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Research Summary of State Policies for Increasing Access to Nature for People with Disabilities

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This report was developed in conjunction with the New Jersey Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services, **Inclusive Healthy Communities** (IHC) grant program. IHC provides funding support to initiatives throughout New Jersey to advance lasting policy, systems and environmental change that, through collaboration with people with disabilities, builds a healthier, more inclusive New Jersey.

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Introduction

In New Jersey, one in four adults has a disability. People with disabilities face a variety of mental and physical health disparities (CDC, 2022). Outdoor recreation opportunities can mitigate these disparities, leading to a range of health benefits for this population, including increased confidence and skills, enhanced relationships, and elevated quality of life (Dorsh, 2016; Armstrong et. al, 2023; Zachor et. al, 2017). However, people with disabilities also face unique barriers preventing them from participating in outdoor recreation activities and other nature-based experiences. These barriers span issues of limited resources including transportation services, support systems, and targeted outreach. As a result, our research team explores the barriers that people with disabilities face regarding outdoor recreation in a separate qualitative study. Further, in a separate white paper we investigate current state policy obstacles to addressing these outdoor recreation barriers for people with disabilities.

Fortunately, states across the nation have demonstrated a range of policies, programs, and practices to increase accessibility and inclusion in public outdoor spaces. From creating state plans, establishing grant programs, collaborating with community-based organizations, and engaging people with disabilities, there are a multitude of projects are working to address this issue. This report explores examples of current state policies that increase access and inclusion to the outdoors for people with disabilities. Surveying twelve states identified for their exemplary policies on this issue, the report analyzes these policies to determine “best practices” for states to increase access and inclusion in outdoor spaces for people with disabilities.

The research summary proceeds as follows. First, we discuss federal policies that increase public recreation access to the outdoors, in order to understand how states have used this context to inform their own efforts to increase outdoor access. Using policy examples from twelve states (Alaska, California, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Virginia, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Massachusetts), the report points to five major insights on best practices for states to address this issue: balancing organized and passive access, preserving natural resources, directly engaging people with disabilities, addressing multiple social vulnerability factors, and maximizing the use of data. After that, we discuss implications for New Jersey, focusing specifically on the role of the following programs: Green Acres, New Jersey Outdoors, Local Recreational Improvement Grants, and the Outside, Together initiative. Lastly, we present our concluding thoughts and limitations on current policies, which we expect to inform future state initiatives on this topic.

Definitions

This paper explores state policies that increase inclusion and access to outdoor spaces for people with disabilities. For the purposes of this paper, outdoor spaces include public parks and local green spaces, state parks, state- or federally-owned walking trails, waterfronts, and coastal areas and beaches. Policies that increase access and inclusion practices can encompass strategies that enhance outdoor spaces in terms of facilities, parking, transportation, or other features of the outdoor site, as well as strategies that increase the availability of outdoor recreation resources and programs. Further, policies may include strategies that increase the representation of people with disabilities in legislative and advocacy spaces around outdoor access decision-making.

Importantly, this paper considers state policies that address access issues for multiple types of disabilities, including developmental and communication disabilities, mobility impairments, deaf/hard of hearing, and blind/visual impairments, among others. Due to the nuanced barriers faced by a variety of underserved communities in accessing outdoor spaces, this paper does not limit its review to only certain disabilities or communities covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As we explain in this paper, certain states are currently expanding on the work of the ADA to more thoroughly consider the barriers faced by people with disabilities and propose better accessibility strategies. On that note, many policies explored here highlight the importance of raising accessibility and inclusion standards among multiple marginalized groups, which are discussed pursuant to the goal of realistically conceptualizing outdoor barriers moving forward in state policies.

Federal Programs and Policies

At the federal level, legislators and policymakers are currently leading initiatives to increase public access to outdoor recreation opportunities. In 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law. This law established significant federal funding for outdoor recreational opportunities by supporting national and state programs that enhance recreational facilities, public open space access, outdoor recreation infrastructure, and land/water conservation (H.R.1957). Specifically, the Great American Outdoors Act is composed of two key pieces of legislation. First, the Act established the National Parks and Legacy Restoration Fund and appropriated funding for this program from fiscal years 2021 to 2025. Secondly, the Act permanently funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), authorizing annual funding of \$900 million for this program (H.R.1957). Following the signing of this bill into law, Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt declared August 4th as “Great American Outdoors Day” in which entrance fees to national parks across the U.S. will be waived for the day (National Park Service, 2022). As a result, the Act has extremely positive implications for expanding access to the outdoors, particularly among groups with limited financial resources.

The National Parks and Legacy Restoration Fund is a program that funds five federal land management agencies from 2021 to 2025: the National Park Service (NPS), USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Education (Department of the Interior, 2021). Across each of these agencies, funds are designated by the Act to be spent on “priority deferred maintenance projects” or essential neglected maintenance/development projects for each agency, in order to address the backlog of priority deferred maintenance projects. The portion of the annual funds allocated for NPS is \$1.3 million, which helps the agency expand environmental preservation efforts and increase outdoor recreation opportunities for visitors (National Park Service, 2023).

Meanwhile, the Land and Water Conservation Fund—the second program funded under this Act—provides matching grants to federal, state, and local governments for the acquisition of land and water. This program funds the acquisition of land and water for purposes of outdoor recreation or environmental preservation of land that is considered important for outdoor recreation (Department of the Interior, n.d.). In order to qualify for LWCF support, states must submit a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), a five-year plan that articulates the state’s priority needs to improve public outdoor recreation access. Established by Congress in 1964, the program to date has funded a total of \$4 billion in projects for every county in the nation (Department of the Interior, n.d.).

Additionally, LWCF funds the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP). In 2014, state law established this nationally competitive grant program to fund targeted assistance in improving outdoor recreation access in economically disadvantaged communities (National Park Service, 2023). The aim of this program is to restore, develop, or maintain outdoor spaces for recreation in areas that are specifically characterized as park-poor areas or “park deserts,” which are communities with limited to no access to publicly available, local outdoor recreation spaces. Further, funding priority is given to projects that specifically increase access to green spaces and landscapes, engage community members, create or expand public-private partnerships, demonstrate coordination among agencies of multiple sectors, and advance goals of the state’s most up-to-date Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Current successful grantee projects include communities in Alabama, Ohio, Virginia, and Connecticut (National Park Service, 2023). Most recently, Congress appropriated \$150 million for ORLP projects in 2021, after the National Park Service had approved which projects would be moved forward (Department of the Interior, 2021).

In addition to the positive benefits of the Great American Outdoors Act and its implications for other programs, the legislature has pushed public outdoor recreation access in other examples. In November 2021, America’s Outdoor Recreation Act was introduced in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Sponsored by Senators Manchin (D-WV) and Barrasso (R-WY), the goal of the bill is to provide additional outdoor recreation opportunities and facilitate greater access to federally owned public lands (S.2366). The bill is composed of several key pieces of legislation, including:

- The Departments of Interior and Forest Use will collaborate with the Rural Utilities Service to develop broadband internet infrastructure on federally-owned recreation sites.
- The Departments of Forest Service and Land Management must direct land managers and planners on best practices to improve outdoor recreation and better consider recreation access needs in land management planning and decision-making.
- Provide technical and financial support to businesses in rural communities to improve facilities adjacent to outdoor recreation areas, including hotels, campgrounds, and restaurants to increase visitation to outdoor recreation sites in low-income rural areas.
- Direct federal land management agencies to extend the seasonal period that certain recreation areas are open to the public to maximize public outdoor recreation access.

This bill was introduced in the Senate but did not move forward for further consideration. In September 2022, the bill was put on the Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders (S.2366).

Similar to this initiative, Senators Murkowski (R-AK) and Cantwell (D-WA), introduced the Recreation for All Act. This federal bill establishes that four federal agencies—the Forest Service,

Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service—must do the following to increase and enhance outdoor recreation access opportunities:

- Increase outdoor recreation opportunities for youth, particularly underserved youth.
- Pilot innovative technologies to better track the number and type of visitors to outdoor recreation sites.
- Improve online communication with potential visitors about road and trail closures.
- Require the Office of Management and Budget to issue an annual report detailing the total federal dollars spent on outdoor recreation projects on federally owned public outdoor sites, in order to appropriately allocate future funding for these projects (S.1385).

The bill was introduced in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in April 2023 (S.1385). However, there is no record of further developments on the bill since its introduction.

Reviewing the most recent federal outdoor recreation access legislation demonstrates that efforts to increase accessibility are not exclusively state-centered. Through a variety of targeted projects that use federal dollars to increase outdoor recreation access, state and local governments have a framework to invest greater funding and focus on outdoor recreational access issues. From the examples shown here, especially through the LWCF and ORLP, state focus on outdoor recreation access starts with project opportunities that are federally led in the legislature.

Insights About Best Practices

Based on the information surveyed across the twelve states, the research team has developed five important insights regarding best practices for increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation for people with disabilities, detailed in the below summary.

Balancing organized versus passive access

Across the states surveyed in this research summary, policy focusing on increasing outdoor access for people with disabilities spans two main categories of access, which this research team coins *organized* and *passive* access. Conceptualizing these two categories is necessary to distinguish between two types of policies. First, policies that increase the availability of structured outdoor trips, educational opportunities, and other programming for people with disabilities. Second, policies that increase opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy and participate in outdoor spaces independently. The primary difference between these two types of policies is the presence of self-directed access; while organized access increases the availability of innovative outdoor activities, passive access fundamentally changes the structure of the outdoor space—whether in terms of its staff training, community outreach, or website development—so people with disabilities can independently plan and participate in outdoor activities.

There are many examples of states with innovative programs that support organized access. In California, there are key nonprofit organizations in the Bay Area that lead outdoor opportunities for people with disabilities: Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC), the Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP), Access Northern California, and Coastwalk. ETC and BORP were started a year apart (BORP in 1975 and ETC in 1976), coinciding with the opening of the first Independent Living Center in the city of Berkeley (National Park Service, 2019) and the state’s passage of the California Coastal Act ([CA Pub Res Code § 30000, 2021](#)). The historic efforts of ETC and BORP—providing opportunities for people with disabilities to access the outdoors before the state had robust policies to support access—demonstrate that these organizations are pioneers in the realm of outdoor disability access and inclusion.

Fortunately, California’s policies gradually caught up with the innovative work of these organizations. In 2013, California state law established the Explore the Coast Grant Program, which funds the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) to develop a competitive grant program where public agencies, nonprofits, and private organizations receive support for projects that increase the accessibility of the California Coast to underserved communities, including people with disabilities (SCC, n.d.). Currently, both ETC and BORP receive annual funding

from SCC, which supports their work in offering organized outdoor opportunities, such as kayaking, camping, paddle boarding, and biking trips. Other state agencies aiming to address outdoor recreation accessibility supplement the SCC funding provided to these two organizations, including the California Coastal Commission, California State Parks, the Division of Boating and Waterways, and the state Department of Transportation (ETC, n.d; BORP, n.d.).

Similar organized access initiatives are ongoing in other states and steered by disability advocate nonprofit groups. In Oregon, influential nonprofit organizations (Adaptive Sports Northwest, Oregon Adaptive Sports, and Adventures Without Limits) have outdoor programming that spans soccer, kayaking, swimming, and snowboarding for people with disabilities. Nonprofit organizations with outdoor programming also hold weight in Utah, with examples such as Ogden Valley Adaptive Sports, Wasatch Adaptive Sports, Common Ground Outdoor Adventures, and the Kostopulos Dream Foundation. Fortunately, states are starting to recognize the important role of these organizations in laying the groundwork for improving outdoor accessibility. This state recognition is demonstrated by the development of new outdoor accessibility state policies in recent years to support this work. In 2019, the Oregon Governor's Office established the Task Force on the Outdoors for the purpose of increasing outdoor recreation participation, particularly among youth and underserved communities (Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation, n.d.). Further, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department created an ADA Transition Plan in 2021 to remove accessibility barriers through Oregon's state parks. The Department identified barriers ranging from inaccessible picnic areas and restrooms to limited accessible parking, and the Department's Universal Access Committee categorized these barriers based on the length of the funding and implementation timeline for the Department to remove the barriers completely. The Department surveyed over 200 of the state's facilities and recreation sites operated by the Parks Department and created accessibility goals based on this evaluation and a timeline for redevelopment plans (Oregon State Parks, 2021).

Utah's legislative history has also followed in suite of nonprofit work to support organized access. In 2009, state law established that the Division of State Parks may provide support to a nonprofit organization or foundation whose work helps the Division achieve its outdoor recreational goals ([UT Code § 79-4-206, 2022](#)); interestingly, this legislation coincided with the launch of the nonprofit organization Ogden Valley Adaptive Sports in that state (Ogden Valley Adaptive Sports, n.d.). In 2013, Utah became the first state to develop an Office of Outdoor Recreation (Utah Department of Natural Resources, n.d.). Since then, the legislature signed Utah's Outdoor Recreation Act into law in 2021 ([UT Code § 79-7-201, 2021](#)). With amendments in 2022, the purpose of the Act is twofold: first, to combine resources by merging the Office of Outdoor Recreation and the Division of Recreation into one Division of Outdoor Recreation and second, to establish the following grant programs: (1) the Outdoor Recreation Program, (2) the Recreation Restoration Infrastructure Program, (3) the Outdoor Recreation and Education Program, and (4) Recreational Infrastructure Grant Program ([UT Code § 79-7-201, 2022](#)). Through the specific aims of each grant, the programs collectively support improving access to outdoor areas by encouraging organized outdoor activities.

While certain state policies and programs have focused on increasing organized access, it is equally important to recognize policies that support passive access. As discussed above, passive access may include—but is not limited to—initiatives that increase the accessibility of outdoor trails, improve signage at outdoor sites and parks, enhance website accessibility, and incorporate accessibility training for staff of the outdoor site. For example, in Puerto Rico, the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources created the first system of trails designed with accessibility features for blind/visually impaired visitors. Focusing on the four trails in the Punta Tuna Wetland Nature Reserve in the city of Maunabo, the Department widened the trails and developed educational signs with audio recordings that discuss information about the trail (Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, 2015). These features, in which visitors use a QR code to play the recording during their visit to the reserve, allow information about the reserve to be accessible to blind or visually impaired individuals. The Department launched this initiative in 2018, when Puerto Rico was beginning to capitalize on outdoor recreation employment opportunities to rebuild the state’s economy in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria (Blevins, 2018).

On this topic, certain states have achieved a balance of addressing both organized and passive access through a variety of initiatives. In addition to funding the Explore the Coast Grant Program, California’s SCC also manages the Coastal Stories Grant Program, which supports organizations to develop or improve existing signage in coastal spaces. The projects must make signage inclusive to traditionally underserved communities, including people with disabilities (SCC, n.d.). Additionally, SCC funds the Disability Continuation Project, in which SCC has a contract with BORP to re-develop the website that accompanies *Wheeling Cal’s Guide to the Coast*, an accessibility guidebook to the California coast for people in wheelchairs that was written by Coastwalk and published by SCC (SCC, 2022). California enhances the accessibility features of outdoor recreation websites through other projects. For example, Access Northern California is a nonprofit that maintains, in partnership with BORP, a website to help people with disabilities independently plan visits to various outdoor spaces across the state (Access Northern California, n.d.). Similarly, the California State Parks System maintains a website with very clear and detailed accessibility information, with specific accessibility webpages for each state park (California Department of Parks and Recreation, n.d.).

In a different state that equally balances organized and passive access, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation manages the state’s Universal Access Program. Through this program, the department works to update outdoor sites, equipment, and facilities to make them more accessible and adaptive for individuals with different needs. The department makes a variety of outdoor recreation accessibility updates available on its website, including information on accessible walking trails, volunteer opportunities, and types of outdoor recreational activities throughout the state (Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, n.d.). Additionally, the department makes the adaptive program schedule available, which involves current adaptive recreational programming available at the state’s parks, pools, and rinks through partnerships with public and nonprofit partner organizations (All Out

Adventures, Easterseals Massachusetts, Holyoke Rows, Waypoint Adventure, Spaulding Adaptive Sports Center, and Boston Community Boating). Through this program, the state department is improving outdoor recreation access in ways that facilitate both organized and passive access opportunities for people with disabilities.

Preservation of natural resources

Across the states surveyed in the process of this research summary, the research team found multiple projects that link conservation and recreation to increase public outdoor access. These types of projects increase recreational access for underserved or disadvantaged groups while also satisfying conservation goals by maintaining the land's ecosystem and habitat. Further, the greater outcome of these projects includes the development of a broader community invested in the land, as a result of enhancing the land's accessibility and inclusion. Through these projects, the relationship between conservation, recreation, and environmental stewardship contributes to efforts that increase access to nature for people with disabilities.

A first-hand example is the establishment of the Washington Conservation Corps Program. In 1983, the Washington Legislature created a Conservation Corps program in state law, to be administered through the Departments of Ecology, Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife, and the Parks and Recreation Commission ([RCW 43.220.020](#)). The purpose of the Conservation Corps program is to protect the state's natural resources, including forests, agricultural lands, estuaries, waterways, and watersheds. Interestingly, within this program, the legislature developed a separate Puget Sound Corps program in 2011 state law, with the specific priority of employing individuals with developmental disabilities to gain meaningful employment. Additionally, the state law requires state agencies and other partner organizations on this project to provide employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. Corps project areas include cleaning up the Puget Sound ecosystem, oil spill response and cleanup, and the reduction of forest hazards ([RCW 43.220.020](#)).

Another example emerges from Michigan's recent approval of state funding in the form of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant Program. Originally created in state law in 1976, this program funds projects that simultaneously support outdoor recreation and natural resource protection (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, n.d.). In 2022, Michigan Gov. Whitmer authorized \$45.6 million in the form of Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, 2022). Managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, these grants support a multitude of outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan, including fishing, kayaking, hiking, and accessible playgrounds/facilities. Grants are available to public agencies, municipal governments, and nonprofit organizations specifically at the local level to create opportunities for people of all abilities to enjoy the outdoors. Trust Fund Grant projects fall into two categories: acquisition grants and development grants (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, 2022). Although projects funded through this grant are not specific to

people with disabilities, the program provides a host of opportunities for accessible recreation projects to take place by increasing access to both available land and available funding for project implementation.

Meanwhile, the linkage of conservation and recreation through state policy in Minnesota has led to a more inclusive outdoor recreation community, while cultivating an atmosphere in which outdoor site visitors see themselves as caretakers. In 1991, state law established the Minnesota Adopt-a-Park Program, coordinated between the state's Division of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Natural Resources ([MN Stat § 85.045, 2022](#)). The purpose of the program is to encourage the engagement and involvement of businesses, civic groups, and state residents in the improvement and maintenance of state parks and state recreation areas enjoyed by various communities throughout the state. The "Adopt-a-Park" program is an informal agreement for community groups, businesses, or individuals to participate in volunteer services that improve a state park, recreation area, monument, historic site, or recreational trail ([MN Stat § 85.045, 2022](#)). While not specific to people with disabilities, the program's environmental stewardship increases the diversity of state residents that visit outdoor areas by encouraging involvement in the maintenance of public open spaces.

Lastly, Florida also incorporates policies that link conservation and outdoor recreation. In 2008, state law established a new feature of the Florida Communities Trust Program known as the Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts Florida Forever Program ([FL Stat § 380.502, 2022](#)). In partnership with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the trust will develop a process for evaluating and ranking water acquisition projects on the recreational and conservation success of the project. In addition to scoring ongoing water acquisition projects, the intent of the legislature is to develop a system of weighted criteria to identify priority communities for future waterfront projects ([FL Stat § 380.502, 2022](#)).

These are examples of ways that state policy reinforces practices that maintain the land while increasing recreation access opportunities. By increasing the multitude of projects that center around land stewardship and accessibility, underserved communities—including people with disabilities—can become more included in outdoor spaces.

Policies and programs that transcend multiple categories of barriers

Through the process of this research, there are select key states that stand out for strategies that address multiple levels of inclusivity and accessibility. For example, outdoor recreation accessibility projects may seek to include a variety of traditionally excluded groups from the outdoors, including people of color, tribal groups, immigrant communities, disadvantaged youth, people who are low-income or of low socioeconomic status, or inland communities (for accessibility issues in coastal zones). Spanning a variety of excluded groups, these types of innovative projects shed light on the multiple ways in which outdoor recreation participation has

depended on exclusivity and privilege. Through these projects, state policies address the nuance in barriers experienced by people with disabilities in accessing the outdoors— particularly the idea that one’s disability may be compounded by other social vulnerability factors.

In California, SCC funds the Lower Cost Coastal Accommodations Program, which develops or enhances low-cost opportunities for California residents to partake in coastal activities (AB-250). Additionally, as previously discussed, the Explore the Coast Grant Program funds projects that address barriers for a variety of excluded groups; these include the Brown Girls Surfing Camp, Amah Mutsun Land Trust’s Summer Camp, and the Outdoor Outreach Coastal Adventure Program (SCC, n.d.). Although these grantees are working on projects that are not specific to people with disabilities, they each address barriers that intersect with disability barriers and aim to create broadly more inclusive and accessible outdoor spaces for all. In Alaska, the work of key public and private organizations has also focused on inclusive outdoor programming, mainly to reduce public health and economic disparities among state residents. These organizations include Alaska Trails, Alaska Outdoor Council, and Alaska Outdoor Alliance.

Through an initiative in Colorado, the state Department of Natural Resources manages the Outdoor Equity Program. This program funds projects in Colorado community-based organizations to create more opportunities to increase access to outdoor recreation for traditionally excluded groups, including people with disabilities (HB21-1318). According to the grant application, projects should address one or more of the following: the racial inequities young Coloradans face in accessing the outdoors, improving environmental justice, accessibility to the outdoors for Colorado youth from historically excluded communities, and providing environmental, experiential, outdoor, or stewardship and conservation education (HB21-1318). This grant program was enacted during the 2021 legislative session in the state legislature and created an Outdoor Equity board in the division of Parks and Wildlife.

Similarly, a nonprofit organization in Michigan has utilized community organizing and policy advocacy to restore the Grand Rapids and increase equitable outdoor recreation access. Known as Grand Rapids WhiteWater, this organization has a very specific mission: to restore a 2.5-mile stretch of the Grand River in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After several decades of suffering from six low-head dams in the Grand River, which has resulted in numerous public safety and environmental conservation consequences, this organization has advocated for, and finally in the process of, removing the low-head dams to restore the rapids and the natural flow of the Grand Rapids River (Grand Rapids WhiteWater, n.d.). In restoring the rapids, the goal of the project is to reap the social, environmental, and economic benefits of the river by increasing the diversity of Grand Rapids residents that can benefit from the public recreation and fitness opportunities from the river. Grand Rapids WhiteWater has argued that when the rapids are restored, the river will be publicly accessible by foot, bike, bus, and car. Additionally, the river will be much safer to use, promoting accessible outdoor water recreation to economically diverse communities in the city (Grand Rapids WhiteWater, n.d.).

Further, two of the four grant programs established by Utah’s Outdoor Recreation Act of 2022 focus more broadly on increasing access to outdoor spaces for traditionally excluded populations. Under the Children’s Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant, organizations receive support from the state Office of Outdoor Recreation for projects that encourage the health and social benefits of outdoor recreation for children, provide recreation opportunities, and encourage nature-based learning for underserved and disadvantaged youth communities (UT Code § 79-7-206, 2022). Similarly, with the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Grant, the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation funds projects that build, maintain, and promote recreational infrastructure to increase access to low-cost outdoor recreation for Utah residents. Additionally, projects should work to provide more recreation opportunities specifically for underserved communities (UT Code § 79-7-206, 2022).

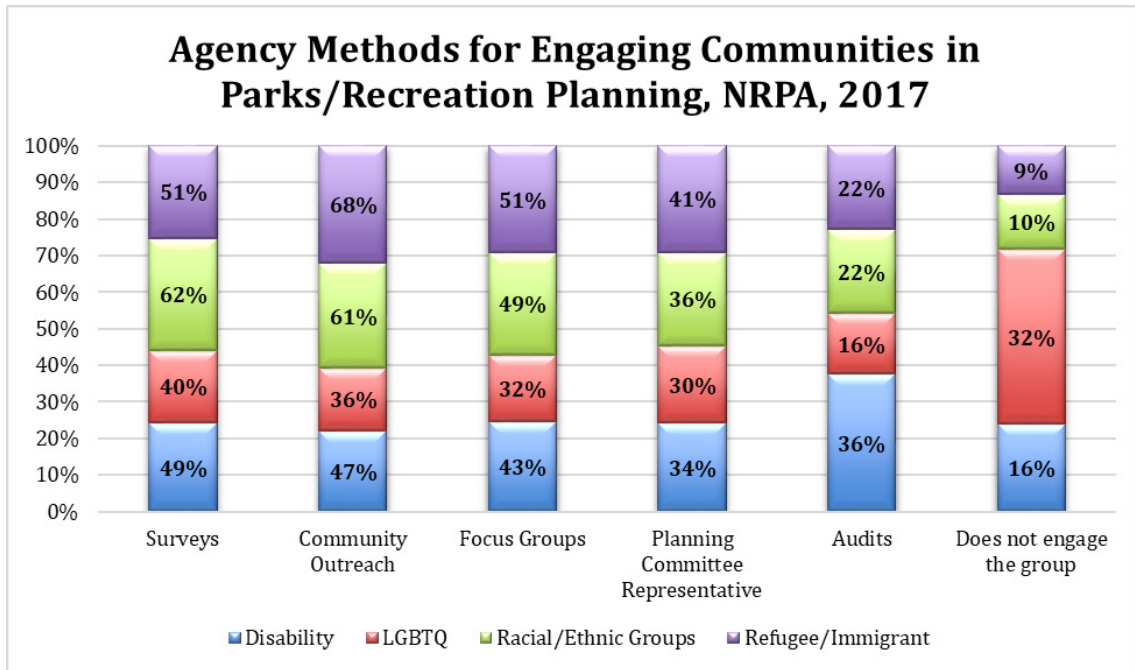
These examples demonstrate that outdoor recreation access depends on the removal of a suite of barriers, including financial, economic, and social barriers. By establishing state-run grant programs, states increase motivation among outdoor recreation stakeholders to address these barriers through state and local-level outdoor accessibility projects.

Direct engagement of people with disabilities

In addition to the best practices that have been considered thus far, it is essential to consider the extent to which state policies and programs engage people with disabilities in the development of outdoor accessibility strategies. This can be accomplished by consulting people with disabilities, having people with disabilities serve as committee representatives, or holding focus groups for outdoor recreation accessibility projects. Directly engaging people with disabilities in the development of projects serves to both accurately gauge existing barriers for this community while also increasing inclusion practices for the project.

National data indicates that there are several ways states currently engage people with disabilities in decisions around outdoor access. Through the 2017 Parks and Inclusion report administered by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA), the organization collected data on a variety of practices utilized by outdoor recreation agencies. Specifically, the NRPA surveyed parks and recreation professionals from county and municipal agencies from urban, suburban, and rural areas across the U.S. The report’s findings include methods used by agencies for engaging and including disadvantaged communities in the planning and design of outdoor recreation programs (NRPA, 2017). As detailed in Figure 1, which is adapted from the data detailed in the NRPA report, the top ways that agencies engage people with disabilities are through surveys and audits (e.g., by providing transportation, specific trail features, and other accessibility accommodations). However, other methods include focus groups, outreach at community events, or electing people with disabilities as planning committee representatives (NRPA, 2017).

Figure 1. Agency Method for Engaging Communities in Parks/Recreation Planning, NRPA, 2017



Parks and Recreation Inclusion Report | Research | National Recreation and Park Association. (2017). Retrieved June 4, 2023, from <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/parks-and-recreation-inclusion-report/>.

Alt text: stacked bar chart displaying outdoor recreation agencies' methods to engage underserved groups in parks/recreation planning. The agency methods, listed on the x-axis, are surveys, community outreach, focus groups, planning committee representatives, and audits. The underserved groups, listed using a color legend, are people from the disability, LGBTQ, racial/ethnic, and refugee/immigrant communities. The top methods for engaging people with disabilities are surveys (49%), community outreach (47%), and focus groups (43%).

However, other examples indicate that the direct engagement and inclusion of people with disabilities usually occur when people with disabilities themselves are the ones pioneering the accessible outdoor initiatives. In Florida, an individual with a spinal cord injury started the Sports Ability Alliance in 1990—the same year that the ADA Act was signed into law (ADA.gov, n.d.). A long-time athlete, the founder was injured unexpectedly and wanted to help other disabled people in Florida improve their mobility and mental health through outdoor activities (Sports Ability Alliance, n.d.). Formerly known as the Florida Disabled Outdoors Foundation, the organization provides recreational activities and programs, works with other recreational organizations and stakeholders, and engages people with disabilities on ways to improve their health. The organization’s current programs include a year-round recreational sports league, a nature-based adventures program, an inclusive fishing group, and adaptive sports for veterans and people with spinal cord injuries (Sports Ability Alliance, n.d.).

Since the inception of the Sports Ability Alliance, the work of improving recreation access has been supported by state policy in Florida. In 2000, the legislature designated the state Department

of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop and implement the Florida Recreational Assistance Program. The purpose of the program, as the legislature dictates, is to provide grants to local government entities to acquire or develop land specifically for public outdoor recreational access purposes ([FL Stat § 375.075, 2022](#)). Further, in 2001, the legislature once again designated DEP with the responsibility of developing and implementing a comprehensive multipurpose Statewide Outdoor Recreational Plan. The purpose of this plan is to gauge current outdoor recreational supply and demand, anticipate future demands for outdoor recreation opportunities, and propose ways to close gaps in any outdoor recreation needs currently not being met with future programs ([FL Stat § 375.021, 2022](#)).

In another example of an organization that promotes the direct engagement of people with disabilities, BORP was also founded by several people with disabilities—including Susan Sygall, a wheelchair-impaired recreation professional for people with disabilities. Aside from Sygall’s work in developing BORP, she is also the co-founder of Mobility International USA, and has been recognized as an expert in empowering people with disabilities, particularly women (BORP, n.d.). However, when Sygall co-founded BORP, she was still a college student at the University of California, Berkeley. After being denied access to a swimming class at the university, she was motivated to address the need for adaptive sports and outdoor recreation for people with disabilities (Nguyen, 2020). Through the presence of non-governmental outdoor access organizations run by people with disabilities, these organizations not only influence state policy, but also advocate for the engagement of people with disabilities in public outdoor access decision-making by being the ones who first got the conversation started.

Use of data on outdoor recreation use trends to inform projects

In order for states to develop policies that address accessibility and inclusion barriers for people with disabilities in participating in the outdoors, it is essential for states to be able to accurately assess what those barriers are for the disability community in their state. On that note, in addition to the strategies discussed thus far, it is essential to maximize the use of data to inform the development of new initiatives to address outdoor accessibility issues. Examples may include utilizing survey data to assess perceptions of barriers, geospatial data to evaluate the level of concentrated availability of outdoor spaces, or population data to understand the demographic characteristics of the disability community in each state.

As previously discussed, the Department of Interior manages LWCF, in which one of the requirements for grantees is to submit a five-year plan assessing and synthesizing the state’s goals to use LWCF to address outdoor recreation barriers in their state. State grantees approach this five-year plan, known as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) with varying strategies. However, some of the most effective plans incorporate survey data to better understand how state residents use the outdoors, how residents value outdoor recreation, how frequently they participate in outdoor recreation, and what the obstacles are (if any) that govern outdoor recreation trends for individuals.

For example, Minnesota was a 2019 LWCF grantee, which prompted this state to develop its own SCORP. In the process of developing this five-year plan, the state's Department of Natural Resources launched the Minnesota Outdoor Recreational Use Survey. From there, the state was able to use these results to establish its five-year goals, which revolved around better considering the needs of people with disabilities and lower socioeconomic status (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, n.d.). Similarly, Florida's 2019 SCORP included the results of an Outdoor Recreation Survey. One of the identified goals in Florida's 2019 SCORP, based on the results of their survey, is to increase public access, accessibility, and connectivity. Specific goals for accessibility include working with local government parks, greenways, and trails to identify ways to better serve recreation opportunities for underserved communities (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, n.d.).

Further, Minnesota has used data in other ways for outdoor recreation access purposes. In 2008, state law established the Parks and Trails Fund. Through this fund, projects or programs receive support by meeting or exceeding the constitutional requirement to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. Money from this fund must be spent according to Minnesota's distribution formula ([MN Stat § 85.53, 2022](#)). Importantly, projects must satisfy evaluation and measurement criteria, and data must be collected from all funded projects. Spatial data from every project should be collected to contribute to Minnesota Geographic Data Clearinghouse at the Minnesota Geospatial Information Office. The data from parks and trail fund projects must be available to the public through the Internet and readily accessible to the public. Collecting this data informs the planning and management of natural resources, emergency preparedness, and infrastructure investments ([MN Stat § 85.53, 2022](#)).

Additionally, the use of data to inform outdoor recreation accessibility projects can take on other forms. In Virginia, the state Department of Conservation and Recreation develops the ConservationVision Nature-based Recreation Access Model. Using land and water-based metrics, this model quantifies the availability of nature-based recreational opportunities in Virginia based on whether available public lands meet the land and water-based metrics (Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, n.d.). The results of this model are available as both a downloadable public dataset and as an interactive ArcGIS map. The model is part of a broader range of assessment tools made available by Virginia ConservationVision, a public lands assessment project started in 2007 with the goal of developing a conservation atlas (Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, n.d.)

Through these examples, the final best practice states must consider is effectively collecting data on outdoor recreational use patterns among their residents. When collecting data, it is especially helpful for states to obtain information on outdoor recreation barriers and any inequitable availability of accessible green spaces in communities. With this information, states should apply trends revealed in this data to inform the design of outdoor recreation access projects.

Conclusion

Implications for New Jersey

One in four New Jersey adults has a disability, in which the two leading categories of disability experienced by this population are mobility issues and cognitive disabilities (CDC, 2022). Consequently, the insights outlined above are important considerations for New Jersey's current outdoor programs and experience. Given that the research summary demonstrates that the barriers faced by people with physical disabilities are very different from those with cognitive and intellectual disabilities, it is essential for New Jersey to evaluate programs with the consideration of multiple types of barriers. Further, the state must propose strategies that combine passive and active recreational opportunities.

Current programs in New Jersey include New Jersey Outdoors, an interactive website maintained by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that provides information on state parks, such as available facilities and amenities, as well as directions to the site (New Jersey Outdoors, n.d.). Additionally, the DEP manages Green Acres, a grant program supporting projects that conserve the state's natural resources and open space while ensuring public recreation access. Green Acres promotes specifically local-level engagement through its Local Assistance Program, which provides grants and low-interest loans to county-level governments and nonprofit organizations for the development of open space and parks (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, n.d.). Similarly, the Local Recreation Improvement Grant, housed under the state's Department of Community Affairs, (DCA) distributes funding for the enhancement of indoor and outdoor recreation centers. DCA developed this grant specifically to support quality outdoor recreational spaces for underserved communities. The program received increased funding following the COVID-19 pandemic (Department of Community Affairs, n.d.).

In addition to these examples of state-run programs, New Jersey features organizations that host educational and recreational programs that promote equitable public outdoor access and land stewardship, such as the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, both of which are grantees of the New Jersey Department of Human Services **Inclusive Healthy Communities** program. Additionally, local government programs that are supported by county open space taxes may also participate in the New Jersey Green Acres Planning Incentive Program and the Green Acres Tax Exemption Program provides exemptions from local property taxes to eligible nonprofit organizations that own recreation and conservation lands that are available for public use. Increasing access to nature and the outdoors has been a dedicated focus of the New Jersey Department of Human Services Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) Program. In addition to supporting the Pinelands

Preservation Alliance and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, IHC is supporting efforts of The Family Resource Network and its partner Stockton University to develop a toolkit to assess the accessibility and inclusivity of outdoor spaces for people with disabilities. IHC is also support Allies in Caring and its partner, the South Jersey Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Coalition, to advance an educational campaign to support greater access to the outdoors for people who are deaf and/or hard-of-hearing. (Division of Disability Services, 2023).

Situating the state in federal legislation, New Jersey currently receives funding from both the LWCF and the National Recreational Trails Program, an opportunity that collectively brings the state \$7-8 million a year in support of public outdoor recreation access (Watson, 2023). In 2022, Commissioner LaTourette established a state advisory committee to inform the development of *Outside, Together*—New Jersey’s latest version of SCORP (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, n.d.). In addition to insight from the advisory committee, the DEP welcomes feedback on how the state can better improve stakeholder engagement practices to improve public outdoor access. Among the plan’s other objectives, *Outside, Together* strives to improve user experience in outdoor areas and better consider the needs of residents in underserved communities. The *Outside, Together* Report will be submitted to the NPS to maintain its LWCF funding in December 2023 (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, n.d.).

Final Insights

The goal of this report is to assess state policies that increase access to nature and outdoor spaces for people with disabilities. The research team reviewed current federal policies that address this issue, put them in context with state policies, and developed five major insights regarding best practices: balancing organized and passive access, linking public access with natural resources conservation and stewardship, creating policies that address compounding factors of social vulnerability, directly engaging and including people with disabilities, and effectively incorporating data in project development. In the process of explaining each individual takeaway in turn, the report uses examples of state practices that justify the insight, which collectively includes Alaska, California, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Virginia, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Massachusetts. We have included details and external resources about policies and programs in the Appendices.

Access to nature and outdoor recreation for people with disabilities is a dynamic issue that requires a variety of state policy strategies. Additionally, the effectiveness of strategies varies based on municipal and state-level characteristics of a given state. Nevertheless, there seem to be commonalities among certain programs and projects surveyed here, particularly the reliance on innovative grant programs with a multitude of nonprofit and private partners. Further, the development of state policy on disability outdoor access issues is often driven by nonprofit and private organizations that pioneered initiatives in their state, in which the organization is founded by one or more persons with a disability. The history of nonprofit groups steering better

accessibility policies speaks to issues of responsibility, in which the burden of creating better outdoor accessibility falls disproportionately on the disability community itself.

There are other shortcomings identified in current state policies on the topic of outdoor and nature access for people with disabilities. Across the state policies and programs explored in the development of this research summary, the extent to which state policies increase access to outdoor recreation across a span of multiple categories of disability is limited. While many state policies on this topic are in the form of grant programs that encourage innovative and creative projects for enhancing access, our research team did not find any programs that specifically encourage the development of projects that clearly distinguish and address outdoor recreation barriers for different types of disability. While nonprofit and private organizations offer outdoor programming for multiple disabilities—many of whom are in part funded by the state—the research team did not identify policies that specifically identified and encouraged this practice.

On that note, this limitation appears to emerge because the majority of state policies identified on this topic meet one of the following categories: (1) grant programs funding any community or state-wide project that addresses access under the umbrella of disadvantaged/underserved communities, (2) the designation of a state agency to appropriate increased funding on this topic, or (3) the development of a council, collaboration, or group to convene to discuss general outdoor recreation accessibility issues in their state. In other words, most state policies are only the beginning of policy formation and maintenance from the groundwork of disability advocate organizations.

Importantly, SCC recently hosted focus groups with environmental justice leaders from advocacy groups in the Bay Area, as part of the state’s development of Equity and Environmental Justice guidelines for further programmatic initiatives and advocacy by the agency. Insights from these focus groups shed light on the vagueness of terms such as “disadvantaged,” “underserved,” or “under-resourced,” and leaders recommended shifting away from deficit-based language to describe communities and describe more directly the groups of interest for California’s outdoor access funding opportunities (SCC, 2019). These insights are important considerations, given that this language is consistent across many of the states identified in this research summary. Although it is possible that the presence of deficit-based language is a by-product of the introductory nature of state policies, these insights indicate that continued use of this language may prevent states from progressively building on their current efforts to expand outdoor access. As outdoor accessibility initiatives move from the nonprofit space to state and local government, it is essential to incorporate people with disabilities in every stage of the planning and policymaking processes to avoid perpetuating ableist language.

Further, there appears to be a lack of programs that maximize targeted outreach toward the support systems of disabilities. Several qualitative studies indicate that people with disabilities rely on their family, friends, and caregivers to pursue new opportunities (Stigsdotter et. al, 2019; Groulx et. al, 2022). As a result, one policy recommendation for future state agencies, community-based organizations, and research teams is to develop strategies that increase targeted outreach to

robust support systems, advocates, and other spaces where resources for people with disabilities are already in place. Through this potential strategy, increasing outdoor and nature-based opportunities for people with disabilities will build upon access and inclusion initiatives that are taking place in other policy areas and disciplines, from education and public health to vocational training and employment.

Increasing access to nature and outdoor opportunities for people with disabilities depends on a variety of federal, state, and local-level policies and programs. Policies must address the different barriers faced by people depending on their type of disability, while also working in conjunction with compounding or intersecting factors of social vulnerability. Additionally, effective state policies and programs directly engage people with disabilities, while also targeting support systems and other stakeholders in the broader topic of disability advocacy. Lastly, state policies maximize the use of nonprofit and private partners in steering initiatives and opportunities. Using these strategies and insights, states can increase the availability of publicly accessible, inclusive, outdoor activities and nature-based experiences for people with disabilities.

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Appendix A: List of Relevant Organizations

Alaska

- **Alaska Trails** - This nonprofit organization provides strategies, ideas, and sources to improve trail-related programs and projects in the state of Alaska, including development, maintenance, easement acquisition, safety, education, and more. Among the organization's primary goals and guiding principles, Alaska Trails aims to achieve improved and expanded trail use access for a diverse group of visitors. One of the organization's current projects is the Alaska Trails Initiative, which is a coalition of trails organizations that are working together to improve facilities, terrain, signage, and marketing around trails in order to expand diversity in outdoor recreation trail visitors, and make it easier and more accessible for people to take advantage of outdoor recreation opportunities and reap the public health benefits. Learn more: <https://www.alaska-trails.org/>
- **Alaska Outdoor Alliance** - This is a coalition of outdoor recreation stakeholders in Alaska that are engaging with the state to realize the untapped potential of outdoor recreation—for its public health, economic, and social benefits for underserved communities. The organization invests in public outdoor recreation infrastructure funds, advocates for outdoor recreation legislation at the state and local levels, and advocates for state policy that increases outdoor recreation access and supports environmental stewardship. Every March, the organization hosts a Capitol Outdoor Week, where the coalition discusses policy priorities in a series of public events and meetings with state leaders. Learn more: <https://www.alaskaoutdooralliance.org/>
- **Alaska Outdoor Council** - The Alaska Outdoor Council is a public agency committed to public outdoor access and equality of public outdoor facilities and resources in the state of Alaska. Through the council, grassroots outdoor organizations in Alaska can sign up for memberships, and the council protects these "member organizations" by communicating with state leaders about key components of outdoor recreation policy that will enhance public access, conserve the state's natural resources, and improve public outdoor education. The organization was ranked by the University of Alaska as the most influential outdoor advocacy organization in the state. Learn more: <https://alaskaoutdoorcouncil.org/>
- **Outdoor Recreational Trails and Advisory Board** - Operating under the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), this advisory board is responsible for providing recommendations to the Division of Parks and Recreation on project funding priorities, evaluating ongoing outdoor recreation projects funded through this division, and advocate for the economic, health, and social benefits of improving public outdoor recreation access. Learn more: <https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/misc/ortaboard.htm>

California

- **Environmental Traveling Companions** - This nonprofit organization offers adaptive kayaking, skiing, and whitewater rafting for people with disabilities. Additionally, the organization also runs the Youth LEAD program, an outdoor adventure camping program for disadvantaged youth from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds. ETC partners with a variety of nonprofit, private, and public disability service organizations to offer subsidized outdoor programming for people with disabilities, including burn victims, the blind/visually impaired, people with spinal cord injuries, developmental disabilities, and for those who are deaf/hard of hearing. Learn more: <https://etctrips.org/>
- **Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program** - This nonprofit organization offers both indoor and outdoor adaptive recreation for people with disabilities, at no cost. The organization's outdoor recreation programming includes cycling, climbing, and kayaking. Additionally, BORP runs an Adventures and Outings program, a group outdoor trip to a camp, accessible hiking trail, or a community event. BORP provides accessible transportation to and from its outdoor recreation programs. The organization was co-founded in 1975 by Susan Sygall, a person with a disability who received the President's Award in 1995 for her leadership in empowering people with disabilities. Additionally, through a contract with the State Coastal Conservancy, BORP was tasked with developing an accessible website to accompany the accessible guidebook *Wheeling Cal's Guide to the California Coast*, which was completed earlier this year. Learn more: <http://www.wheelingcalscoast.org/>
- **Access Northern California** - This nonprofit organization operates an accessible website for people with disabilities in California. The aim of the website is to provide information on accessible trails, parks, gardens, recreation programs, and lodgings. Since 2017, Access Northern California has been operating under BORP's leadership, in order to combine and streamline outdoor accessibility resources for people with disabilities in California. Learn more: <https://accessnca.org/>
- **Coastwalk/California Coastal Trail Association** - This nonprofit organization was founded in 1983, with the purpose of furthering grassroots/advocacy to expand state funding opportunities to complete the California Coastal Trail vision communicated in the California Coastal Act. In the early 2000s, Coastwalk received several grants from the State Coastal Conservancy to support the development of the California Coastal Trail through promotional materials for the public, signage, and trail mapping. In an extension of this partnership between Coastwalk and the State Coastal Conservancy, Coastwalk developed two editions of *Wheeling Cal's Guide to the California Coast*, an accessible guidebook for people with disabilities in 2001 and 2006, respectively. Learn more: <https://coastwalk.org/>
- **California Coastal Act** - In 1976, the California legislature established that the California coast needs to be managed in a way that maintains coastal conservation while taking into account the social and economic needs of state residents. Pursuant to these needs, the legislature seeks to maximize public access to the coast through the establishment of the Coastal Public Access

Program, which includes encouraging a combination of state-led and local development initiatives that are mutually beneficial for coastal conservation and public access. Learn more: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/coastact.pdf>

- **Explore the Coast Grant Program** - The Explore the Coast Grant Program was established in 2013, to provide meaningful outdoor experiences in coastal areas for “ETC priority communities,” which include lower-income individuals and households, people with disabilities, people of color, immigrant communities, and foster youth. Since the program’s inception, the State Coastal Conservancy has funded over \$18 million 296 different grant projects. Learn more: <https://scc.ca.gov/grants/explore-the-coast-grants/>
- **Coastal Stories Grant Program** - In 2021, the State Coastal Conservancy established the Coastal Stories Grant program, an effort to increase inclusive signage, murals, monuments, and guides in coastal spaces. This effort is designed to reject the European-settler perspective that often excludes ETC priority communities from the history of coastal and outdoor spaces in California. Learn more: https://scc.ca.gov/files/2021/10/2021-22-Request-for-Proposals-Coastal-Stories_final.pdf
- **Lower Cost Coastal Accommodations Program** - In 2017, the California legislature launched the Lower Cost Coastal Accommodations Program, to be managed by the State Coastal Conservancy. This program aims to develop new, low-cost opportunities to stay overnight at the California coast. Additionally, the legislature requires the State Coastal Conservancy to manage a pilot program to assess the effectiveness of new accommodation opportunities for state residents. Learn more: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB250

Oregon

- **Adaptive Sports Northwest** - This nonprofit organization provides adaptive sports and recreational opportunities for people with physical disabilities. Founded in 1982, the organization offers a wide range of programs, particularly for children and adults in wheelchairs such as wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball, and sitting basketball. In terms of outdoor recreational opportunities, the organization’s program offers soccer, track/field, swimming, and kayaking. Additionally, program participants that become “members” can rent the organization’s range of adaptive equipment in order to independently take advantage of recreational opportunities. Learn more: <https://adaptivesportsnw.org/>
- **Oregon Adaptive Sports** - This nonprofit organization provides outdoor recreation experiences for people with disabilities. The organization works to improve recreational opportunities so Central Oregon can be a significant source of outdoor recreation experiences for people of all abilities. The organization’s range of adaptive equipment accommodates sports such as hiking, skiing, cycling, golfing, kayaking, rock-climbing,

and snowboarding. Interestingly, to participate in the organization's program offerings, individuals register for lessons for each type of sport, to emphasize safe and responsible use of the adaptive equipment. Learn more: <https://oregonadaptivesports.org/>

- **Adventures Without Limits** - This nonprofit organization was founded in 1995 to bring more outdoor recreational opportunities to Oregon, specifically adaptive solutions for people with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors. The organization's program offers a range from whitewater rafting and kayaking to hiking and camping. However, since the organization's inception, it has addressed broader barriers regarding outdoor access, including transportation, skills training, and advocating for low-cost accommodation options. The organization has a long list of partners, including schools, businesses, and other nonprofit groups. Learn more: <https://awloudoors.org/>

Utah

- **Ogden Valley Adaptive Sports** - This nonprofit organization provides outdoor adaptive recreation opportunities for people with disabilities in northern Utah. The organization was founded in 2009 and primarily serves people with disabilities in the Weber, Davis, Morgan, and Box counties, with the adaptive programs geographically centered in Ogden Valley. The organization has previously competed at Paralympic Competitions. The organization's work is done to fulfill the vision that people with and without disabilities can come together to enjoy sports and recreation in the state's outdoor areas. The organization's winter programs span adaptive skiing and snowboarding, while the summer program offers kayaking, cycling, and indoor climbing. Learn more: <https://ogdenvalleyadaptivesports.org/>
- **Wasatch Adaptive Sports** - This nonprofit organization provides adaptive recreation programming for people with disabilities. Established in 1977, the organization's programs include affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities for children, adults, and veterans. The organization's summer programs span cycling, mountain biking, paddle sports, and yoga. Additionally, the organization's summer programs include skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, yoga, and indoor cycling. Learn more: <https://wasatchadaptivesports.org/>
- **Common Ground Outdoor Adventures** - This private nonprofit provides adaptive outdoor recreational programs for people with disabilities. The organization was originally founded in 1993 as part of an AmeriCorps VISTA project, in a collaboration between Utah State University's Outdoor Program and the Audubon Society. In 1997, the organization officially obtained nonprofit status and started and began its own independent programming and projects separate from its AmeriCorps origins. In 2017, the organization opened a brand-new adaptive center, in addition to its adaptive programming in Logan as well as their digital programming. The organization's summer programs span cycling, rafting, canoeing, rock climbing, nature-based crafts and learning

activities, yoga, and hiking. The organization's winter programs span snowshoeing, nature-based crafts and activities, skiing, ice-skating, and sled hockey. The organization aims to remove physical, social, and financial barriers to outdoor recreation for people with disabilities. Learn more: <http://cgadventures.org/>

- **Kostopulos Dream Foundation** - This private foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities through education and recreation opportunities. The organization offers several types of summer camp experiences for people with disabilities throughout a variety of outdoor areas in Utah. Additionally, the organization runs vocational rehabilitation and work experience programs to help students with disabilities transition out of high school and prepare to enter the workforce. The organization's community-based programming runs from September to April and includes games and activities at different outdoor community events. Finally, the organization has a year-round equestrian program. Learn more: <http://www.campk.org/>
- **2009 Utah Legislature** - The legislature establishes that the Division of State Parks may provide support to a nonprofit organization or foundation whose work helps the Division achieve its outdoor recreational goals. Learn more: [UT Code § 79-4-206 \(2022\)](#)
- **Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation** - The Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation, under the division of the Department of Natural Resources, assists communities in building local recreational projects that encourage both residents and visitors of Utah to be active and to enjoy Utah's green space. This community assistance is funded by the state legislature-funded Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant. Developed in 2015, this grant has funded over 155 outdoor recreational projects, covering over 25 different types of outdoor recreational opportunities. In addition to this grant, the office developed two new outdoor recreation grants in 2020: the Recreation Restoration Infrastructure Grant and the Utah Children's Outdoor Recreation and Education Grant. Learn more: <https://recreation.utah.gov/>
- **Utah Outdoor Association** - This private association is focused on supporting the economic growth of Utah's outdoor industry by developing networks between Utah residents and outdoor recreation organizations and sharing/developing new ideas for best practices about maintaining outdoor access. The association advocates for "common sense" conservation efforts, as well as the acceptance and inclusion of all people in enjoying Utah's outdoor spaces. Among the association's events and outreach includes university partnership, recreation "days on the hill" to foster partnerships with Utah's policymakers and has a presence at state annual outdoor recreation summits to bring together leaders in outdoor spaces from all over Utah. Learn more: <https://utahoutdoor.org/>
- **Outdoor Recreation Planning Assistance Program** - The Outdoor Recreation Planning Assistance Program is a newly developed technical service provided by the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation to help communities define and develop outdoor recreational goals at the local level. Types of project assistance as part of this program could include (1) community visioning and stakeholder facilitation, (2) Plan coordination

and development, (3) Outreach and community input strategies, or (4) trail counter deployment and visitor analysis, among others. Eligible organizations to apply for this program include municipal agencies, county governments, and tribal governments. Learn more: <https://recreation.utah.gov/grants/planning-assistance/>

- **Utah Recreation and Parks Association** - The mission of the Utah Recreation and Parks Association is to support the development of recreation, leisure, parks, and natural resources in Utah. Similar to the Utah Outdoors Association, professionals working in various sectors can apply to be a member in order to strengthen their knowledge and commitment to creating outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the state. A variety of representatives are elected to two-year terms on the Association's board in order to increase the diversity of background experiences in areas of outdoor recreation projects. Included on this list of representatives that are elected every two years is an Adaptive Recreation Representative, who supports and considers the needs of people with disabilities in outdoor recreation project/planning decisions. Learn more: <https://www.urpa.org/>
- **Utah State Parks** - Utah State Parks Department has a fixed list of accessible outdoor sites available on their website. In 2020, the Department's Interpretive Specialist received an award for her Braille interpretive panel rock art imagery, which is displayed at the wheelchair-accessible trail at Fremont Indian State Park. Additionally, the department has a designated ADA Coordinator to answer additional questions from Utah residents and visitors about accessibility. Learn more: <https://stateparks.utah.gov/resources/accessibility/>

Massachusetts

- **All Out Adventures** - This nonprofit was founded in 2001 with leadership from the state's Universal Access program and the Greenfield Community College Outdoor Leadership Program. The organization's various programs are funded in large part through three public grants from the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program, the Statewide Head Injury program, and the Veterans Adaptive Sports program. The organization's various programs include adaptive cycling programs for veterans and seniors. Additionally, the organization has three types of programs for participants from the Statewide Head Injury Program: adaptive cycling, hiking, and kayaking. Finally, the organization runs equipment rentals, in which individuals can rent equipment for independent cycling on the Northampton Trail, and will also hold private large group cycling, kayaking, and hiking programs. Learn more: <https://alloutadventures.org/>
- **Project Adventure** - This nonprofit organization collaborates with schools and organizations to create adventure-based learning opportunities to enhance growth and development for children from all backgrounds. Additionally, the organization provides consulting services for other organizations and programs that want to adapt their outdoor recreation programs to be more inclusive and accessible. The organization is a partner in the state's Universal Access Program. Learn more: <https://www.pa.org/>

- **Easterseals Massachusetts** - This nonprofit organization provides essential services to residents in Massachusetts with disabilities, including recreation, job training, digital literacy, and educational/college navigation. Specifically in relation to outdoor recreation, the organization offers several adaptive recreation programs: martial arts, swimming, summer camp, and horseback riding. The organization is funded in part by the state's Universal Access Program. Learn more: <https://www.easterseals.com/ma/>
- **Holyoke Rows** - This nonprofit organization offers low-cost adaptive rowing and kayaking programs for both adults and children with disabilities. The organization is a partner in the state's Universal Access Program. Learn more: <https://www.holykerows.org/programs>
- **Waypoint Adventure** - This nonprofit was founded in 2010 and offers a variety of outdoor programs for people with a wide variety of disabilities- including physical disabilities, mobility issues, and visual/hearing impairments, as well as developmental, communication, and intellectual disabilities. The organization's programs include hiking, kayaking, a ropes course, rock climbing, snowshoeing, and tandem cycling. These programs include both private and open enrollment programs. The organization's funding relies on partnerships with private foundations and corporations, and the staff maintains training through organizations such as Project Adventure, National Outdoor Leadership School, Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, and the American Canoe Association. Learn more: <https://www.waypointadventure.org/>
- **Spaulding Adaptive Sports Center** - This rehabilitation hospital provides adaptive recreation programming for people recovering from injuries or surgery. The hospital's outdoor programming spans kayaking, cycling, mountain biking, and tennis. The organization is a partner in the state's Universal Access Program. Learn more: <https://spauldingrehab.org/conditions-services/adaptive-sports>
- **Cape Organization for Rights of the Disabled** - This nonprofit organization advances independent living options for people with disabilities, as the only independent living center for the Cape and Islands region of Massachusetts. This organization's goal is that through community outreach, partnerships, and programs, they will increase the ability of people with disabilities to live independently and live healthy, fulfilling lives in their communities. Learn more: <https://www.cordcapecod.org/>
- **Boston Community Boating** - This nonprofit organization works to create a diverse community of outdoor recreationalists through inclusive sailing experiences. It is the oldest sailing organization in the United States and offers sailing programming for both children and adults with disabilities, using a variety of adaptive sailing equipment that make these experiences possible. The organization's executive leadership includes staff that helped develop the state's Universal Access Program, in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Learn more: <https://www.community-boating.org/>
- **Sail Cape Cod** - This nonprofit organization offers inclusive sailing programs. The organization aims to make its sailing programs accessible not just to the general public, but

children and adults from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and underserved communities. The organization's different types of programs include adaptive sailing, adult sailing, youth sailing, community outreach projects, and a sailing certificate program. Learn more: <https://www.sailcapecod.org/>

- **Access Recreation New England** - This is a coalition of organizations and partners that collectively work to enhance recreational opportunities in Boston and New England. The steering committee of this organization comprises a variety of experts in adaptive sports, recreation, and tourism in Massachusetts. The organization aims to make a variety of resources on adaptive recreation available to people with disabilities on its website. These resources include places to rent adaptive equipment, accessible museums, summer camps, and outdoor trails. Learn more: <https://accessrec.org/>
- **Adaptive Sports New England** - This nonprofit collaborates with schools, colleges, and recreation networks to provide adaptive sport opportunities for children and adults with visual or mobility issues. The organization specifically works to integrate adaptive sports into existing recreational events and competitions, working with partners such as South Shore YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, Eastern College Athletic Conference, NCAA, and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee. The organization's supporters primarily consist of private foundations. Learn more: <https://adaptivesportsne.org/>
- **Piers Park Sailing Center** - This nonprofit provides inclusive community sailing experiences for individuals in Boston Harbor. The organization runs a specific adaptive sailing program, in which it partners with nonprofits, schools, and disability service organizations to provide these experiences for people with disabilities. This organization is one of the few of its kind in the country with accreditation as a U.S. SAILING Adaptive Sailing Center, and it was awarded the Best Community Program for Disabled Sailors by U.S. SAILING. Many individuals with spinal cord injuries or mobility impairments are eligible for free or subsidized costs for the organization's programs. Additionally, the organization runs a variety of inclusive youth programs around sailing and marine science education. Learn more: <https://piersparksailing.org/>

Washington

- **Washington Trails Association (WTA)** - This nonprofit organization was founded in 1966. WTA originally began as a magazine, Signpost, with the goal of circulating articles and press materials about different trails for hikers in Washington. However, the magazine quickly grew and obtained nonprofit status, with several different hiking and guidebook authors serving on its board of directors. Throughout the 1990s, WTA became increasingly involved in connecting hikers with opportunities to engage in conservation opportunities to preserve the trails that they used and loved. One of the organization's current campaigns, Trails

for Everyone, is dedicated to creating an inclusive hiking community in Washington. This campaign develops volunteer opportunities and other public programs for traditionally excluded groups to take part in trail conservation, an Outdoor Leadership Training Program, and a Trail Smarts series with guides to responsible, safe, hiking. Other programs that expand community engagement in the environment include Vacations for Youth and Families Go Hiking programs. Learn more: <https://www.wta.org/>

- **Washington Water Trails Association** - This nonprofit organization was founded in 1990 with a focus on retaining public access to water trails in Washington State. The organization advocates for public access to waterways and associated water trails; additionally, the organization looks to opportunities to enhance community engagement and stewardship in maintaining high-quality public water trails. WWTa promotes this engagement through partnerships with other private and public organizations. Additionally, the organization consistently posts updates on their website and their brochures about your legal rights regarding public water trails access as a Washington resident and safety/information tips for visitors to the Washington coast. Learn more: <https://www.wvta.org/>
- **Outdoors for All Foundation** - This nonprofit organization was founded in 1979 and offers adaptive recreational programs for children and adults with disabilities. This organization's extensive list of programs includes skiing, snowboarding, cycling, kayaking, and hiking, in addition to adult and youth camping programs. The organization also runs a variety of partnership-specific programs, with partners ranging from schools, community centers, and disability services organizations. The organization's various programs are made possible through both its staff and robust volunteer base. Learn more: <https://outdoorsforall.org/>
- **Washington State Parks Foundation** - This nonprofit organization supports and funds efforts to maintain vibrant and inclusive state parks in Washington. The organization's goal is to fund state park efforts by raising operating revenues to expand on public state park funds. Additionally, the organization supports facility and trail maintenance to maximize high-quality public access to state parks in Washington. Each year, the organization releases a report on the list of park development projects it has completed to enhance a welcoming and inclusive environment at different state parks. In 2022, the organization completed 12 park improvement projects—including an ADA accessible counter at Maryhill State Park, new bike racks at Fort Worden State Park, and a new Discovery Center for community activities at Sacajawea Historical State Park. Additionally, the organization provides virtual tours and interactive maps of Washington on their website, which maximize information sharing about state parks. Learn more: <https://waparks.org/>
- **Disabled Hikers** - This nonprofit organization was founded by disability advocate Syren Nagakyrie, this organization works to develop a hiking community for people with physical disabilities and chronic conditions. Nagakyrie authored *The Disabled Hiker's Guide to Western Washington and Oregon*, an effort to create more extensive, detailed, research on accessible trails available to people with disabilities on car, wheelchair, and foot. Additionally, the organization's website contains a wealth of other resources,

information, and considerations for hikers with different physical disabilities, including where to find accessible trail information, types of accessible trail conditions, and hiking boot recommendations. Learn more: <https://www.disabledhikers.com/>

Florida

- **Florida Greenways and Trails System** - Managed by Florida DEP, the Greenways and Trails System identifies existing recreational trails to enhance and open space that can be developed for recreational purposes. Building on local and regional trail projects, the program works to create a coherent system of recreational opportunities through trails to be enjoyed by all Florida residents and visitors statewide. Additionally, the program consistently holds meetings about upcoming projects, new recreational opportunities, and updates to their 5-year priority and opportunity maps, which engage members of the public and other stakeholders. The organization's System Plan for 2019-2023 clearly identifies the need for outdoor recreation in the development and maintenance of healthy communities. Learn more: <https://floridadep.gov/parks/ogt/content/florida-greenways-and-trails-system-plan-and-maps>
- **Florida Recreation and Parks Association** - This private foundation combines the experience of several outdoor recreational leaders in Florida to communicate the social and health benefits of outdoor recreation, while advocating for outdoor recreation projects throughout the state. The organization works on legislative issues and activities related to outdoor recreation, developing educational programs centered on outdoor recreation, and creating opportunities for the public to get involved in outdoor recreation legislative discussions. For example, the organization's website stayed updated with a "Legislative Items to Watch" page, which includes bills that are currently being introduced in the Florida Legislature related to outdoor recreation. Additionally, the organization holds an annual conference of Florida park and recreation professionals. Learn more: <https://www.frpa.org/home>
- **Designation of Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan** - In 2001, the legislature determined that Florida DEP is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive multipurpose Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan. Florida DEP will do this in collaboration with several departments: Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Transportation, Fish and Wildlife Commission, Economic Opportunity, and the water management districts. The purpose of this plan is to gauge current outdoor recreational supply and demand, anticipate future demands for outdoor recreation opportunities, and propose ways to close gaps in any outdoor recreation needs currently not being met with future programs. [FL Stat § 375.021 \(2022\)](#)

Colorado

- **Colorado Mountain Club** - This nonprofit organization promotes outdoor recreation, outdoor education, and environmental stewardship throughout the state. Through a variety of adult and youth programs, the organization increases environmental activism, particularly in areas of recreational trail development and restoration, by engaging a wide and diverse community of Colorado residents. Additionally, the organization's publication division, CMC Press, has published literature on opportunities for health equity through inclusive, low-cost recreational practices. Learn more: <https://www.cmc.org/>
- **Colorado Outdoor Partnership** - This is a network of organizations in Colorado that are interested in the intersection of preserving conservation and recreation interests. According to the website, this can include organizations from a variety of sectors: outdoor recreation groups, conservation, sportspersons including hunters and anglers, environmental education, outdoor recreation industry partners, lands stewardship, agriculture and ranching, and government. Some current members include both government agencies (Colorado DNR, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, and the Ute Mountain Tribe) and nonprofit/community-based organizations (Colorado Mountain Club, Colorado Youth Corps Association, Colorado Parks and Recreation Association, and Volunteers of Outdoor Colorado). Additionally, the partnership's Regional initiatives were created in 2020, through **Executive Order B 2020 08**, which identifies regional strategies for outdoor recreation. Learn more: <https://copartnership.org/>
- **Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado** - This is the state's oldest outdoor stewardship nonprofit organization. The organization manages volunteer projects across Colorado that aim to improve public lands for outdoor recreation while developing a larger community of stakeholders for outdoor recreational issues. The organization's funding sources come from government agencies, foundations, and partner organizations, among other sources. The organization runs community engagement programs, including the Cairn Youth Program, Affinity Partnerships Program, Healthy Community Projects, and their signature Family Camping Projects. Each of these programs looks to include historically underrepresented communities in outdoor recreation. Learn more: <https://www.voc.org/>

Michigan

- **Michigan Department of Natural Resources** - The Michigan DNR is a 2022 recipient of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which requires state grantees to submit a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), a five-year plan that demonstrates a critical assessment of the state's outdoor recreation needs and how the state will use the funds to address these needs. Consequently, the Michigan DNR released their 2023-2027 plan, which outlines four strategies to achieve equitable distribution and appropriate management of outdoor recreation assets: improve collaboration, improve, and

expand public outdoor recreation access, enhance health benefits, and enhance prosperity. Learn more: <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr>

- **Michigan DNR Outdoor Adventure Center** - The Michigan DNR operates and manages an Outdoor Adventure Center, a one-stop destination to learn about any and all outdoor recreation opportunities in Michigan. This center is managed with the support of funding from the DNR's Natural Resources Trust Fund Grants. At the Center, staff educate visitors about various state park opportunities, help residents pinpoint local public recreation options in their community, host recreational events for Michigan residents and visitors alike, and create a community of people invested in Michigan's outdoor recreation opportunities. The Center is located at Detroit's riverfront park, with the Dequindre Cut Trail running, which makes the Center a segway to connect Detroit's riverfront parks with nearby neighborhoods. Additionally, this location allows visitors to partake in hands-on outdoor activities at the Center itself through its exhibits and simulators that explore features of the riverfront park. Learn more: <https://www.michigan.gov/oac>
- **Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education** - This is a professional association whose programs, events, and other opportunities support environmental education in a variety of settings, including areas of environmental literacy, outdoor education, and stewardship. Since its inception in 1955, the association has a variety of accomplishments, including: (1) being a primary advocate for the state's 1994 Environmental Education Act, (2) publishing a guide to environmental-themed curriculum, (3) launched the Environmental Education Curriculum Support Project and Project WILD, and (4) developed an Environmental Educator Certification Program. Through the organization's various initiatives and program offerings, it places a high priority on collaborative partnerships and diversity in the process of achieving environmental stewardship and education opportunities. Learn more: <https://www.maeoe.com/>

Minnesota

- **Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force** - In 2020, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Explore Minnesota created this Task Force. This task force is a 21-member team that meets throughout the year to develop recommendations for enhancing outdoor recreation, which is then used by legislators, DNR, and Explore Minnesota for future projects. The 2021 report recommends creating a new Office of Outdoor Recreation, which would focus on three major action items: 1) increase participation to enhance equity, diversity, and inclusivity, 2) unite Minnesota's outdoor recreation community, 3) unify communications amongst the state's diverse outdoor recreation sector. Learn more: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ortf/index.html>
- **Minnesota 2020-2024 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan** - In 2017, the DNR conducted an Outdoor Recreation Household Survey, to better understand and respond to the outdoor needs and uses of residents throughout the state. Additionally, the information from the survey was used to identify trends in outdoor activities among adults, explore barriers to

outdoor recreation, and establish a baseline dataset for reference in future outdoor recreation projects. Learn more: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/scorp/index.html>

- **Outdoor Recreation Grant Program** - The DNR runs a state Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, which provides matching grants to local governments throughout the state for the cost of acquisition, development, or restoration of local parks and recreation. Grants may cover up to 50% of the project costs. The eligible applicants for this grant are Minnesota's cities, counties, and townships. Learn more: https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor_rec.html
- **Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program** - This grant program assists local governments and school districts with fee title acquisition and permanent easement acquisition to protect public access to high-quality and scenic natural areas. Although public access should be supported, high levels of development and active use are not appropriate and will not be supported in this project. Rather, compatible use and development of natural and scenic lands is defined by "passive use," or activities such as walking, hiking, kayaking/canoeing, or nature observation. Grants can be up to 50% of the overall project costs. The eligible applicants are cities, counties, townships, and school districts. Learn more: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/85.019>

Virginia

- **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** - This private foundation was founded in the Virginia legislature in 1966 to promote open space outdoor lands. Additionally, through this organization's outreach and engagement, it encourages individual donations from state residents and other forms of involvement to ensure environmental preservation for natural, scenic, historical, and recreational values. The organization works with federal, state, local, and private agencies for the purposes of preserving and enhancing outdoor recreational lands, currently protecting more than 850,000 acres in 111 counties and cities. In 2020, the foundation established the Get Outdoors Fund, which provides grants for projects that increase access to safe open space in Virginia's communities. Its additional grant programs are the Preservation Trust Fund and the Targeted Environmental Remediation and Restoration Accounts programs. Learn more: <https://www.vof.org/>
- **Department of Conservation and Recreation** - This state department is Virginia's lead natural resource conservation agency. Through partnerships with other public and private organizations, the Virginia DCR leads projects that both encourage environmental preservation while enabling state residents to benefit from natural resources. The DCR manages the state's Land Conservation Foundation, works closely with the state's Outdoors Foundation, and manages a variety of federal funding programs for Virginia, including the Recreational Trails Program and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program. Additionally, the Department manages an accessibility website to inform state residents of accessibility options for people with physical disabilities and other accommodations at Virginia's various state parks. Learn more: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/>

Appendix B: List of Relevant Legislation

Washington

- **1970:** The Washington legislature established a state recreational trails system. Recognizing the increased outdoor recreation needs of Washington residents, in addition to an expanding tourist population, this system of trails will encourage both residents and visitors to the state to participate in outdoor recreational activities. [WA Rev Code § 79A.35.010 \(2022\)](#)
- **1993:** The Washington legislature established a water trail recreation program, with all associated responsibilities designated to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. This program is developed in recognition of the increased water recreation activity on the state's coastal and outdoor sites, including more frequent outdoor camping on the state's public and private beaches. The water trail recreation program will primarily focus on the Cascadia and Willapa Bay Water Trails. Additionally, this program may distribute grants to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal governments for projects focused on developing and enhancing recreation for the state's water trails. [WA Rev Code § 79A.05.380 \(2021\)](#)
- **2000:** The Washington legislature established the Washington State Parks Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides opportunities for Washington residents to contribute to the enhancement of recreational opportunities and conservation of public lands for recreation. This foundation will actively seek out donations from individuals and groups that are engaged in the continued use of Washington State Parks for outdoor recreation. Additionally, the foundation will run a competitive grant program to fund projects by organizations that improve state parks. [WA Rev Code § 79A.70.005 \(2022\)](#)
- **2011:** The Washington Legislature identified an increasing need for both conservation of natural resources and outdoor recreation, given that the demand for outdoor recreation in the state is met with shrinking available space for outdoor recreation because of inadequate conservation of land. As a result, the legislature designated the state to do the following: provide updated access policies for state lands (including motor vehicle passes), secure more funding for the development and management of outdoor recreational opportunities, identify areas of impact for the growing demand for outdoor recreation on residents and visitors of Washington, and increase the accessibility of state access land use policies for outdoor recreationists. [WA Rev Code § 79A.80.005 \(2022\)](#)
- **2007:** In 2007, the Washington Legislature established the Outdoor Education and Recreational grant program, to be distributed by the state's Parks and Recreation Commission. This grant program funds programs that provide outdoor education learning opportunities to benefit public school students

from underserved communities. Eligible organizations to receive Specifically, this grant program was passed with the following language:

“It is the intent of the legislature to establish an outdoor education and recreation program to provide a large number of underserved students with quality opportunities to directly experience the natural world. It is the intent of the program to improve students’ overall academic performance, self-esteem, personal responsibility, community involvement, personal health, and understanding of nature. Further, it is the intent of the program to empower local communities to engage students in outdoor education and recreation experiences.” **WA Rev Code § 79A.05.351 (2021)**

The Legislature listed several objectives for the types of criteria and programs that should be satisfied in order for the representative agency to receive the grant. Most importantly, programs should use outdoor recreation to contribute to healthy lifestyles, maximize environmental-based educational curriculum, and provide students with opportunities to experience and understand the outdoor world. An advisory committee is designated to assist in the continued development of this program, with representation from the following disciplines: the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the department of fish and wildlife, business community, and outdoor advocacy organizations with an interest in education.

- **2021:** Most recently, the Washington legislature dictated that the Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife will undergo a public process to consider whether people with disabilities can use electric-assisted bicycle on nonmotorized natural surface trails affiliated with the Washington State Recreational Trails system should be allowed. This public process will incorporate input from tribes, representatives from natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation organizations, and people with disabilities. Following these considerations, the Departments must report their findings to the state legislature on September 30, 2022. **WA Rev Code § 79A.35.140 (2022)**

Oregon

- **1970:** The Oregon legislature established the State Scenic Waterways program, which enhances the conservation of Oregon river systems to satisfy environmental preservation and outdoor recreation goals. **OR Rev Stat § 390.805 (2021)**
- **1971:** The Oregon legislature passed the Oregon Recreation Trails System Act. This Act established the Oregon Recreation Trails Advisory Council, and designated this council with the responsibility of promoting public recreation and outdoor access, in light of an increasing tourist population to the state. Learn more: <https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/BWT/Pages/BWT-ortac.aspx>
- **1989:** The Oregon legislature established the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (ORPD), with the goal of distinguishing the responsibilities of promoting public

transportation from public recreation. Today, ORPD manages five competitive grant programs for projects that enhance outdoor recreation in the state. Learn more: <https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/AO/Pages/AU-about.aspx>

- **2017:** The Oregon legislature established the Office of Outdoor Recreation, an administrative section of the State Parks and Recreation Department. This office will coordinate and develop outdoor recreational policies, assist in the development of outdoor recreational management strategies by the department, and collaborate with the Oregon Travel Commission to produce accessible materials about outdoor recreation for residents and visitors of the state. **Oregon House Bill 3350 (2017).**

Minnesota

- **1969:** The Minnesota Legislature established the State Parks system, state-designated public recreational areas, and state waysides. These lands will collectively be developed and enhanced to maintain the scenic, natural, historical, and environmental value of the lands, as well as serve the needs of Minnesota residents for park purposes and to protect the state's wildlife. **MN Stat § 85.012 (2022)**
- **1991:** The legislature establishes the Minnesota Adopt-a-Park Program, coordinated between the state's Division of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Natural Resources. The purpose of the program is to encourage the engagement and involvement of businesses, civic groups, and state residents in the improvement and maintenance of state parks and state recreation areas enjoyed by various communities throughout the state. The "Adopt-a-Park" is an informal agreement for community groups, businesses, or individuals to participate in volunteer services that improve a state park, recreation area, monument, historic site, or recreational trail. **MN Stat § 85.045 (2022)**
- **1993:** The legislature establishes local recreation grants that will reimburse up to 50% of the projects, including the costs of the acquisition and development of public lands for parks and recreation purposes or the enhancement of existing recreational lands and facilities. **MN Stat § 85.019 (2022)**
- **2009:** The legislature establishes the state's Parks and Trails Grant Program, which will be administered by the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources. This program will fund projects that specifically develop or enhance parks and trails of regional or statewide significance, as opposed to any state park, state recreational trail, or recreational area. **MN Stat § 85.535 (2022)**
- **2013:** The legislature establishes the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, for the purpose of evaluating system planning and providing recommendations about current recreational grant programs and projects in the state's seven-county metropolitan area. This 13-member commission will be composed of two members from each of the regional parks/trail districts, which are appointed by the Governor and will serve three-year terms. **MN Stat § 85.536 (2022)**

Virginia

- 1965:** Virginia legislature established the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Study Commission. This commission was developed to evaluate the state’s natural and recreational resources, providing recommendations on how to meet outdoor recreation needs in light of population growth and changing demographics throughout the state. The commission’s analysis and recommendations were put together in the Virginia Outdoors Plan, a comprehensive plan of action for managing the state’s natural resources for recreational value. The report included **21 recommendations**, calling for the expansion of the State Parks system, the development of a Scenic Byways Program and a Historic Landmarks Commission, and a legal framework to better protect the rights of open space recreational opportunities. This report qualified the state to participate in the recently developed federal Land and Water Conservation fund program.
- 1966:** The Virginia legislature established the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, giving the foundation the responsibility of promoting the preservation of open-space lands. The foundation does this specifically by encouraging donations in the form of money, land, and other property to preserve lands for historic, scenic, and recreational purposes throughout the state. In terms of the organizational structure, the foundation is designed to be run by a board of trustees, consisting of members of the Commonwealth, and are appointed by the Governor every four years. **VA Code § 10.1-1800.**
- 1971:** The legislature established the statewide system of outdoor recreational trails, located strategically to maximize the appreciation of natural areas and scenic value while also promoting environmental preservation and conservation. These trails must be “reasonably accessible” to urban areas, and must not be developed to exclude wheelchair or other motorized vehicle use by persons with disabilities, as stated in the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act. **VA Code § 10.1-204 (2022)**
- 1986:** The legislature established the Virginia Recreational Authorities Act, which creates the state’s Recreational Authority as a political subdivision to preserve open space lands and expand research and educational programs for the conservation of scenic and natural areas. **VA Code § 10.1-1601 (2022)**
- 1989:** The legislature established the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, which will have the following purposes/responsibilities: 1) produce an inventory of the state’s natural resources, 2) develop a public database of inventory data and other information of the ecological and heritage relevance of outdoor sites across Virginia, and 3) Develop a Heritage Plan with consistent goals and recommendations for the acquisition of outdoor lands for heritage purposes and the maintenance of existing heritage sites. **VA Code § 10.1-212 (2022)**
- 1992:** The legislature established the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, a body politic that will manage reserves and funding for the protection or preservation of lands with ecological, cultural, historical, recreational, or scenic value. More specifically, this foundation will preserve lands for recreational purposes, state forest lands, and lands for threatened or

endangered species, fish and wildlife habitat, natural areas, agricultural and forest, lands, and open space, and for conservation and restoration of homelands for state-recognized and federally recognized Virginia Indian Tribes. Additionally, the foundation will create and organize grants administered for other public agencies, local governments, tribal organizations for the acquisition of lands for the purposes described above. [VA Code § 10.1-1020 \(2022\)](#)

- **2015:** The legislature established a State Trails Advisory Committee to assist in the continued development and maintenance of a recreational trails system that fully maximizes sustainable, ecological, recreational, and scenic values. This committee will be composed of a representative from the Department of Wildlife Resources, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. National Park Service; the Virginia Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. Additionally, the committee must include non-legislative citizen members from the Virginia Outdoors Plan Technical Advisory Committee and the Recreational Trails Advisory Committee and other individuals with planning and technical expertise in trail development. The committee will specifically recommend strategies to increase community engagement, outreach, and maintenance of public-private partnerships to promote outdoor activities. [VA Code § 10.1-204.1 \(2022\)](#)

Massachusetts

- **2014:** The Massachusetts legislature established an optional section of the Powers and Duties of Cities and Towns (Chapter 40 in the legislature) in which a city/town that decides to “opt in” can have the authority to develop their own conservation commission. This commission has the responsibility of preserving the natural resources of said city/town. In the process of preserving the town’s natural resources, the commission should create plans that promote conservation and passive outdoor recreation. [MA Gen L ch 40 § 8C](#)
- **2017:** The Massachusetts legislature established the state’s Stewardship Council and the council’s associated procedures for managing and regulating state reservations, parks, and forests. The legislature dictates state reservations, parks, and forests as “Massachusetts Wildlands” in which the Department of Conservation and Recreation must submit a management plan with a land stewardship zoning analysis to the Stewardship Council for review and approval. [304 CMR 7.00 MA Code of Regs 7.01](#)
- **2017:** The Massachusetts legislature established that the definitions and procedures of the Department of Conservation under [M.G.L. c. 21A, § 11C](#) (legislation that prohibits the pollution of rivers) are for the purposes of preserving (among other objectives), the scenic and recreational value of the state’s rivers, and its associated public health benefits. Additionally, the interpretation of these regulations should be determined by the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management program, in cases where rivers of scenic and recreational value fall within the CZM boundaries. [302 CMR 3.00 MA Code of Regs 3.01](#)

- **2021:** The Massachusetts legislature passed an Act relative to forest protection in the state. This act establishes a Forest Reserves Scientific Advisory Council, which is tasked with to oversee the management of the Forest Reserves and make recommendations on the basis of ecological and conservation goals. Additionally, the Act designates the division of state parks and recreation to expand or enhance existing state parks and reserves for the purposes of creating more open spaces for outdoor recreation and exercise. **Massachusetts Bill H.912**
- **2022:** The Massachusetts legislature launches the Office of Outdoor Recreation, created to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities. The Office of Outdoor Recreation is within the Executive Office Energy and Environmental Affairs, and partners with several public agencies in the development and maintenance of outdoor recreational opportunities, including: the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Massachusetts Marketing Partnership (MMP), and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT). **Massachusetts Bill S.560**

Our research team consulted state codes and statutes to inform the legislative information presented in this report, available through legislative databases that utilize annotated case law,

Appendix C: A Note About Formatting

such as Justia. We have formatted in-text citations for codes and statutes as a universal citation, or a media-neutral citation that allows readers to identify the source through both print and non-print platforms. This citation style is based on the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). Additionally, we have embedded all universal citations with a web-based link. For more information on this formatting method, please consult the AALL Universal Citation Guide.

The New Jersey State Policy Lab assists the State of New Jersey and its many communities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of state policies and programs by conducting rigorous evidence-based research that considers equity, efficiency, and efficacy of public policies and programs in holistic and innovative ways.

The lab leverages input from a robust network of multidisciplinary scholars, members of the community, and outside policy experts in New Jersey to craft innovative and equitable policy solutions that are sensitive to the needs of our state's diverse population.

By utilizing the combination of strong ties to New Jersey's diverse communities and significant expertise in collecting, cleaning, and analyzing data, the New Jersey State Policy Lab engages and collaborates with stakeholders such as community groups, the state government, and municipal governments to create high quality datasets and evidence that reflects our state's diversity and empowers state policy makers to address the needs of New Jersey communities more effectively, innovatively, and equitably.



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