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Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Region

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To: Forest Supervisors and Assistant Regional Foresters

REPLY DUE SEPTEMBER 30, 1999

R5 UNIVERSAL ACCESS STRATEGY

GOAL STATEMENT

All facilities and programs in R-5 are universally accessible.

INTRODUCTION

This strategy begins with the assumption that transition plans have been completed. A transition plan is a short-term, one time only plan, to comply with the law. It is legally required only when the method chosen to provide accessible programs is through structural changes to existing facilities. Transition plans for each forest in the region were due March 31, 1998. Before they could be prepared, the units needed to complete a self-evaluation, as required by 7 CFR Part 15e, the regulations for federally conducted programs, which implement Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. This self-evaluation included all programs, activities, and services available to the public; surveying facilities for accessibility was also part of this evaluation.

Section 504 mandates accessibility of programs (not facilities), when viewed in their entirety. As stated in the CFR, the rule does not "necessarily require the agency to make each of its existing facilities accessible..." Providing accessible facilities is only one method of providing program access.

Because a transition plan is only required when structural changes are made to existing facilities, one might get the impression that the region is not going beyond this minimum requirement to provide for accessibility. That impression would be false. Region 5's goal is that all facilities and programs will be universally accessible.

Since the transition plans only address accessibility for programs, viewed in their entirety, most facilities are not included in these plans. Changes needed to make existing facilities universally accessible, in order to reach the region's goal, will be detailed in "action plans," which is where this strategy starts.

THE GOAL

The goal that all facilities and programs in Region 5 are universally accessible is a long-term goal. Over the course of time, as each facility is reconstructed (for any reason), then accessibility must be incorporated (required by the regulations) to the degree appropriate (according to the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards [UFAS] and the universal access design guide, until recreation standards are issued).

The universal access design guide provides for various access levels that loosely correspond with ROS classes:

- Easy access--urban/rural ROS class;
- Moderate access--roaded natural ROS class;
- Difficult access--semiprimitive ROS classes;
- Most difficult access--primitive ROS class.

In addition to different levels of access, the degree or scope of access may vary. For example, at a campground, a minimum of 2 or 20% of campsites, whichever is greater, will be accessible at the appropriate access level; 51% of campsites is a more desirable level to be universally accessible at that same campground; 100% of campsites at that campground is most desirable. Put another way, whenever accessibility is provided at a campground or picnic area, as many campsites or picnic sites as possible (up to 100%), given the nature of the terrain (and at the appropriate access level), but never less than 2 or 20%, whichever is greater, of the campsites or picnic sites will be made universally accessible. Regardless of how many campsites or picnic sites at an individual campground or picnic area are reconstructed to be accessible, 100% of site furnishings (tables, grills, etc.) will be universally accessible.

When new facilities are constructed, then accessibility must also be addressed (required by the regulations) in the design, as described in UFAS and the universal access design guide.

ACTION PLANS

Action plans will list all of a forest's facilities in priority order for reconstruction (according to the following Region 5 strategy), what is needed for universal access, and an estimated cost to complete the work. Also include all facilities where accessibility is already provided, but at a level less than 2 or 20%, whichever is greater.

In this strategy, all recreation facilities qualifying under Step 1 will be completed before moving to Step 2; Step 2 will be completed before Step 3; and Step 3 will be completed before moving to Step 4. Administrative facilities are addressed in a separate part of the strategy.

This strategy applies to Forest Service owned facilities, including those authorized under Granger-Thye special use permits. These facilities are our responsibility to reconstruct. For facilities that are authorized under other types of special use permits, reconstructing those facilities is the responsibility of the permittee. The philosophy of which facilities are higher in priority to reconstruct may also apply to permittee facilities. Leased buildings are the responsibility of the lessor. When a lease is renegotiated, the forest should work with the leasing office to ensure compliance with universal design standards.

THE STRATEGY

Recreation Facilities

Step 1) On a forest, the most popular area(s) with a variety of activities in that area will receive the highest priority for reconstruction. If there is more than one very popular area on the forest, then the area that has the widest variety of activities will be reconstructed first. Not all locations within that popular area(s) will be made accessible in this step. All programs/activities available to the public in the popular area(s) will be accessible at one location.

For each program/activity that is consistent with each province's theme in the region's recreation strategy, each of those programs/activities will be made universally accessible at one location on each forest (other locations will follow in later steps).

Step 2) All programs/activities/services that are available to the public will be universally accessible at one location on each district (at the urban/rural ROS class, if the district has it; if not, then roaded natural; if not, then semiprimitive).

Step 3) All programs/activities/services that are available to the public will be universally accessible at one location on each district at all access levels/ROS classes that the district has.

Step 4) Whatever is left.

Administrative Facilities

* Reasonable accommodation needs will be provided whenever they are identified.

Other identified needs (e.g., elevators) will be addressed in the following priority order:

- 1) Public access needs;
- 2) Other employee needs (not including reasonable accommodations).

TIME-FRAME

Action plans for each forest are due in the Regional Office by September 30, 1999.

Achieving the goal requires a long-term strategy. It could perhaps take at least 15-20 years, with work occurring continuously during that time. Depending on the amount of work to be accomplished and estimated cost, as identified in the action plans, that time-frame could be quite different. After the action plans are completed, then we will be able to make a better estimate of both the cost and time needed to accomplish the work.

Funding strategies to accomplish the work will be addressed after the action plans are submitted, and we have a better estimate of how much money will be needed to accomplish each of the steps in Region 5's universal access strategy.

A task force made up of RO employees, forest representatives, and a member of pathfinders met August 1998, to design a strategy for R5 Forest Action Plans. Lynn Boone worked with six forests during Sept/Oct/ Nov 1998 to finalize the process and presented it to the region Civil Rights Team during their Fall meeting. She will continue to assist each forest on site in the completion of Forest Access Action Plans.

Forest Supervisors, the responsible officials, will be checked at their end year review for completion of Forest Access Action Plans by September 30, 1999. They will also be checked annually for Forest Access Transition Plan Implementation and Access Action Plan progress in their accomplishment report.

If you have any questions, please contact Lynn Boone at (415) 705-2895.

/s/ David V. Diaz (for)
REGIONAL FORESTER TEAM

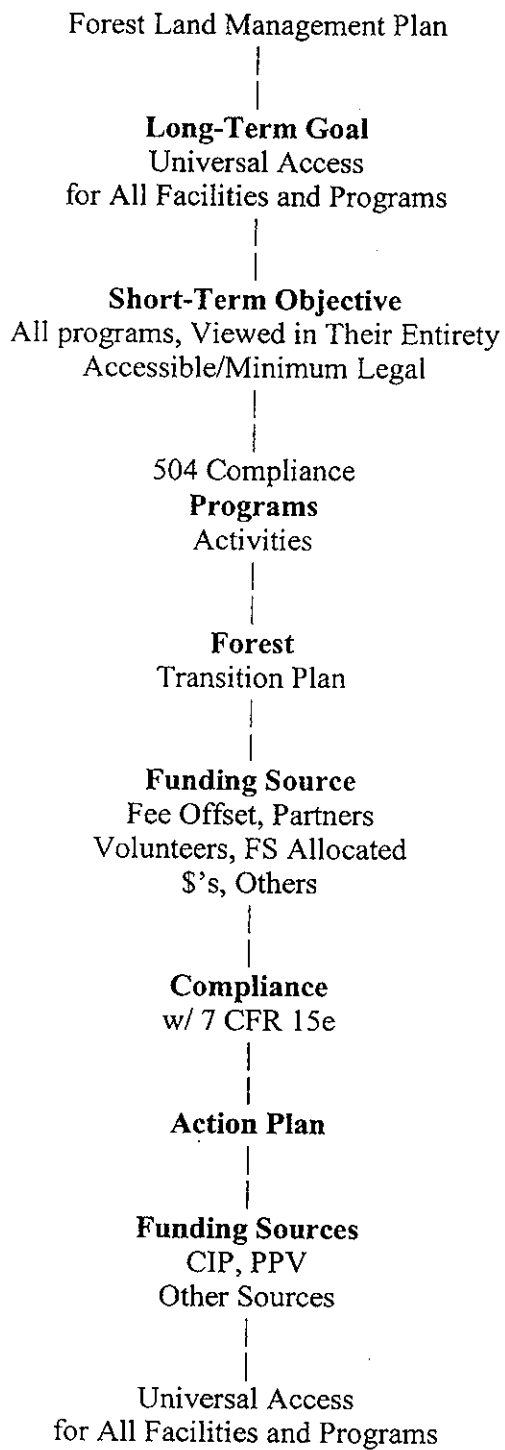
Enclosures

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Concur: puf, cmangono, 11/23/1998 12:52pm
Concur: rf, grf2, 12/03/1998 02:26pm
Concur: puf, ejames, 11/30/1998
Concur: puf, jshilling, 12/03/1998 07:30am

PROCESS FLOW CHART



Example of Forest Access Action Plan

FOREST ACCESS ACTION PLAN INSTRUCTION SHEET

PROCESS FOR COMPLETION OF ACTION PLANS BY SEPTEMBER 31, 1999.

Action Plans are required to:

1. Provide documentation of intent to achieve Universal Access;
2. Give long term guidance and direction on how and where a forest intends to provide universal access to all visitors;
3. Give cost estimates in 1999 dollars and provide priorities to access projects;
4. Provide information for INFRA Data Base and MM.

These plans are based on the levels of accessibility as described in the Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation, a Design Guide.

Using access surveys for each site, document similar information as the transition plan, i.e. obstacles, planned changes, time-frames and costs. Add ROS classes for each site as per the Forest Plan. The difference is the action plans are based on individual sites using all levels of accessibility as described in the design guides whereas the transition plans are based on programs with access at the easiest level of accessibility.

Another reason for action plans is to identify which customer service level standards for accessibility will apply to each site.

Optimum Service Level: 100% Campsite/Picnic sites and all other programs within the facility.

Acceptable Service Level Standard: 51% Campsite/Picnic sites and all other programs within the facility.

Transitional Service Level Standard: 2 or 20% (WHICH EVER IS GREATER) sites and all other programs within the facility.

The result will be a set of planning documents that will:

1. Be available to individuals answering inquires, complaints, etc. about accessibility to facilities;
2. Guide the forest to the highest priority sites for access funding;
3. Be available for public review;
4. Feed into Meaningful Measures to further guide recreation management activities at the project and site levels.