

Adaptive Facilities Transition Plan

*Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Transition Plan*

June 2026



DNR Unicorn Lake Fish Hatchery's Floating Fishing Pier is a past project funded by the Maryland DOD Access Maryland Program.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Transition Plan is a federally mandated report in which an organization inventories its barriers to access and describes its plans to address them. The plan should include an outline of the organization's self-evaluation of the physical barriers that impact access to programs, services, and activities. It should also include the plan for the removal of these barriers, including budget, schedule, and any improvements made. The Transition Plan should be updated as buildings, properties, and indoor or outdoor spaces come into or fall out of an organization's management, purview, or occupation. Additionally, an updated plan should be resubmitted every 3-5 years. The development and submission of a Transition Plan is required of all entities by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (28 CFR Section 25) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (49 CFR Section 27). The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has conducted a self-evaluation of its services, programs, activities, and facilities on public lands and within public rights-of-way. Based on the information gathered, this Transition Plan has been developed detailing the methods to be used to ensure compliance with ADA accessibility requirements.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) works to lead the state towards a resilient and sustainable future. It collects scientific data and connects with agencies and non-governmental partners to make informed and community-driven decisions that affect Maryland's outdoor spaces. It also takes an innovative approach to improving the ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all communities. As part of this mission, DNR manages over 509,000 acres of public lands and protected open space, including 214,000 acres of forests and over 70 state parks. Marylanders and visitors use these natural spaces to connect with each other and with nature, explore new activities, and generally enjoy time outdoors. In order to create natural spaces for all visitors to enjoy, DNR prioritizes equitable access to state facilities. These include, but are not limited to, playgrounds, day-use areas in parks, and boating and fishing amenities (see Appendix A). Through the development of accessible features, including accessible parking spaces, ramps, and entry doors, DNR makes the outdoors more welcoming and accessible. This Transition Plan covers types of accessible resources, describes the self-evaluation process, and includes DNR's plans to continue increasing equitable access to the outdoors.



Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park Secretary Chanelle Wimbish, left, uses an adaptive mountain bike on the improved Poplar Trail in the McKeldin Area. To the right, adaptive mountain bike instructor David McSpadden.

HISTORY OF DNR'S ACCESS RENOVATIONS PROGRAM (1988 - 2024)

Access to nature is a human right that has been shown to benefit people's mental and physical health and contribute to community welfare. DNR works to provide equitable access to the outdoors in Maryland by focusing on the provision of accessible facilities on state lands during the project planning process. To date, hundreds of projects that increase access to the outdoors for visitors have been successfully completed, some of which were funded by Access Maryland. In most cases, such accessibility considerations are incorporated as a core component of larger construction or renovation projects, such as the now-standard addition of family restrooms with adult changing tables to bathhouse and comfort station projects. This design standard allows for adults with severe disabilities who require toileting assistance to have access to it in more private conditions. Some projects, however, are solely designed around accessibility considerations, such as an ongoing series of projects that add ADA hunter access options to state wildlife areas. Traditional wildlife areas assumed that hunters could travel cross-country off-trail to access hunting sites, but this new approach adds pull-offs and paved trail access so that individuals with physical mobility issues can still participate in hunting.

ONGOING ACCESS - SELF-EVALUATION FOR POTENTIAL PROJECTS

In December 2025, DNR developed a new capital project self-assessment tool process to gather additional data on capital projects' status and needs. Each potential project will be evaluated, prioritized, and listed based on a set of departmentally established criteria, including accessibility, climate vulnerability, outdoor recreation, and other priorities (see Appendix B). The projects will also be evaluated based on the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) Access Maryland requirements and the Federal Access Board's ADA Standards. DNR acknowledges that the Transition Plan is a living document that should be reviewed and updated at least once a year to remain current. DNR will also retain the self-evaluation for three years.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

In order to assure public input, it is required that a grievance procedure be in place. The grievance process for DNR is administered by the Office of Fair Practice (OFP). The process requires an individual to submit a written complaint using the [complaint form](#) and clearly describe the issue and the requested location to the ADA Coordinator within 1 year of the alleged incident. Upon receipt, the ADA Coordinator or designee will initiate contact within 30 calendar days and conduct an initial review or investigation. They will then provide a written response to the complainant within 30 calendar days after the review or investigation is complete. If the complainant disagrees with the outcome, they have the right to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR), and/or the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Reasonable accommodations may be provided throughout the process, as appropriate.

PROJECT PRIORITIZATION STRATEGY

Currently, DNR has many proposed projects that will increase accessibility in facilities around the state. The following project prioritization strategy was created to identify the projects on which the state should focus its resources. 1 is the highest priority project type, and 7 is the lowest priority project type.

1. Primary Recreational Visitor Approach and Entrance Areas. - *Examples: Parking lots, building entrances, facility approach, and picnic shelters.*
2. Restrooms that support primary recreational visitor areas.
3. Access to Goods and Services Recreational Visitor Areas - *Examples: Service counters, seating areas, golf patios, outdoor food bars.*
4. Secondary Recreational Visitor Approach and Entrance Areas. - *Examples: Mountain biking, equestrian trails, disc golf, picnic areas (non-shelter), water refill stations.*
5. Non-Essential Park User Recreational Support, Facility Services. - *Examples: Park office, administrative office, rental center, concessions, police.*
6. Facilities Needing Further Study for Future Use, Renovation, Replacement, or Removal. - *Facilities identified in 10-year master plans needing further study for future use, renovation, replacement, or removal.*
7. Physical Structural Barriers in Facilities That Impede Employees but Not the General Public. - *Examples: Maintenance areas, dam facilities.*

Please see Appendix B for more detailed information.



LEFT: The Boardwalk Trail at Cunningham Falls State Park.



RIGHT: The accessible fishing pier at Morgan Run Natural Resource Management Area in Carroll County, Maryland.

CAPITAL FACILITIES/PROCESS

DNR is implementing a new Major Capital Project planning process preparatory to the submission of the agency's FY28 capital budget request. This process, which solicits requests for significant new facilities or large-scale renovation projects, specifically asks units to consider accessibility in their requests and will collect

information about accessibility for consideration by the Office of the Secretary as they make project prioritization decisions.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PROCESS

DNR is in the process of developing a modernized asset management system in order to systematically identify and address ongoing maintenance needs and inform future agency infrastructure investments. As a part of that process, the Engineering & Construction Unit has formed a new team that will conduct a systemwide survey of all facilities. This survey will help identify additional needs for accessibility across the system.

DEPARTMENTAL SCHEDULE/PLANNING EFFORTS

DNR will continue to update its Transition Plan on a yearly basis with a focus on identifying completed projects and additional needs. Every three to five years, per recommendation to state agencies, DNR will electronically submit an updated plan to MDOD. In addition to making the spaces more physically accessible, DNR is committed to addressing visual, auditory, sensory, and other barriers on state lands.

APPENDIX A - NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF TYPES OF ACCESSIBLE DNR RESOURCES

Public lands managed by the DNR have a variety of infrastructure that increases access to recreation on state lands throughout Maryland. A non-exhaustive list is shared below:

Accessible Boat Ramps - These ramps, installed at boat launches, are specially designed to allow for people with disabilities (including wheelchair users) to get on and off of boats safely and independently.

Assateague State Park, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Pocomoke River State Park, Point Lookout State Park, Rocky Gap State Park, Seneca Creek State Park, Smallwood State Park, St. Mary's River State Park, Susquehanna State Park.

Accessible Kayak Launches - These launches are equipped with features like gentle ramps, stable floating platforms, transfer benches, and handrails to help those with mobility impairments enter and exit kayaks.

Greenwell State Park, Seneca Creek State Park.

Accessible Fishing Piers - These platforms are designed to have wide surfaces and smooth slopes, which allow wheelchair users to easily maneuver onto and around them, as well as rod holders and lowered, dispersed railings for the anglers.

Assateague State Park, Bill Burton Fishing Pier, Cunningham Falls State Park, Deep Creek Lake State Park, Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Herrington Manor State Park, Jane's Island State Park, Martinak State Park, Morgan Run Natural Environment Area, Pocomoke River State Park, Point Lookout State Park, Rocky Gap State Park, Sandy Point State Park, Smallwood State Park, Susquehanna State Park.

Accessible Pavilions - These facilities contain wheelchair-accessible tables and other features that allow people with mobility devices and impairments to enjoy meals outdoors with their colleagues.

Assateague State Park, Calvert Cliffs State Park, Elk Neck State Park, Greenwell State Park, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Jane's Island State Park, Patapsco Valley State Park, Pocomoke River State Park, Rocky Gap State Park, Sandy Point State Park, Seneca Creek State Park, Smallwood State Park, Tuckahoe State Park.

Accessible Playgrounds - These play structures have ramps, smooth surfaces, and adaptive equipment that allow for children of all abilities to play together outside.

Assateague State Park, Cedarville State Park, Cunningham Falls State Park, Deep Creek Lake State Park, Greenbrier State Park, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Herrington Manor State Park, Martinak State Park, New Germany State Park, Patapsco Valley State Park, Pocomoke River State Park, Point Lookout State Park, Rocks State Park, Seneca Creek State Park, Smallwood State Park, St. Mary's River State Park, Susquehanna State Park, Tuckahoe State Park.

Accessible Trails - These paths are specially designed with certain features, including firm, stable surfaces, gentle slopes, and a large width that allows for those who use mobility devices (such as wheelchairs) to safely enjoy nature.

Cunningham Falls State Park, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Martinak State Park, Patapsco Valley State Park, Tuckahoe State Park, Rocky Gap State Park.

All-Terrain Wheelchairs - These specialized mobility devices are built with large wheels, advanced suspension systems, and durable frames to brave outdoor terrain, from natural surface trails to sand on a beach, so their users can explore our state lands.

Cunningham Falls State Park, Deep Creek Lake State Park, Greenbrier State Park, Herrington Manor State Park, Rocky Gap State Park.

Hunter Platforms - This platform hosts large interiors and an entrance ramp that allows for individuals with mobility devices (such as wheelchairs) to easily and conveniently maneuver themselves as they hunt.

Potomac-Garrett State Forest

APPENDIX B - DRAFT PRIORITIZATION PROTOCOL

Draft Prioritization Protocol

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Facility Access Improvement for Americans with Disabilities Act Transition

6/16/25

Objective:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must prioritize and promptly complete Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) projects necessary to ensure equal access for all Marylanders. Provided all such projects are completed, this protocol aims to ensure equitable access for all Marylanders, including those with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities, by systematically identifying and addressing facility barriers across DNR facilities, ensuring compliance with the ADA while maximizing public benefit and effective resource allocation.

This protocol supports compliance with **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §12131 et seq.)**, the **implementing regulations at 28 CFR Part 35**, and **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**, while also aligning with the **State of Maryland's Code of Fair Employment Practices**.

System Prioritization (30 Max Points Possible)

#1: Level of Public Use

- High Use: Facilities with high levels of annual visitors. (10 Points)
- Moderate Use: Facilities with moderate levels of annual visitation. (6 Points)
- Low Use: Facilities with low levels of annual visitors. (2 Points)

Rationale: Facilities with higher visitation serve more people and thus should be prioritized to maximize impact. Levels of visitorship will determine the use level.

#2: Identified Accessibility Needs

- High Need: Facilities with a high level of ADA complaints or identified needs. (10 Points)
- Moderate Need: Facilities identified as non-compliant without ADA complaints or identified needs. (6 Points)
- Low Need: Facilities with a low level of formal verbal or written ADA complaints or identified needs. (2 Points)

Rationale: Facilities with a high level of formal verbal or written ADA complaints or identified needs must be mitigated promptly to ensure equal access.

#3: Program Uniqueness & Geographic Distribution

- High: Facilities offering one-of-a-kind experiences not found elsewhere in Maryland, or contribute to a broader geographic distribution of ADA resources (Western, Central, Southern, and Eastern). (10 Points)
- Medium: Facilities with specialized experiences available in only a few locations, or serving a region that will moderately contribute to a broader geographic distribution of ADA resources. (6 Points)
- Low: Facilities with similar recreational experiences found throughout the state, or do not serve a region that contributes to a broader geographic distribution of ADA resources. (2 Points)

Rationale: Ensuring unique programs are accessible allows people with disabilities to experience all Maryland has to offer.

Facility Project Prioritization (20 Max Points Possible)

The following priorities should be taken into account.

1. Areas with primary approach and entrances for visitors, and employees with disabilities to state lands that include parking lots, building entrances, facility approach, and picnic shelters. (20 points)
2. Restrooms that support Primary recreational visitor areas. (16 points)
3. Access to Goods and Services, recreational visitor areas, service counters, seating areas, golf patios, outdoor food bars. (12 points)
4. Secondary recreational visitor approach and entrance areas: Mountain biking, equestrian trails, disc golf, picnic areas (non-sheltered), water refill stations. (8 points)
5. Non-essential park user recreational support, administrative office, rental center, concessions, and police. (4 points)
6. Physical structural barriers in facilities that impede park employees but not the general public. Maintenance areas, dam facilities. (2 points)

Note: While public-facing facilities are prioritized to maximize visitor benefit, employee access barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from performing essential job functions will also be addressed consistent with Title I and Title II obligations.

Total Project Score Possible 50 Points

Methodology

This methodology ensures that Maryland DNR systematically prioritizes facility improvements for ADA transition, focusing on legal compliance, visitor impact, and accessibility equity across the state. To ensure a fair and inclusive prioritization process, the Maryland DNR will:

1. Survey facilities to identify needed improvements.
2. Solicit feedback from stakeholders, including disability advocacy groups.
3. Regularly update the prioritization list based on visitor feedback, emerging issues, and funding availability.
4. Partner with the DNR, Office of Fair Practice (OFP) to implement annual ADA compliance audits, track progress, assess results, and identify priorities.
5. Formally review and update this protocol **at least once every three years**, or sooner if required by changes in federal or state ADA guidance.
6. Document and publish prioritization results to ensure transparency and accountability.

Compliance Assurance

This protocol is designed to ensure that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources meets and maintains compliance with **Title II of the ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**, and the **State of Maryland's Code of Fair Employment Practices**.

DNR affirms its commitment to ensuring equal opportunity, preventing discrimination, and providing programmatic and physical accessibility for all individuals with disabilities.