

Nature: Accessible for All

Regulatory Reform Working Group

Mission Statement: Achieve reforms of environmental regulations to facilitate creation of accessible trails and scenic sites

Our mission is to ensure that people with disabilities, their families and allies can and do enjoy New Jersey's extraordinary natural places. New Jersey needs more trails, scenic sites and similar facilities in natural settings that are accessible to people with disabilities, but existing environmental regulations present unintended obstacles to improving these assets for accessibility. This working group aims to work with state agencies to reform those rules in order to facilitate the creation of high quality, accessible trails, sites and facilities.

Goals for Regulatory Reform Working Group:

1. Clarify the rationale and criteria for environmental regulations that both protect the environment and support improvements for accessibility.
2. Achieve reforms of environmental regulations that currently bar or discourage accessibility improvements by making them impractical, too expensive and/or ineffective.
3. Ensure that land managers, friends groups and other interested parties are aware of the issues raised and successes in improving the regulations.

Actions:

- a) Identify the design standards the working group will use for high quality, accessible trails, sites and facilities.
- b) Identify the regulations that create barriers to accessibility improvements and the changes needed to remove these barriers.
- c) Discuss the changes we propose with relevant experts and government officials and make changes that these discussions suggest.
- d) Advocate for the changes we propose with the relevant public agencies.
- e) Support public agencies in adopting and implementing reforms.

Nature: Accessible for All Campaign – Working Group Guidelines

First Principles

This initiative is grounded in the following principles:

1. **Self-determination** – Voices from the disability community must drive the design and implementation of strategies to increase access for people with disabilities to nature and outdoor recreation.
2. **Rights of all people** – Access to nature nurtures people emotionally, psychologically and cognitively. Access to outdoor recreation delivers additional physical benefits to health. Both should be a fundamental right of all people.
3. **All forms of disability** – Solutions must consider delivering benefit to all forms of disability.
4. **Inclusion** – Inclusion is the concept that a right to nature and outdoor recreation includes access that does not separate people with disabilities from others.
5. **Justice** – Intersected goals of this initiative include advancing a disability justice approach that focuses on people with disabilities who also have, historically, had disproportionately less access and who also experience other forms of social discrimination, including people who are low-income, people of color, immigrants, and people who identify as LGBTQ+.
6. **Organized and Self-managed** – Efforts must include both “organized” inclusive experiences for people with disabilities, as well as opportunities that allow for individual access.
7. **Systematic** – Individual projects that increase access for people with disabilities to nature and outdoor recreation are positive outcomes, but success is measured by the extent to which systematic change in policies, systems and organizational cultures.