

# **REPORT ON ACCESSIBILITY OF MARTHA’S VINEYARD BEACHES**

**February 2024**

**by the**

**Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities<sup>1</sup>**

## **RESULTS OF SURVEYS COMPLETED BY BEACH MANAGERS, AN INITIATIVE UPDATE, AND THE WORK AHEAD<sup>2</sup>**

**Part of the Beach within Reach Accessibility Initiative  
of Healthy Aging Martha’s Vineyard, Martha’s Vineyard Community Services-  
Disability Services, and the Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities**

### **I. Introduction**

Recognizing the need to improve accessibility to the Island beaches and reflecting their own missions, Healthy Aging Martha’s Vineyard (HAMV), the Martha’s Vineyard Community Services-Disabilities Services (MVCS-DS),<sup>3</sup> and Dukes County’s Associate Commissioner for Disabilities (Associate Commissioner) came together in early 2023 to address this critical need in this valued domain of Island life. As the first step of this initiative, we asked towns and other entities that operate beaches to complete a survey of the current accessibility of their beaches. The results of the surveys are set forth in Section II. They are summarized in a Brief Report attached accompanying this report or may be found by going to the links at the end of the report.

#### **A. What makes a beach accessible?**

A public beach is both a location and a service/program owned and/or operated by government entities and in some cases by private organizations, generally nonprofits. A beach, as with any space, location and/or service open to the public is considered accessible when it enables individuals of all abilities to access, navigate, participate, and enjoy as independently as possible the physical space and what it offers.

On a practical level for a beach this includes:

- Individual and public ways to arrive and depart from the beach.
- Accessible designated parking, where parking is available to all beachgoers/visitors.

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<sup>2</sup> An update of the initiative and next steps are also summarized in a Brief Report and a Survey Data Slide Presentation prepared by HAMV accompany this report or can be accessed through the links at the end of this report (p.10). The Complete Results of the Surveys can also be found by going to those links. The data management and analysis presented in those materials and in this comprehensive report were coordinated by MVCS-DS and HAMV.

<sup>3</sup> Initially the Island Disability Coalition was part of the coalition. Due to staffing changes, MVCS-DS assumed its role in the initiative.

- Accessible routes from the parking lot/area and beach entrances to the beach’s water edge allowing a person to navigate and participate without assistance or as independently as possible.
- Means to enter, experience, and exit the water safely.
- The availability of an accessible shower, toilet, or other facilities when such facilities are available to the public generally.

**B. What is the “Beach within Reach” Initiative doing to Promote and Advance Accessibility to Island Beaches?**

The Beach within Reach initiative consists of a multi-step and multi-perspective review of Island beaches to raise awareness of the current levels of beach accessibility, identify priorities for improving beach accessibility and promote the development and implementation of solutions and actions plans. As the Island public beaches are owned and operated by either one of the six Island towns, Dukes County, or environmental/conservation nonprofit organizations, we see this effort as a collaborative one with these various government and non-government entities. See Appendix A for a list of the beaches owned or managed by Town, the County and other organizations. For simplicity sake, all entities owning or operating beaches will sometimes be referred to as “Beach Managers.”

Recognizing that with any dynamic process, the phases of this project could be modified or may evolve, here are the phases of this project that we feel are needed to achieve the project’s goals:

- (1) Requesting beach managers to complete an online survey on beach accessibility (surveys), based on current standards and best practices. **Completed**
- (2) Analysis of the survey data and conducting follow-up site visits as needed to gain multiple perspectives and to help develop short- and long-term recommendations. **Completed**
- (3) Reporting out the results from beach manager surveys and follow up site visits by the Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities (hereinafter Associate Commissioner) to the beach managers, other officials and stakeholders, and the public.
- (4) Outreach to beach managers to assist in or promoting the development and implementation of solutions and action plans, recognizing that some solutions may be carried out relatively easily and quickly and others may be more complex and take longer.
- (5) Develop new and/or promote existing consumer beach information websites or publications to include narrative descriptions of the level and nature of accessibility for each beach site.

**C. What are the standards, principles and assumptions guiding this initiative?**

Underlying or guiding this project are several basic requirements, principles, and/or assumptions.

First and foremost, this survey and the project overall rely on federal and state standards or best practices. The overarching federal standards for beach accessibility are found in the USDA’s Forest Service *Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails*, August 2012 (USDA’s

*Accessibility Guidebook*)<sup>3</sup> The USDA Accessibility Guidebook in turn is built or based on federal laws dating back to 1968, including most notably Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the 1968 Architectural Barriers Act, and the 1991 enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and regulations issued pursuant to those laws.<sup>4</sup> These laws and others relied upon by USDA were spurred by the self-advocacy and disabilities' rights movement which emerged in the late 1960's/1970's.

While the USDA Accessibility Guidebook standards are only mandatory on National Forest system lands,<sup>5</sup> several of the federal laws that the publication relies on such as the ADA do require new and pre-existing locations, buildings, outdoor settings and environments, programs, activities and services, including beaches, be made accessible when they are created, renovated, or altered. Beaches in even in their current state may also require accessibility measures when they are “readily achievable.”

On the state level, the Department of Conservation and Recreation promotes accessible beaches. See for example <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/accessible-beaches#beach-mat-information> for guidance regarding the necessity of installing beach mats as close as possible to the water's edge. The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board, created by M.G.L. c. 22 section 13A and its implementing regulations have provisions on accessible parking,<sup>6</sup> accessible toilet facilities and other elements as well as accessible routes/walkways applicable to beaches.<sup>7</sup> These regulations are very similar to the USDA Accessibility Guidelines and ADA requirements regarding walkway/pathway width, firmness and stability, slope, etc.

The USDA Accessibility Guidelines, as with all federal and state accessibility laws, allow for exceptions when, for example, it is not possible or feasible to achieve complete accessibility, it would be unduly costly compared with the expected benefit, or the change would destroy the character of the constructed structure or natural resource. The latter exception is particularly applicable to beaches. The USDA carves out four specific exceptions to making a beach or other outdoor public recreational site accessible.<sup>9</sup> Indeed all its guidelines are based on balancing what can be competing considerations. As the Guidebook states:

The Forest Service is committed to integrating and maximizing accessibility into the full range of recreation of opportunities while protecting natural resources and maintaining the character and experience of the settings so that all people have the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This USDA Forest Service publication (hereinafter “USDA Accessibility Guidebook”) can be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Accessibility-Guide-Book.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> USDA Accessibility Guidebook, pp. 6-7, 13..

<sup>5</sup> USDA Accessibility Guidebook, p.1

<sup>6</sup> MA Architectural Access Board regulations, 521 CMR 23 at <https://www.mass.gov/law-library/521-cmr>

<sup>7</sup> MA Architectural Access Board regulations, 521 CMR 22, 19 at <https://www.mass.gov/law-library/521-cmr> <sup>9</sup> For Allowable Exceptions to accessibility relative to beaches, see USDA Accessibility Guidebook, pp. 31-35, 76 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Accessibility-Guide-Book.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recreation/programs/accessibility/pubs/htmlpubs/htm12232806/page02.htm>, p.1 <sup>11</sup> This could mean accessibility to parts of a site, changes that would allow access to people with certain types or level of disability, or access with assistance.

The exceptions allowed under the USDA Accessibility Guidebook, like all related laws and standards, do require that if fully compliant accessibility cannot be achieved, as much accessibility as possible be afforded.<sup>11</sup>

Relying on such standards has other decided benefits in surveying and evaluating the Island beaches as well as in determining the needed corrective work.

- (1) The use of objective external standards avoids or at least minimizes the possibility of arbitrary, inconsistent, or subjective interpretations of what is and is not accessible and what needs to be corrected.
- (2) Government standards and regulations in the disability/aging/ accessibility areas are developed and based on a consideration of broad-based and in depth stakeholder input from multiple perspectives including from the principal beneficiaries of the standards, individual with disabilities and the aging population, individuals and entities responsible for the operation of the beaches, conservationists, subject matter professionals and experts, e.g. contractors, landscapers landscape architects, engineers, natural resource and beach experts, and members of the public.

Other principles or assumptions which this project is guided by and form the basis of the USDA Accessibility Guidelines and other applicable laws and standards include:

- (1) On the most fundamental level, disability, whether from birth, a medical condition, trauma or any other source, is a natural part of human life. For too long this obvious fact has not always been recognized and accounts for why so many constructed or natural settings and environments have not been designed to allow for easy or any access to people with disabilities. This basic truth is frequently cited in legislative findings behind the ADA and other disability-related civil rights laws. This principle also applies to aging.
- (2) As noted, the recognition that not all beaches and environments can be made fully accessible to all individuals because of environmental or operational issues or other challenges.
- (3) While people with disabilities or the aging population are often viewed as one large monolith, that is obviously not the case. Differences and challenges vary between types of disabilities, for example, between individuals who are blind vs. those with mobility issues vs. someone with learning or intellectual disabilities. Edgartown in its 2022 Open Space Plan in recognizing the need for improved beach accessibility stated it this way:

Despite choices for public beaches in town, accessibility can be markedly improved with the addition of portable mats at beaches, which provide more stable footing for older adults and folks contending with disabilities. There are even wheelchairs designed for sand and water entry that the town might consider for those who are not ambulatory.<sup>9</sup>

- (4) The impact of a disability can vary from mild to severe, and of course no two people are alike. Each person has unique traits, characteristics, and tolerances. Laws and standards recognize these differences and nuances in the following ways:

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<sup>9</sup> p.69 [https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/EdgartownOpenSpaceRecPlan\\_approved.pdf](https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/EdgartownOpenSpaceRecPlan_approved.pdf)

- a. When considering a change or alteration of a beach or any other site whether for accessibility or other reasons, by collaborating with or obtaining input from people with disabilities, aging citizens as well as others affected who are in the best position to know what is needed.
- b. By designing where possible the environment to enable a wheelchair user to be able access and use the beach. This has an added benefit. As stated by the U.S. Forest Service: “If a person who uses a wheelchair can use a trail [or any outdoor path], most other people can, too.”<sup>10</sup>
- c. By applying the concept of “universal accessibility” to beaches which means so many others will benefit, e.g. individuals carrying a heavy load, transporting and launching a kayak or other small marine craft from a beach, individuals pushing a stroller, pulling a wagon, or experiencing a temporary disability.
- d. As noted above, making a beach or other site partially accessible, where full accessibility is not possible.
- e. Publicizing how an individual with a disability can request a reasonable accommodation to access a beach. This is another way to consider the unique needs or differences especially when full accessibility cannot be achieved across the board.

## **II. Findings/Results from the Surveys and Follow-Ups Site Visits**

### **A. Introduction.**

To begin the process, coalition partners telephoned each Beach Manager or Managing Entity to introduce them to the initiative and inform them of the beach accessibility survey that they would be receiving. We also asked if they or another person was the appropriate person to complete it. A follow up email was then sent with a link to the online survey in Survey Monkey. The email also included a resource sheet providing links to the USDA Accessibility Guidelines and other standards for those questions in which the additional guidance may be helpful e.g. the standards for an accessible route/pathway. A copy of the survey in Word format and the resource sheet are attached as Appendix B. and B-1, respectively.

The response rate was high. Most surveys were filled out and submitted promptly. Only a survey for Fuller Street Beach in Edgartown was not completed. In total 34 beaches were filled out. Following review, four (4) of the 34 were removed from the analysis. A duplicate for Eastville Beach was removed as was Herring Run Creek in Aquinnah, which we learned is not a beach and thus not fitting the purpose of the survey<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Sailing Camp in Oak Bluffs and Menemsha

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<sup>10</sup> As further explained by the Forest Service: “The building blocks for accessible design are mostly based on wheelchair dimensions, clear space, maneuvering room, and reach ranges .... This is because the dimensions, multiple moving surface contact points and wheels of a wheelchair are usually the most difficult to accommodate. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/html06232801/page24.htm#:~:text=If%20a%20person%20who%20uses,for%20trails%20are%20explained%20below.>

<sup>11</sup> Herring Run is not a beach but principally a herring run site. The intended beach was Tashmoo Beach at the end of Herring Creek Road in Vineyard Haven sometimes referred to as Herring Creek Beach. As discussed in Part II(C) below, the Associate Commissioner subsequently did an assessment of Tashmoo Beach as well as the Fuller Street Beach in Edgartown for which we also did not receive a survey.

Hills were removed as they are not principally swimming beaches. We nevertheless recommend that the responsible entities make accessibility improvements to those sites as well, as many of the same or similar accessibility standards apply to these sites.

**The summary of findings below therefore encompasses 30 beaches.** A list of the beaches is attached as Appendix A. Follow up surveys were performed by the Dukes County Associate Commissioner of Disabilities (Assoc. Commissioner) on 25 of the 30 beaches.<sup>12</sup> The follow ups were done to gain a better understanding of each beach and the responses to the survey and to assist in recommending and collaborating on solutions. The follow ups also helped to fill in gaps when questions were left unanswered or the respondent was unsure of an answer as well as for due diligence verification purposes.

## **B. Results from the Beach Managers' Survey of the 30 Beaches**

Below is a summary of the results from the 28-question survey.<sup>13</sup> As noted above the Associate Commissioner performed follow ups on 25 of the 30 surveys.<sup>14</sup> His observations fully or substantially coincide with most of the survey results. The one area where there was relatively more divergence was on the question on accessibility onto the beach itself and to the water's edge. This is referenced in subsection II(B)(4) below.

### **1. Availability of Designated Accessible Parking (Q5-Q8)**

The survey responses indicated that parking lots or parking spaces were available for the public at all 30 beaches. In 24 of the beaches the entity responsible for the beach owned or operated the parking lot/area; in 6 cases it was another entity such as a town or the state.

Out of the 30 parking lots/areas, the responses indicated that there was one or more designated accessible parking spaces in 26, or 88%, of the lots and areas, and none in four (4).

### **2. Presence of a Bus/Public Transit Vehicle nearby (Q9)**

16 respondents (or 53%) of the survey responses indicated that there was a nearby transit stop or vehicle drop off area; 14 (or 47%) indicated that there was not.

**3. Accessibility of route from parking lot/area or transit stop to beach entrance (Q10)** Note: This question examined the accessibility of the route from the parking lot/area to either the entrance

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<sup>12</sup> Volunteers from Martha's Vineyard Community Services Daybreak program after receiving training also performed follow up surveys on four beaches three in Vineyard Haven where Daybreak is located, and one in Oak Bluffs. Their results mirror the results of the Associate Commissioner.

<sup>13</sup> For a complete analysis of the results for each every question, see Beach within Reach Survey Data Slides at the links at end of the report.

<sup>14</sup> The Associate Commissioner's follow up assessment was limited to survey questions in which he could make direct observations or he otherwise had direct knowledge. For example, where the beach managers in many instances removed beach wheelchairs from beaches at the end of the summer season, he did not evaluate that feature when performing his follow up surveys in September and October 2023. The survey questions he did follow up on were Questions 3, 5-8, 10, 12, 22, and 23.

to the beach or if there was a pathway/trail to the beach, to the beginning of the pathway. (The next section addresses accessibility once on the beach or the pathway to the beach to the water's edge.) Standards governing these routes include specifications for the route's width, the surface's firmness and stability, grade/slope, lack of obstructions (from the ground or horizontally into the route). The resource sheet accompanying the survey (Appendix B-1) provided a link the standards and elements of what constitutes an accessible route.

17 responses (or 57%) indicated the route from the parking lot/area to the beach or pathway entrance was accessible. 8 (or 27%) indicated they were not while 5 (or 17%) were not sure.

**4. Accessible route from beach entrance to high tide mark (for a tidal beach) and to water's edge (for pond or lake).** (Q 2 and 3) The same standards of accessibility referenced in subsection 3 above and in Appendix B-1 apply to this question.

- **Responses from Survey**

- Only 11 (or 37%) of the 30 survey responses indicated that their beaches have an accessible route to the water's edge (high tide mark in a tidal beach and water's edge in lakes and ponds). 19 or 63% indicated that they did not have an accessible route.

- **Associate Commissioner Follow-up**

- Of 25 beaches the Associate Commissioner examined, the survey responses indicated that six (6) of the 25 had an accessible route to the water's edge and 19 did not. The Associate Commissioner's assessment did not find any of the routes of the 25 beaches accessible. In several of the 6 cases of divergence, it was merely due to the beach mat failing to reach the water's edge. In in a few cases, it appeared that the divergence of opinion stemmed from a determination that transporting individuals in large wheel beach wheelchairs provided sufficient accessibility. Standards provide that the availability of large wheel beach wheelchairs is not a substitute for an accessible route to the water mark as the goal is to enable individuals to access beach elements as independently as possible.<sup>15</sup>

## **5. Availability of Large Wheel Beach Wheelchairs & Floating Wheelchairs (Q13-Q18)**

### Large wheel beach wheelchairs

Of the 30 who completed the survey, 15 survey responses (or 50%) indicated that one or more large wheel beach wheelchairs were available, while 12 (or 40%) indicated that they were not. Of 15 who had them, two-thirds (2/3) had one chair and one-third (1/3) had two or more chairs available. 3 did not answer this question.

### Floating wheelchairs

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<sup>15</sup> The U.S. Guide to ABA Accessibility Standards of the U.S. Access Board Section 1018.4 states: "Beach wheelchairs are not a substitute for providing beach access routes. Beach wheelchairs have large, wide wheels that can roll across sand without sinking but do not provide independent access."  
<https://www.accessboard.gov/aba/guides/chapter-10-outdoor/>

Of the 30 who completed the survey, 5 (or 17%) indicated floating wheelchairs were available. 22 or 82% indicated that they were not. 3 did not answer this question.

**6. Availability of trained staff/volunteers to assist in providing accessibility (Q's19-20)**

Of the 30 who completed the survey, five (5) (or 19%) indicated that staff/volunteers are required to assist in providing accessibility while 22 (or 73%) indicated that they were not. Several comments to this question indicated that their beaches were not staffed. Four (4) others indicated that while staff may **not be required** to provide assistance, they do provide assistance or are expected to. Four (4) did not answer this question.

**7. Do staff/volunteers receive training on assisting individuals with disabilities? (Q21)**

Of the 30 who completed the survey, 1 (or 3%) indicated that staff/volunteers do receive training while 5 (83%) indicated that they do not. 24 did not answer this question.

**8. Availability of toilet facilities, including porta potties, to the public and accessible facilities to individuals with disabilities (Q22 & Q23)**

- Of the 30 who completed the survey, 17 (or 57%) indicated that toilet facilities were available to the public while 10 (or 33%) indicated they were not. 3 did not answer this question.
- Of the 17 who indicated that they had such facilities, 14 (or 82%) had accessible facilities, while 3 or (18%) indicated that they did not.

**9. Publicizing accessible features through pamphlets, publications, social or traditional media, websites, signage, etc. (Q 24)**

Of the 30 who completed the survey, 5 (or 17%) indicated that they did publicize accessible features, while 21 (or 70%) indicated that they did not. 4 did not answer this question.

**10. Conducting own assessment of the accessibility of own beach. (Q 26)**

Of the 30 who completed the survey, 12 or (40%) indicated that they have conducted their own assessment of the accessibility of their beach, while 14 (or 47%) indicated they have not. 4 did not answer this question.

**11. Existence of a transition or compliance plan to achieve beach accessibility (Q 27)**

Of the 30 who completed the survey, 3 (or 10%) indicated that they did have a transition or compliance plan while 23 or (77%) indicated that they did not. 4 did not answer this question.

**C. Five Additional Beaches in which the Associate Commissioner Conducted an Assessment**



The five beaches were Tashmoo Beach in Vineyard Haven, Edgartown’s Fuller Street, Light House and Gardner Beaches, and Doug Cove Preserve in Oak Bluffs. As noted above, we did not receive a survey response for Fuller Street Beach in Edgartown or for Tashmoo Beach in Vineyard Haven.<sup>16</sup> As to the other three beaches, they should have been on the original list of beaches to be surveyed but were inadvertently omitted or were discovered subsequently.

The detailed results of the Commissioner’s assessment will be shared with the responsible beach managers/entities as we reach out to the towns during the next phase of the project and collaborate on and advance accessibility solutions.

Four of these beaches are particularly noteworthy and may warrant priority consideration. Three of them appear to be very close to full compliance and could become so with relatively few measures—Doug Cove Preserve, Edgartown Conservation Gardner Beach, and Tashmoo Beach. They all appear to have been subject to prior efforts to make them accessible. The fourth one, Edgartown Light House Beach, while it will take more effort to achieve accessibility, it is a widely popular and scenic beach and site because of its cultural and historic significance, its location and multi-purpose offerings/nature.

### **III. Recommendations and Next Steps**

As we move to the next phase of this project—instituting solutions—we will not only convey our recommendations to each beach manager but be ready and willing to promote and support the development of solutions for each beach. For accountability and management purposes, we recommend that each town or nonprofit entity develop an action plan with timelines that lay out the necessary measures to achieve compliance as soon as possible. Such plans should also include maintenance capacity so that accessibility is sustained over time.

The precise methodology and strategies will be up to each town/nonprofit, but one other suggestion we would make is prioritizing beaches based on several considerations or criteria. Beaches for example that are close to being fully accessible or could become so relatively easily should be prioritized with the goal of having them ready by the 2024 summer season. For significant changes, such as creating new or alternate accessible routes to a beach, input should generally be obtained from stakeholders as well as the public at large.

It is also suggested in determining what and how changes are made, the universal access principle should be applied as well as the other principles described in Section I(C).

The specific beach-by-beach recommendations will vary in number and range from relatively simple to more complex and be tailored based to the unique nature and elements of the site and current level of accessibility. However, based on the surveys and follow up assessments, there are measures that will be applicable across many sites, including:

- Installing appropriate signage designating current or new accessible spaces in parking lots/areas and making sure the spaces are as close as possible to the beach entrances.

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<sup>16</sup> See Part II(A) above and footnote 14 for additional information regarding Tashmoo Beach.

- Taking measures to make the route(s) from the parking lot to the beach and ultimately to the water's edge accessible in accordance with standards.
- Where it is not feasible to make the existing route(s) accessible, consider alternative or additional routes.
- Signage pointing to accessible route(s) particularly where there are multiple entrances.
- Staff orientation or training
- Where not present, large wheel beach wheelchairs and floating chairs.
- Accessible toilet and shower facilities, where they are available to the public generally.
- Publicizing accessible beaches and the various accessibility features and elements • Supporting/facilitating online or other systems describing or rating beach accessibility.

Many of the solutions are obvious or based on common sense e.g. extending an existing accessible route to the water's edge. As noted, our coalition is willing to collaborate or offer technical assistance. Other solutions may require more subject matter expertise which may exist in-house in some towns or non-profits or from outside experts. Economies of scale would suggest sharing of such resources, information, and solutions.

For the longer range, while many of the solutions are simple and may have little or no cost associated with them, others may require more resources. Grants or funding from government or private sources are available to pay for improvements or supplement funding from the responsible entities. Fundraising is also an option with opportunities for further collaboration.

To summarize, the Associate Commissioner, HAMV, and MVCS-DS have made notable progress, in a year, toward the goal of advancing accessibility on Martha's Vineyard beaches. The "where we are now" information base described in this report is a launchpad for joint efforts among public and private entities in a common mission for safe and accessible beach recreation for all.

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**This report and following documents referenced in this report can be found at [www.dukescounty.org/associate-commissioner-disabled](http://www.dukescounty.org/associate-commissioner-disabled), [hamv.org/beach-within-reach](http://hamv.org/beach-within-reach), or <https://www.mvcommunityservices.org/services/disability-services/>**

Appendix A—List of Beaches Surveyed

Appendix B-- Sample Accessibility Survey (Word Version)

Appendix B-1—Resource Sheet accompanying each survey

Beach within Reach Survey Slide Public Presentation

A Brief Report of Survey Results

Beach within Reach Survey Data Slides of Complete Results

**BEACHES SURVEYED\***

The beaches are listed by location. If the beach is not owned or operated by the town under which it is listed, the entity that owns or operates the beach is noted in parenthesis as follows: For Dukes County (DC), MV Land Bank (MVLB), and The Trustees of the Reservation (TOR). If there is no notation, it is town owned/operated.

**AQUINNAH**

Lobsterville Beach

Moshup Beach (MVLB)\*\*

Philbin Beach

Red Beach

**CHILMARK**

Chilmark Pond Preserve (MVLB)

Great Rock Bight Preserve (MVLB)

Lucy Vincent Beach

Menemsha Beach

Squibnocket Beach

**EDGARTOWN**

Bend in the Road Beach

Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge (TOR)

Chappy Point Beach (MVLB)

Edgartown Great Pond Beach (MVLB)

Joseph Sylvia State Beach\*\*\* (DC)

Norton Point Beach.

South Beach

Wasque Reservation (TOR)

**OAK BLUFFS**

Eastville Point Beach

Joseph Sylvia State Beach\* (DC)

Marinelli Beach

Oak Bluffs Town Beach

**VINEYARD HAVEN**

Hillman'Point Preserve (MVLB)

Lake Street Beach

Owen Little Way

Owen Park

Wilfred'sPond Preserve (MVLB)

**WEST TISBURY**

Lambert's Cove Beach

Long Point Wildlife Refuge (TOR)

Sepiessa Point Reservation (MVLB)

Seth Pond

\*Surveys were not completed for Edgartown Fuller Beach and Tisbury Tashmoo Beach at end Hearing Creek Road.

\*\*While MVLB owns and operates Moshup beach and the paths leading to it, the Town of Aquinnah owns and operates the parking lot.

\*\*\* While Joseph Sylvia State Beach is listed twice under Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, it is one beach and managed by Dukes County who filled out the survey.

**Survey Filled out by Beach Managers  
(Word Version)**

Q1 Select the beach for which you are filling out this survey? All questions apply to the beach selected below. Remember if you own or operate more than one beach, fill out a separate survey for each.

Q2 How many entrances are available to the public?

Q3 Is there an accessible route to get to the water's edge (for a lake, pond, or reservoir) or high tide level (for a tidal beach) from the beach entrance? This could include things like a mobility mat, a wooden walkway, or a firm and stable surface made of other materials. (For the standards and elements of an accessible route, see attached Resource Sheet, No. II.)

Q4 Please specify/describe the accessible route to get to the water's edge (for a lake, pond, or reservoir) or high tide level (for a tidal beach) from the beach entrance.

Q5 Do you own or operate a parking lot(s)/area(s) at or near your beach that beachgoers use for parking?

Q6 How many spaces are designated as accessible in the lot/area?

Q7 If you do not own or operate a parking lot at or near the beach, is there public parking at or near your beach that beachgoers commonly use?

Q8 How many spaces are designated as accessible in the lot/area?

Q9 Is there a bus/public transit or vehicle drop-off area at or near the beach that beachgoers commonly use?

Q10 Is the route from the parking lot/area or transit stop (whether you own it or not) to the beach entrance accessible to people of all abilities/disabilities? (For the standards and elements of an accessible route, see attached Resource Sheet, No. II.)

Q11 Please provide any elaboration or explanation you feel is needed for your answers related to parking or the route from the parking or transit stop to the beach entrance.

Q12 Please indicate whether the route from the transit stop or the parking lot/area (whether you own it or not) to the beach entrance is accessible to: (check all that apply)

- people who use power wheelchairs
- people who use manual wheelchairs
- people who have significant mobility impairments
- people who use walkers, canes, crutches or other aids
- people who are blind or who have significant visual impairments

Q13 Do you have beach wheelchairs with large wheels designed to go over sand available for beachgoers who may require them?

Q14 How many beach wheelchairs are available?

Q15 Please indicate how and where the beach wheelchairs are reserved, located, and made available.

Q16 Do you have floating beach wheelchairs available for beachgoers who may require them?

Q17 How many floating beach wheelchairs are available?

Q18 Please indicate how and where the floating beach wheelchairs are reserved, located, and made available.

Q19 Are some or all staff or volunteers required to offer assistance to wheelchair users or others with disabilities if requested or needed in accessing or using the beach and its various features and elements?

Q20 Please explain the above if needed.

Q21 Are the staff/volunteers that are providing assistance given training on assisting wheelchair users or others with disabilities?

Q22 Are there toilet facilities, including porta potties, available to the public onsite either on the beach, in the parking or other adjacent area you control?

Q23 How many toilet facilities are accessible to people with disabilities?

Q24 If you have any of the accessible elements and features referenced in this survey, do you publicize or otherwise let the public know about them such as through pamphlets, publications, social or traditional media, websites, signage, etc?

Q25 Please explain how you publicize or otherwise let the public know about them such as through pamphlets, publications, social or traditional media, websites, signage etc?

Q26 Have you performed your own assessment or evaluation of the accessibility of your beach to and for people with disabilities or others?

Q27 Do you have a transition or compliance plan or any other plans related to achieving accessibility at these properties?

Q28 Please provide a link or send your transition or compliance plan to Richard Cohen or to c/o Dukes County Administration Offices, P.O. Box 190, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568, or email to racohen65@aol.com or fax to 508-696-3841.

Thank You!

Q29 Contact Information

Name (First and last)

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Job title

Q30 Electronic Signature (Please initial)

Q31 Space for additional comments, including what you may need to implement any new accessibility features. (attach additional sheets if necessary)

## Resource Sheet

### Federal Standards Relative to Beach Accessibility for All levels of Abilities/Disabilities

I. For Standards on what constitutes an accessible route for beaches (from the beach entrance to the water), including standards for firm and stable surfaces, width and slope/grade requirements, tread obstacles, etc., see USDA Forest Service "Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails, pp. 74-78  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/AccessibilityGuide-Book.pdf>

II. For Standards on what constitutes (a) accessibility in parking lots at or near beaches and (b) accessible routes from parking lots/drop off areas to beach entrances, see USDA Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails, pp. 36-44, 48-51.  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Accessibility-Guide-Book.pdf>. These standards include requirements for:

- Parking e.g., One or more designated accessible parking spaces are required in the lot depending on the number of total spaces. For most, if not all Island beach parking lots, this will generally mean one and in some cases two designated accessible spaces.\*
- Other accessible elements in the lot if provided to all users. For example, if portable poZes are available to the public, at least 5% have to be accessible. For most, if not all MV beach parking lots or beaches, this would be satisfied with one accessible portable po^y.\*\*
- Route from parking lot to beach entrance must be at least 36" wide or 32 inches in sections under certain conditions. pp. 39-40
- Firm and stable surfaces along route. pp. 36-37
- Removal of surface obstacles (e.g. roots, rocks) higher than 1 inch or in the case of paved or wooden sections higher than ½ inch along route. pp. 40-41
- Protrusions into route. Constructed features along the route between 27" and 80" high (e.g. signs) cannot protrude more than 4 inches into the route. p. 42
- For wooden walkways, spaces in between slats of no more than ½" wide. p.41
- Grades/slopes generally no more than 5% (1:20) along route, however for short distances steeper grades are allowed.\*\*\*
- Cross slopes should generally be no more than 2% or 3%. pp. 38-39

III. For Allowable Exceptions to accessibility relative to beaches, see USDA Accessibility Guidebook, pp. 76, 31-35 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Accessibility-GuideBook.pdf>

\* As stated in the USDA Guidebook, p. 48, the accessible parking requirements are the same as those that apply to parking lots for residential facilities as described in the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Accessibility Standards (ABAAS), e.g. one accessible space for the first 25 spaces. See the ABA Accessibility Standards, Chapter 5, sections F208 & F502 for more details at <https://www.access-board.gov/aba/guides/chapter-5-parking/>.

\*\* Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards, section F213.2, Ex. 3 at <https://www.accessboard.gov/files/aba/guides/toilet-rooms-ABA.pdf>.

\*\*\* A 8.33% grade (1:12) is allowed for up to 50 feet and a 10% grade (1:10) for up to 30 feet. pp. 38-39