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NCA Celebrates 10th Anniversary Promoting Access to Parks, Recreation & Tourism for People with Disabilities



"The National Center on Accessibility has for over ten years been committed to providing national level leadership in making park, recreation and tourism venues and programs accessible to people with disabilities. Through our research, technical assistance and training we have directly touched the lives of thousands of professionals, consumers and students. We believe that through these efforts, we have also indirectly benefited thousands more who now have better access to our nation's vast array of leisure opportunities. We extend our sincere appreciation to our colleagues for all of your support over the last 10 years and look forward to the next 10 years."

-Gary Robb, Executive Director

The Spring of 2002 marks the 10th anniversary of the National Center on Accessibility, one of the nation's premiere resource centers promoting access for people with disabilities. Over the last decade, NCA has played a critical role in increasing awareness of inclusion of people with disabilities in parks,

recreation and tourism while advancing the spirit and intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Rehabilitation Act and other disability legislation. A collaborative program of Indiana University and the National Park Service, NCA focuses on research, training and technical assistance to link the preferences and needs of people with disabilities to those of practitioners designing facilities and planning programs. Since the Center's inception in 1992, NCA has trained over 20,000 professionals and answered over 19,000 requests for technical assistance. NCA research findings have been instrumental in the development of national accessibility guidelines for swimming pools, trails, beaches, golf, and other recreation environments.

Current projects underway at the National Center on Accessibility include the development of a series of distance learning programs for the National Park Service, research on park visitor expectations, playgrounds and ticketing policies and the kick-off of a community golf program initiative with the National Alliance for Accessible Golf. Read more about NCA's milestones and current activities inside this special edition of *Access Today*.

Photo: Participants of NCA's Retrofitting for Accessibility training course study trail access on a site visit to Lake Pueblo State Park, Colorado.



The National Center on Accessibility is a program of Indiana University's Department of

Recreation and Park Administration and is funded in part by the U.S. Congress through the National Park Service. NCA focuses primarily on accessibility as it relates to parks, recreation, and tourism industries. Major objectives include: conducting research, providing technical assistance, developing resources and training materials, and conducting educational programs.

NCA Staff

Gary Robb, Executive Director
Ray Bloomer, Director of Education & Technical Assistance
Jennifer Bowerman-Skulski, Dir Marketing & Special Projects
Amy Patrick, Accessibility Specialist
Susan Ostby, Accessibility Specialist
Nan Smith, Training Logistics Coordinator
Anahit Behjou, NCA Secretary
Trudy Butrum, Financial Assistant
Linda Heerdink, Web Developer

Access Today is a free publication distributed by NCA with the purpose of updating and informing people in the recreation field of current developments in the area of accessibility. Access Today is available in alternative formats, back issues are also posted on the NCA web site. For more information:

National Center on Accessibility
 2805 East 10th St, Suite 190
 Bloomington, IN 47408
 (812) 856-4422 Voice
 (812) 856-4421 TTY
 (812) 856-4480 Fax
 nca@indiana.edu
 www.ncaonline.org

From the Editor's Desk

Accessiologist by Trade, Advocate at Heart

In January the staff of the National Center on Accessibility began team-teaching R270: Inclusive Recreation Services, a required class of all recreation majors at Indiana University. To past NCA training course participants, the curriculum will look very familiar: attitudes, terminology, accessibility standards, principles of

universal design, program access. Many of the class discussions have also followed the same direction as in NCA training courses: debate about the use of the word "handicapped" vs. "people first language;" discussion about Casey Martin and limited funding--how do we make accessibility improvements with limited or diminishing budgets? What has been truly interesting throughout the semester, has been the evolution or shift from "student" to "accessiologist." Over the years, a couple of our colleagues have coined the term "accessiologist" or "one who studies or advances accessibility." An accessiologist doesn't just go to a program, they look for all of the accessible elements and barriers along the way. Where is the accessible parking, entrance, restrooms? Does the program provide auxiliary aids or services? Are staff trained at serving patrons with disabilities? As the semester progresses, students make the shift to accessiologists. This evolution is the same "lightbulb moment" we hope to spark with NCA training course participants; the moment when students make the realization that equal access is not a privilege but a civil right, incorporating accessibility into programs and facilities doesn't have to be difficult, and we should do it--not because it is the law, but because it is the right thing to do. This semester will culminate with students conducting accessibility assessments of programs and facilities on the IU campus. They will identify barriers and make recommendations to university administration for improving access to students, staff, faculty and visitors with disabilities. Already we have heard comments like "I don't just go to the library or sports complex anymore, now I look for all the things that are either accessible or not to people with disabilities." Perhaps their practice as accessiologists will carry through to the "real world" too when they take their first jobs in parks and recreation. Get ready, here they come!



R270 students discuss accessible stadium seating in Assembly Hall.

In parks and recreation,
 Jennifer K. Bowerman-Skulski, Editor-*Access Today*

NCA Gears Up for Another Busy Summer

NCA staff might be 10 years older and wiser, but the years certainly haven't slowed them down at all. The NCA team is gearing up for another busy summer of research, technical assistance and training to assist colleagues in the field do what they do best even better, that is providing inclusive recreation opportunities for everyone.

NPS Distance Learning Program

The National Park Service has awarded NCA two contracts to develop distance learning programs in FY2002. The "Learning at Your Desktop" program will include a series of webcasts and an interactive CD-Rom on access to outdoor recreation environments.

NCPAD

NCA's fourth year of collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago begins this season. UIC partnered with NCA and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago to establish a National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD). NCA has developed a series of fact sheets and monographs for NCPAD while also providing technical assistance for consumers. NCA and NCPAD will sponsor a webcast "Recreation Access: Research to Practice" on June 20.

Ticket Policies Survey

NCA has partnered with the ADA/504 Coordinators for the Arts, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community to conduct a survey of facility operators of performing arts venues and sports arenas.



NCA Staff from left: Anahit Behjou, Susan Ostby, Amy Patrick, Ray Bloomer, Gary Robb, Nan Smith, Jennifer Skulski. Absent: Trudy Butrum and Linda Heerdink.

The survey explores how facility operators accommodate patrons with disabilities, from accessible seating to auxiliary aids and services.

Visitor Expectations Study

Research continues this season with the University of Tennessee. The perceptions of people with disabilities relative to program and physical access were studied at five National Park Service units: the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah National Park, Mammoth Cave National Park and Hot Spring National Park. This summer, researchers will interview park visitors with physical disabilities at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to explore their perceptions on access to the park and expectations as a park visitor.

Playground Study

Research will also continue this summer in Lombard, IL where NCA is studying the preferences of children with disabilities accessing

a playground specifically designed by the minimum accessibility guidelines. Is the playground not only accessible, is it usable? Inclusive? And most importantly, FUN!?

Research Subject Pool

People with disabilities are encouraged to join NCA's research subject. When NCA is conducting research in various regions of the country, the volunteer subject pool enables NCA to draw from a group of people with disabilities that also have similar interest in the research subject matter. NCA research volunteers have tested various products, surfaces and designs. Most notably, people with disabilities volunteering for the NCA research subject pool contributed to the development of accessibility guidelines for swimming pools soon to be released by the U.S. Access Board. People with disabilities interested in volunteering for research can send a letter of interest to NCA or e-mail to nca@indiana.edu.

New NCA Beach Report & Tech Sheets Available

The National Center on Accessibility has issued the results of research on temporary beach surfaces. Seven temporary surfaces were tested on ease of use by people with mobility impairments. In addition, the research study analyzed installation, weekly maintenance and cost. The executive summary is available on the NCA website, www.ncaonline.org. The full 78-page report is available through NCA for \$20 (includes shipping).



Volusia County Beach Patrol staff install one of the surfaces to be tested in the NCA research study.

NCA has also authored a series of technical assistance sheets on access to outdoor recreation environments. The tech sheets are available for download in PDF format on the NCA website, www.ncaonline.org.

- Trail Surfaces: What do I need to know now?
- What is an Accessible Trail
- Picnic Elements
- Campgrounds (coming soon)
- Beaches (coming soon)

Sign the NCA Guestbook

Have you participated in an NCA training course, used NCA research findings or received NCA technical assistance over the last 10 years? Send NCA staff a note of congratulations on 10 years of service promoting access and inclusion for people with disabilities. Sign the NCA 10th anniversary guestbook on the web at www.ncaonline.org.

Access Board Votes on Recreation Rule

On Wednesday, March 13, the U.S. Access Board voted unanimously to approve the recreation facilities accessibility guidelines. The recreation facilities guidelines address:

- Recreation facilities: sports facilities & swimming pools
- Places of Amusement
- Golf
- Boating and Fishing

Eventually the recreation facilities guidelines will be incorporated into the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). The Access Board has been working on the multi-phased development of accessibility guidelines specific to recreation facilities since 1993 with the coordination of a national advisory committee of stakeholders who provided preliminary recommendations. Access Board staff will make final preparations to the recreation facilities guidelines and then submit the final guidelines, along with other material such as a regulatory assessment (ie cost-benefit analysis) to the Office of Management and Budget for review and clearance. OMB then has 90 days for its review. Upon completion of review, the recreation facilities guidelines will be issued as a Final Rule by the U.S. Access Board sometime in late summer/early fall 2002. The last step will include adoption by the U.S. Department of Justice for inclusion within the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations.

Once the final rule is issued, it will be available on the U.S. Access Board web site at www.access-board.gov

Accessibility guidelines for outdoor recreation environments including trails, campgrounds, picnic areas and beaches are still under development by the Access Board.

Subscribe to NCA News, the official NCA listserv, for the latest information on training courses, new technical assistance publications, research findings, status of rulemaking and articles of special interest.
www.ncaonline.org

NCA Surveys Clients on Impact & Future

“Hello. This is the Indiana University Center for Survey Research calling. We would like to ask you a few questions about your experience with the National Center on Accessibility.”

You may have received this call over the winter. NCA recently contracted the IU Center for Survey Research to survey past training course participants on the impact of NCA services. A total of 362 professionals who attended NCA training courses participated in the survey. This is what some of you had to say:

97% of respondents shared information on accessibility with colleagues and staff after attending an NCA training course

84% of respondents reported they were able to improve staff attitudes about accessibility issues after attending an NCA training course

84% of respondents report they were able to improve staff attitudes about services for people with disabilities after attending an NCA training course

76% of respondents have been able to initiate physical access improvements to their facilities such as providing new or additional accessible parking, entrances, restrooms, trails or picnic areas

52% of respondents have been able to make programmatic accessibility improvements such as providing caption videos, assistive listening systems, sign language interpreters, tactile maps, alternative format brochures, and making exhibits accessible since attending an NCA training course

69% of respondents reported that their training from NCA helped to bring about new accessibility plans or improvements at their facility

70% of respondents reported that lack of funding was a barrier to implementing accessibility improvements at their facilities

Here is what some of you had to say about improvements you have been able to make after attending an NCA training course:

“We have initiated a series of programs to replace old bathrooms using an accessible design with the walkways to and from them; we have also worked with concessionaires to build accessible campgrounds.”

“We installed a \$20 million aerial tramway (gondola) that has a mid-station viewing deck that is totally accessible. In addition, we just built an RV park campground and a 12-person rental accommodation on the lake shore of Lake Tahoe that is totally accessible.”

“We purchased four beach wheelchairs. People are amazed that we have them, and very thrilled that they are available.”

“I’ve been able to make sure that our print products are accessible. I’ve also had input on designing exhibits and making sure our videos are accessible.”

“We’ve recently established an accessibility team to go throughout the state inspecting facilities, making recommendations, and spending money.”

“We contracted with a vendor to create a tactile model of the grounds and we are currently working on our tactile exhibits. We have a large-print brochure. We made an audio presentation for the tactile model and exhibit we have on slavery. We also have a captioned video in the works.”



Gary Robb talks with NCA training course participants about conditions for departure from the proposed trail provisions during a field visit to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

A note of thanks to all of you who participated in the survey. Your feedback has always been very important to NCA. We look forward to using your comments to continue to improve the quality of NCA services.

NCA Milestones Pave Accessible Route

Swimming Pools

When the U.S. Access Board's national recreation access advisory committee made preliminary recommendations for accessibility guidelines in recreation environments back in 1994, access to swimming pools was still questionable. The advisory committee stated that there was not enough information on how people with disabilities access swimming pools and thus called for more research.

"NCA made a significant contribution to the Access Board through the implementation of its Swimming Pool Accessibility Research Project. The results of this project formed the basis for ADA accessibility guidelines for swimming pools and spas."

*-Larry Roffee,
Executive Director,
U.S. Access Board*



NCA was awarded that research contract by the U.S. Access Board in 1995 and went on to study the preferences of people with disabilities as they enter and exit swimming pools and spas. NCA surveyed pool operators to examine the prevalence of designs and devices used to provide pool access, related policies and procedures, as well as safety and maintenance concerns. In addition, NCA tested a variety of equipment and designs including swimming pool lifts, transfer systems, ramps, moveable floors and zero depth entries to measure the appropriateness, independent use and safety of each. Later this summer, the U.S. Access Board will issue a final rule for accessibility guidelines for recreation facilities including swimming pools and spas. NCA's research findings serve as the basis for the new accessibility guidelines.



Beaches

Identifying practical solutions for beach access has long been a priority of NCA. One of the first research studies undertaken by NCA was a comprehensive look at assistive devices for beach access including wheeled beach chairs and surface applications to create accessible routes on beaches. In 2001, NCA partnered with Action Disability Advocates and the Volusia (FL) County Beach Patrol to investigate seven different temporary surface products that may provide easier access for people with mobility impairments across the sand to the water's edge. The study focused on consumer perceptions, costs, installation and maintenance. The research findings provide objective information to managers of beach areas allowing them to compare options for temporary surfaces used to create beach access.

Photos: (Left) A volunteer research subject enters the pool of the Indiana University Natatorium at Indianapolis using a transfer system. Research assistant Kathy Mispagel provides guidance while principle investigator Dr. Edward J. Hamilton looks on. (Above) The Volusia County Beach Patrol provide daily maintenance to temporary beach surfaces in preparation for use during research subject testing.

to Parks, Recreation & Tourism

Playgrounds

NCA has hosted two national symposia on playground access. In 1995, before there were accessibility guidelines for playgrounds, NCA developed "Access to Play Areas," a resource packet for playground owners. This spring, NCA will continue work on a research study in the Chicago-suburbs on the preferences of children with disabilities accessing play equipment. The objective of the study is to provide playground owners and designers with information on the preferences of children with disabilities so that they may design and install playgrounds that are inclusive, accessible, usable and preferred by children with disabilities.



Trails

Creating trails that are accessible, inviting and challenging without fundamentally altering the nature of the environment has been a challenge for outdoor recreation planners and designers. NCA has conducted research on proposed technical provisions for accessible trails and surface stabilizing applications. In addition, NCA has hosted a series of trail access symposia to highlight creative design and programming including the demonstration of the Universal Trail Assessment Process developed by Beneficial Designs.



Outdoor Recreation

Access to outdoor recreation environments has always been a top priority for NCA. NCA has been represented on both the U.S. Access Board's 1993 Recreation Access Advisory Committee and 1998 Regulatory Negotiating Committee on Outdoor Developed Areas. NCA research has included a profile of people with disabilities in the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment. In addition, NCA has collaborated with the University of Minnesota to study the functional aspects of accessible picnic elements and develop practical recommendations for park planners. Currently research includes a study with the University of Tennessee on the perceptions and expectations of visitors with disabilities in five national parks. Over the last 10 years, NCA staff have worked closely to link volunteers from the Telephone Pioneers of America to national parks in need of volunteers for accessibility improvement projects. NCA staff have also traveled nationally to conduct accessibility assessments and provide consultation to Alcatraz Island, Fort McHenry, Gateway National Recreation Area, Castillo De San Marcos National Monument, Indianapolis Parks Department, Wildlife Prairie State Park, and the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail....just to name a few!

For The Good of the Game:

Golf Access Proves to Be A Challenge

Access to the game of golf for people with disabilities has been one of the greatest challenges of all the recreational pursuits. The challenges don't lie so much in the physical, structural or landscape architecture of making golf courses accessible. More so the challenges are where golf course management policies and procedures meet the golfer with a disability head on at the first tee.

"While there have been a number of organizations and individuals involved in making the game of golf both more accessible and inclusive, the tireless contributions of the National Center on Accessibility have been at the forefront of this effort. Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done. In that regard, it is comforting to know that the NCA has committed its expertise to help insure the future success of this particular initiative, and, even more importantly, to promote the inclusion of all disabled individuals into the social fabric of society as a whole."

*-Trey Holland, President
United States Golf Association*

Long before Casey Martin had dreams of playing on the pro tour, the National Center on Accessibility and Clemson University had formed a unique partnership focused on increasing awareness of access issues within the golf industry. Together, NCA and Clemson have sponsored six National Forums on Accessible Golf. In 2001, as a direct result of the sixth annual Forum, NCA facilitated the establishment of the National Alliance for Accessible Golf, a collaboration of agencies, institutions, corporations and individuals committed to the inclusion of golfers with disabilities in the game of golf. Member organizations of the Alliance Leadership Council include: PGA of America, LPGA, USGA, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, National Golf Course Owners Association, Clemson University, Indiana University, University of Utah, National Therapeutic Recreation



Society and American Therapeutic Recreation Association.

NCA has conducted research on the Pace of Play and attitudes of golf course operators. In addition, the USGA sponsored NCA research "For the good of the game" leading to the development of the booklet "From the Bag Drop to the 19th Hole: Tips on Accommodating Golfers with Disabilities at Your Golf Course or Facility." This booklet has been distributed to all USGA members and is the leading resource for golf course operators as to strategies to successfully include people with disabilities in the game of golf.

The newly formed Alliance is physically housed at NCA, where NCA staff provide start-up support. This summer the Alliance will introduce Project GAIN (*Golf: Accessible and Inclusive Networks*). The project will develop and test a community model for advancing and sustaining golf for people with disabilities. Project GAIN will utilize a local steering committee of golf professionals, advocates, people with disabilities and others. Instructional programs, adapted activities, information resources and materials, technical assistance, and inclusive services will be offered as a strategy for meeting the needs of people with disabilities, regardless of their level of ability, living arrangement, or knowledge of the game of golf.

NCA: A Ten Year Success Story

by David C. Park, guest columnist
National Coordinator
Accessibility Management Program
National Park Service

Jonathan Swift once said "Necessity is the mother of invention!" This can certainly be said for the relationship between the National Park Service (NPS) and Indiana University's Department of Park and Recreation Administration that created the National Center on Accessibility (NCA). The cooperative relationship between NPS and Indiana University was initiated as a direct result of the federal cutbacks in training funds that reduced the availability of training in the area of how to make the parks more accessible to people with disabilities. These reductions in training opportunities happen to coincide with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which had correspondingly increased the demand for greater access. In an effort to continue and to expand training, the NPS Accessibility Management Program sought the assistance of Indiana University, which already had an outstanding reputation in the area of education and in accessibility. The initial agreement was to share resources in order to provide on-going training opportunities in the area of making park and recreation environments accessible to individuals with disabilities. Due to the success of the training programs the agreement was quickly expanded to create what is now known as the National Center on Accessibility. And, as they say, "The rest is history!"

NCA was established to assist the NPS in providing continuing education, technical assistance, and research and demonstration projects to park managers and their staff in providing equal access for visitors with disabilities. In addition, one of the original goals was to expand these opportunities beyond the NPS to

park and recreation professionals throughout the country. Over the ten years of its existence NCA has far exceeded its original intent and expectations and has emerged as a national and international leader in this important area of service. In recent years, the NCA accomplishments have included: (1) providing training in accessibility to over 20,000 park and recreation professionals (2) providing special seminars on critical issues such as trail access, historic site access, beach access, boating access and access to playgrounds, (3) providing direct technical assistance through telephone requests and through the NCA website, (4) conducting research on the methods and techniques for improving access to trails, beaches, historic sites and other outdoor areas, and (5) providing specialized training and technical assistance for other agencies including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Tennessee Valley Authority, NASA, the U.S. Forest Service, and state departments of natural resources.

Gayle Norton, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, and Fran Mainella, Director of NPS have both stated that the creation and nurturing of partnerships will be one of the important goals of this administration. This goal recognizes that in times of fiscal restraint and reductions in staff, pooling and sharing resources is not only prudent, but necessary. This partnership effort has greatly enhanced our ability to provide the technical assistance and education required by our parks to enable them to provide access to persons with disabilities in compliance with federal law and NPS policy.

It has also provided a mechanism for greater collaboration among park and recreation professionals around the world. Thanks NCA for a very productive and exciting partnership. We look forward to the next ten years!



Dave Park (right) talks with NCA training course participants about access to picnic areas during a field visit at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Happy Birthday NCA, from BLM

by Kay Ellis, guest columnist
National Accessibility Program Manager
Bureau of Land Management



Happy birthday, NCA!!!! It's hard to believe it's been ten years since that first training course held at Bradford Woods. Ten years and several thousand students later, the NCA has certainly made its mark as a national leader in the field of access to parks and outdoor recreation opportunities. I'm happy to say many of those students have been field staff from the Bureau of Land Management, a Bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior, because that makes my job as the BLM National Accessibility Program Manager much easier. We are all working hard to make our programs and facilities accessible to people with disabilities, and that task is pretty difficult if the field staff don't

"Have NCA training courses impacted on the BLM's accessibility efforts? You betcha! Not only have the staff who have been trained contributed significantly to increasing the level of access at BLM sites, everyone also now knows that accessibility is a shared responsibility, cutting across all disciplines and staff. It's not just one person's job to ensure people with disabilities can enjoy the public lands, it's everyone's job."

know anything about disabilities or accessibility. The BLM has recently begun a large scale re-evaluation of our recreation programs and facilities using the Bureau of Reclamation Technical Service Center and the Accessibility Data Management System (ADMS). The field staff who attended NCA training have been extremely helpful in the smooth completion of the assessments using the knowledge they learned in the classroom and applying it in the field.

The NCA courses provide our field staff with the tools and resources necessary to make sure our programs are accessible. Hands-on exercises using the tools of the trade, e.g., smart levels, tape measures, and inclinometers, open up a whole new

world and significantly raise awareness levels which is the first, and most important, step in understanding accessibility issues. One of our recreation planners recently commented that the class made her more aware of accessibility issues on a daily basis as she planned outdoor recreation programs. As a result of the training, she is also more insistent on being involved in reviewing projects planned by other disciplines such as engineering and maintenance or interpretation and making recommendations to include accessibility. Another staffer felt the course he took was tremendously beneficial to him as a planner, since he now has the knowledge and resources to tell the engineers exactly what he wants accomplished on a project. Other staff have also commented they are now including accessibility in their workshops and meetings, making good use of their "clickers." Don't know what a "clicker" is? Well, you'll just have to take a NCA course to find out.

There might be one downside to the training as students are forever changed, unconsciously looking for accessibility wherever they go. I often hear the statement "I can't even go to a restaurant without "checking out" the restroom!" Of course, that is actually a positive as the courses plant tiny seeds of knowledge that are in turn spread by the students. Who knows, with this growing knowledge base, maybe there will eventually come a day when the word "challenge" means something with which the designer, not the person with a disability, deals.

Happy Birthday again, NCA, and thank you for your knowledge, availability, advocacy, and willingness to share as we try to make the world a better place for everyone, including someone who happens to have a disability. Now, where did I put that tape measure.....

NCA News On-line

Subscribe to NCA's official listserv for the latest information in parks, recreation and tourism. It's FREE! To subscribe to NCA News, send an e-mail message to listserv@listserv.indiana.edu Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message type: *subscribe NCA-News-L* Be sure to include the space between "subscribe" and "NCA." And be sure to include the hyphens in *NCA-News-L*. Subscribers will receive an e-mail confirmation that requires a reply message in order to validate the subscription. Simply follow the instructions in the forthcoming e-mail confirmation.

NCA Resources

The following resources are available through NCA. Call NCA for more information.

Functional Aspects of Accessible Picnic Elements

This 2001 study ascertains the perceptions of persons with and without disabilities regarding the design and function of certain accessible picnic elements. Full report \$15.

Temporary Beach Surface Accessibility Study

Full report, 78 pages. \$20.

Access to Outdoor Recreation Environments Satellite Seminar

A satellite seminar addressing proposed accessibility guidelines for trails, campgrounds, picnic areas and beaches. The seminar is available as a self study package including a 2-part video, training packet and web-based supplemental material. \$75

Retrofitting for Accessibility

A 26-minute video illustrating accessibility standards for parking, entrances, routes and restrooms. \$30

Product Review

Talking Signs: Infrared Communications Provides Audio Information Around Town

Talking Signs is a remote infrared communication system designed at the Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute, Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center in San Francisco.



Infrared technology is utilized to transmit and receive audio messages; allowing the system to convey environmental information to a person who is blind or has low vision. The infrared technology uses line of sight; which means that the infrared signal is transmitted from the transmitter in a line, similar to a laser. When the receiver comes into contact with this line, the audio message is received and is audible to the user through the receiver speakers. The closer the user gets to the point of interest, the stronger and clearer the message will become. Labels, locations, room names and numbers, and exhibit text can be recorded and transmitted via Talking Signs. The infrared transmitter is permanently mounted in the specific area where information is to be conveyed, such as an intersection, an interpretive display or an office. The receiver is approximately the size of a Walkman and is hand-held or attached to a thread worn around the user's neck.

San Francisco, California has the nation's largest population of Talking Signs transmitters mounted for public use. Select transit platforms, busy intersections, public buildings, bus shelters, newsstands, and public toilets use Talking Signs transmitters to convey location information.

"They work very well," offers Donna Kazanjian, Orientation and Mobility Specialist at the Rose Resnick Lighthouse for the Blind in San Francisco. Ms. Kazanjian emphasizes that the system does not replace mobility skills, but enriches the information received by the user. Tony Candela, a resident of San Francisco who is blind and the National Program Associate for the American Foundation for the Blind, offers his personal opinion on the Talking Signs System, "The burden of carrying the receiver is minimal compared to being able to locate yourself within the environment."

The city of San Francisco is currently installing 66 transmitters for use in a city park, testing the potential for the use of Talking Signs in interpretive environments such as museums and nature trails. The signs can be programmed with descriptive information about an attraction. For more information on Talking Signs, contact: Talking Signs, toll free (800) 339-0117. www.talkingsigns.com

NCA Webcast

June 20, 2002

2-3:30 pm

(Eastern)



Recreation Access: Research to Practice

For more than 10 years the National Center on Accessibility has been conducting research on the needs, preferences and expectations of people with disabilities accessing parks, recreation and tourism. Join the NCA team for a live webcast as we highlight some of NCA's research projects, critical findings and practical solutions for creating optimum access in park and recreation environments. Topics will include:

- Participation of People with Disabilities in the NSRE
- Visitor Perceptions & Expectations
- Functional Aspects of Accessible Picnic Elements
- Trail Surfaces
- Golf Policy & Procedure: For the Good of the Game
- Temporary Surfaces for Beach Access
- Swimming Pools: Considerations for Physical Access
- Preview of Current Research: Playgrounds and Ticket Policies

This program is provided free of charge as a collaborative program of the National Center on Accessibility and the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability. Pre-registration is required. Deadline to register is June 18. For more details: www.ncaonline.org

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National Center on Accessibility
Indiana University
2805 East 10th St, Suite 190
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698

