



Accessibility for Outdoor Recreation Programs & Facilities on Military Installations

Project # 12-624
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Background:

While legislation prohibiting the discrimination against people with disabilities in federal programs has existed for decades, there has been increasing concern and understanding related to accessibility of late. Outdoor recreation issues related to accessibility were emphasized with the 1999 Disabled Sportsmen's Access Act which was followed by the 05 Aug 2002 Department of Defense Memo re: Access to Outdoor Recreation Programs on Military Installations for Persons with Disabilities. Additionally in 2006 updated Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS) were adopted that included new guidelines for Recreation Facilities. In 2013 the final outdoor developed areas accessibility guidelines became part of ABAAS. With an increasing population of injured service members due to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, accessibility has become of greater importance for natural resources managers on military installations. Moreover, there is a growing population of aging veterans and retirees who also require assistance to continue to participate in outdoor recreational activities. The inability to access programs and facilities on military installations has a significant negative impact on veterans, families / dependents of military personnel and active duty personnel.

Objective:

The need was identified for a training course geared toward staff on military installations responsible for outdoor recreation including trails, fishing, hunting, camping and picnic areas, and beaches. The intent of the course was to provide a background and working knowledge of issues to address in order to increase accessibility to all people.

Summary of Approach:

Originally intended as a one-day workshop, this 3-day training held at Fort Drum, NY was created to instruct natural resources managers at military installations on how design and construction affects people with disabilities and how people with disabilities function in these facilities; legislation related to accessibility and program access; and the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards related to boating and fishing facilities, picnic areas and campgrounds, trails, beaches, and hunting facilities. Field exercises were conducted outdoors. Throughout the course, a universal design approach was emphasized for new construction and alterations to existing facilities.

Benefit:

Physical and programmatic accessibility at developed recreation sites within military installations contribute to the mental and physical wellbeing of active duty personnel, families / dependents of military personnel and veterans. Fish & Wildlife Programs manage trails, fishing, hunting, camping and picnic areas and other programs and activities. A well-managed and effective Fish & Wildlife Program provides long-term environmental protection and conservation of the assets of the installation.

Accomplishments:

The training has been conducted, and participants/learners have had the benefit of meeting and interacting with presenters with a variety of disabilities. They have seen and learned about adaptive technologies. Participants have contacted the training organizer, Raymond Rainbolt, Fish & Wildlife Program Manager at Fort Drum to express their appreciation and to let him know their progress to date.



Rich Fabend, in wheelchair, shows the modified gun mount he uses for turkey hunting to Ray Bloomer.

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