disability or program. The *Tips and Techniques Tables* beginning on page 155 show which suggestions are useful for different types of disabilities.

The following abbreviations are used throughout this handbook:

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

2010 ADA Standards - United States Department of Justice 2010 ADA Standards

CSPAG - California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines

CA - California State Accessibility Standards

DOJ- Department of Justice



