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# APPENDIX F

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## Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media

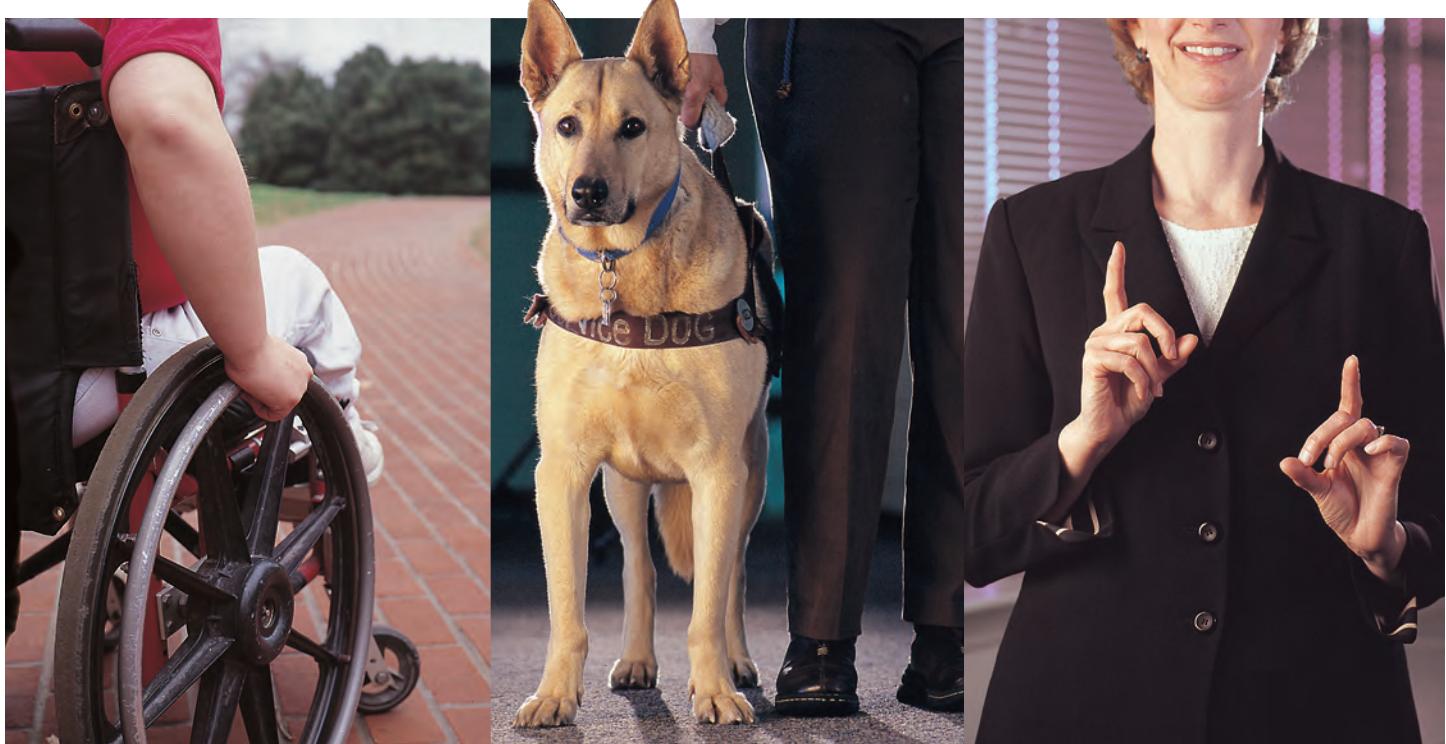
Includes only the sections relevant to the Signage Management Plan. For the full manual, visit NPS's website:  
<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility/accessibilityGuideVersion2.1.pdf>



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# Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media

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Page 79 and page 101, "Appendix E: NPS Accessibility Pictograph Symbols," are the only sections of this document that have changed. All other sections of Version 2.1, February 2012 are the same as Version 2.0, August 2009.

Prior to the October 2007 edition of these Guidelines, this document was titled *Special Populations: Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media*. Note: Because accessibility regulations and technology continue to evolve, we will post updates and corrections on the HFC accessibility website, [www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility).

## 9 Wayside Exhibits

Wayside exhibits are large-format outdoor sign-like exhibits that the National Park Service employs either to orient visitors arriving to a new location, or to reveal the stories hidden in the view. These panels combine photographs, artwork, diagrams or maps, and texts that are written to be easy to read aloud. The goal is both to describe the landscape and to reveal the significance of an outdoor place being preserved as part of the National Park System.

To make sense, waysides must be placed where a particular story intersects a particular view. Most NPS waysides are installed at trailheads, vistas, overlooks, or along front-country trails. Since NPS waysides are usually near sidewalks, hardened-surface trails, and parking areas, most are accessible to wheelchair users. But some waysides will be inaccessible to visitors with limited mobility, due to rough trail conditions and grades.

NPS managers and interpreters must constantly keep in mind that standard waysides provide little benefit to visitors who cannot see. Old-style audio message repeaters that the NPS formerly installed alongside waysides have not solved this problem because the hardware often fails outdoors. Audio technologies are emerging that can provide visitors who are blind or visually impaired access to the information that waysides deliver. While these guidelines may not specify the exact method, some method is required to make waysides accessible to visitors who are blind or visually impaired.

Because waysides are outdoors, color choices in panel design matter. Glare from sunlight must be avoided. Constant exposure to strong sunlight fogs and fades ink pigments so that lettering falls below legibility limits. Program accessibility is not just a matter of installing accessible waysides. Wayside exhibits are a prime example of why an NPS program must be maintained in order for it to continue to be accessible. A regular inspection and panel replacement routine will keep waysides looking their best and solve many legibility problems.

Providing arriving visitors with basic orientation to an NPS site is a program; therefore it must be available to all visitors and delivered in an equitable fashion.

Good waysides should direct attention to the features they interpret, not to themselves. Writing should be focused and compressed. Way-

sides that work best avoid complex topics and multiple layers of information. Graphic elements must be organized to be powerful enough to draw visitors into the story.

For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/way-process-access.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/way-process-access.htm). (See “NPS Wayside Exhibit Map Standards” and “NPS Wayside Exhibit Typographic Standards.”)

## **Wayside Exhibits Guidelines: Mobility**

- Wayside exhibits shall be installed at wheelchair-accessible locations wherever possible. (See “Exhibits Guidelines: Mobility.”)
- Wayside exhibit panels shall be installed at heights and angles favorable for viewing by all visitors, including wheelchair users. For standard NPS low-profile exhibits (angled at 30 or 45 degrees) the recommended height is 32 inches from the bottom of the exhibit frame to finished grade; for upright exhibits and bulletin boards the height is 24–36 inches from the bottom of the exhibit frame to finished grade, depending on panel size.
- Trailhead exhibits shall include accessibility advisory information.
- Wayside exhibits shall have level, firm, hard-surfaced, and slip-resistant exhibit pads.
- Exhibit sites shall offer clear, unrestricted views of park features referred to in the exhibits.
- Park staff shall also consider posting wayside content (excluding copyrighted material) on the park website.

## **Wayside Exhibits Guidelines: Vision**

- Exhibit typography shall be legible and readable and conform to the “NPS Wayside Exhibit Typographic Standards,” [www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/way-pdfs.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/way-pdfs.htm).
- Panel colors shall be selected to reduce eyestrain and glare and to provide excellent readability under field conditions. Because of its reflectivity, white shall not be used as a background color.
- Selected wayside exhibits shall incorporate tactile elements like models, texture blocks, and relief maps using raised lines, base relief, or three dimensional.

- Selected wayside exhibits shall incorporate audio stations that include audio description. (See “Exhibits Guidelines: Visual.”)
- For all major features interpreted by graphic wayside exhibits, the park staff shall offer non-visual interpretation (i.e. audio description) of the same subject matter. Examples include audio tours like digital audio players, radio systems or dial-up messages for cellular phone users, and ranger talks.
- Park staff shall also consider posting wayside content on the park website. Be mindful of copyright restrictions.

**Wayside  
Exhibits:  
Guidelines:  
Hearing**

- Wayside exhibit panels shall communicate visually and will rely heavily on graphics to interpret park resources.
- Other information in audio station messages (music, sound effects, etc.) shall be available in alternative formats: as part of the exhibit, transcript, captioning via a hand-held mobile device, or assistive listening systems via a hand-held T-coil compatible mobile device with headsets and neckloops available. Note: Hand-held devices require fewer repairs or replacements than built-in outdoor equipment. These devices must be available during all times when visitors can access the waysides and not just when visitor centers are open.

For more information see “Exhibits Guidelines: Hearing” and “Audio-visual Guidelines: Hearing.”

**Wayside  
Exhibits  
Guidelines:  
Cognitive**

Text and narrations for visitors with cognitive disabilities are the same as for visitors without cognitive disabilities. There is no separate audio track.

- Text shall be concise, with short paragraphs.

For more information, see “Exhibits Guidelines: Cognitive.”