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# Inclusive Recreation in Kentucky State Parks: A Survey of ADA Compliance and Transcendent Programing

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Inclusive Recreation in Kentucky State Parks: A Survey of ADA Compliance and Transcendent Programing

A Capstone in Public Administration

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      a. Complete Survey

Executive Summary

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, disabled, or differently abled, members of American communities are entitled to receive identical, or equivalent, treatment and admission to public services, without discrimination based solely on their disability. Therefore, it is in violation of this act to not accommodate public spaces and facilities for these individuals, with the exception of cases where doing so to an existing facility would demonstrably, and with burden of proof on the agency, "result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a program or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens" (28 CFR § 39.150). It is consequently of justifiable concern that the natural and historic areas that are the subject of public programming may fall into this exception, due to the fundamental alteration of natural or historic landscapes that may be required for accommodation.

Such concern is greater because, as described in the review of literature, it has been demonstrated that access to natural areas may be helpful in improving mental health for persons with disabilities. The immersion of one's self in natural areas has been statistically shown to decrease depression and anxiety in various individuals. In tandem, the intrinsic burdens of disability have been shown to increase depression, which coincides with stress and anxiety (Noh et al. 2016, mentalhealth.org, 2020). Therefore, not only is the compliance of Kentucky State Parks with the minimum ADA requirements paramount, but the transcendence of natural area activities and programming to be inclusively accommodating and inviting for persons with disabilities could go a long way toward improving the mental health of the community.

Local parks have been working to make their facilities and programming more inclusive for persons with disabilities. It is these practices, described in the review of literature, that I have attempted to scale to the State Park level, as to provide a basis for identifying instances of

exemplary inclusivity, as well as ADA compliance, in natural/historic recreation areas. In order for members of Kentucky's differently abled community to get a sense of where they might go to find state-provided nature or history educational/recreational programming, my capstone consisted of a survey of Kentucky State Parks, from which my intention was to create a scorecard, or guide, to display access to programming that transcends ADA requirements, in addition to gauging minimum ADA compliance. This survey's results would serve as a baseline from which subsequent renditions can be compared to, for improvement or break down of programming and facilities over time. Unfortunately, my survey's responses were cut short by concerns from State Park administrators. While many parks did not respond, graphic depictions of inclusive elements within respondent parks' surveys are broken down herein. Accompanied by an incomplete scorecard, these graphics tell a general story as to the parks' ability to provide uniform conformity for these accommodations.

Problem Statement

Since far before 1990, or even 1978, people with disabilities were seen as unfit second-class citizens, unable to contribute to society. Their disabilities were stigmatized, forcing them to be under intensive control, where they were either locked away or experimented on (State of Alaska, 2020). They were able to be excluded from social and commercial activities. This stigma led to little interaction and thus no obligation on the part of businesses and regular public facilities to include them in their planning of entryways, sidewalks, recreation programs, etc. It was not until the passage of several acts, beginning with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, leading to the ADA, that this negligence to design reasonable accommodation into infrastructure and activities for the differently abled was uniformly outlawed.

Today, nearly 30 years later, access to facilities and programs has vastly improved for the differently abled community. Every public area and business location are required by law to be constructed or modified to accommodate people with disabilities. Entire sports-leagues are devoted to wheelchair users and other handicapped communities. Further, we have even seen a shift in the way that handicapped people are portrayed and cast in Hollywood, taking on more glamorous and good-humored roles. However, there is reason to suspect that one kind of public facilities, natural and historic landscapes, may be falling through the cracks of this statute.

Within the ADA, as well as the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services, and Developmental Disabilities Act of 1978, which regards federally funded organizations exclusively and is adopted within the ADA, there is a provision that businesses and public places are not required to alter their establishment to accommodate handicapped persons if such alterations would *result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a program or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens.* It is within reason to believe that State Parks could easily

prove themselves to fall within this exemption, as the fundamental alteration of nature, an existing facility, is potentially inevitable in making accommodations throughout their environments and programming. Furthermore, differently abled persons may be deterred from visiting under the presumption of difficulty navigating the park. This lack of persons with disabilities in the visitor population may create a negative feedback loop, thereby resulting in scarce time being put toward developing and promoting programs designed for the differently abled.

It could be perceived as the right of every American to experience the benefits of being immersed in nature, based on various civil rights laws passed in the past several decades, and the duty of the government to ensure non-exclusive availability to such publicly controlled spaces. With so many State Parks across Kentucky, it should be unreasonable for its citizens to be outside of a weekend or daytrip distance from a state park that provides these kinds of services. It is colloquially known that Kentuckians are not big travelers, especially those living in rural areas. And so, it is important that the state parks be a part of a Kentucky that is working in a community effort to provide for the disabled community; the chance to experience what any other Kentuckian could find beyond the treeless pastures of their neighbors' yards, inside a preserved landscape, within just a couple hours' drive from home.

Literature Review

In the United States, one in four individuals suffers from a disability recognized by the ADA. In Kentucky, this number jumps to more than one in three residents having some type of disability, with 20% and 16% having a functional disability regarding their mobility or cognition, respectively (cdc.gov). Individuals with disabilities live with many disadvantages, obstacles, and unique stressors that can come from seemingly mundane tasks for those of more able mind and/or body. In recognition of their value to society, and America's infrastructural discrimination, the

ADA was passed with the intent of ensuring disabled Americans equal access to American businesses and all public resources. However, the act does allow for the exception of modification that would *result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a program or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens.* Unfortunately, it may be reasonably easy for a natural areas park to meet this exemption for disability access to natural areas and coinciding programming, due to the fundamental alteration (natural scenery or historic site) that may result. For this reason, it can be difficult for disabled individuals to find public areas that will accommodate them to access natural areas and/or participate in related activities. This has long been an issue, garnering attention, for example, in our National Parks, where our growing elderly disabled population have difficulty finding suitable access (Mullick, 1993).

In support of their case, research has shown that walking through nature, or immersing in nature, can have a psychologically therapeutic and stress-relieving effect on humans, especially for young adults and those with pediatric disabilities (Connections Therapy Center, 2017, & Song et al., 2013, & Bielinis et al., 2019, & Roberts et al., 2019). For this reason, many local parks and recreation departments have been leading the way in creating a more inclusive community through the increasing availability of "inclusive recreation" programs on their sites (Tubbs & Acquino, 2018). In a report on inclusive recreation in local parks and recreation departments, it was found that nearly ¾ of departments formulated and advertised programs for the physically disabled, and nearly 2/3 of departments formulated and advertised programs for the cognitively disabled. Furthermore, 4 out of 5 departments were actively seeking additional resources to be more inclusive (National Recreation and Park Association, 2018).

A multitude of studies have been conducted to determine practices for local parks and recreation departments to follow in the accommodation of people with physical and/or cognitive

disabilities (Klitzing and Wachter, 2005, & Devine, 2012, & Schleien et al., 2009). Currently, while some states, such as Florida, have a specific policy addressing their commitment to inclusive recreation in their parks, Kentucky has only a government-wide ADA policy, without specification for recreation (Florida State Parks & Kentucky Personnel Cabinet). This omission of policy directed specifically at inclusive recreation, may be a precursor to potential deficiencies in the prioritization of training for, and designing programs for, the inclusion of the physically and cognitively disabled visitors of Kentucky State Parks. Therefore, in the interest of determining the extent/existence of this deficit, local parks and recreation practices may serve as a policy model from which Kentucky state parks may be compared to and/or learn from.

In recent years, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) teamed with the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability and Lakeshore Foundation to launch their Parks for Inclusion Initiative. To kickstart the initiative, a $4,000 microgrant was awarded by the Lakeshore Foundation to four cities around the country for inclusive recreation (Tubbs & Acquino, 2018). As stated earlier, there are more localities than not that are eager to be awarded such funds to implement their own programs, needing extra materials, staff, etc. In lieu of these funds, the NRPA has introduced nine guidelines for disability inclusion, as well as a network of "Parks for Inclusion Resources" available online to educate yourself on the subject (NRPA). From there, local parks and other recreational organizations can sign a commitment to inclusion, promising to follow the guidelines set forth. These nine guidelines were developed based on decades of literature, including those cited prior, communicating the importance of therapeutic recreation and general recreation professionals working together, as well as the modification of equipment and activities, collaboration between staff and participants, attentiveness to individual needs and many more actions.

The guidelines lay out several key aspects of what needs to be included in a park's organizational structure in order to be more totally inclusive of persons with disabilities. Not all of these guidelines are applicable to State Parks, due to the somewhat difference in the nature of programs offered, however many are. First and foremost is that park policy should explicitly state its facilities and services are accessible to all people, including persons with disabilities, unless otherwise noted. Along with that, activities that are inclusive ought to be endorsed as such to the public, rather than implied. Another key takeaway is to include people with disabilities in the development and implementation of inclusive activities, as the perspective of the minority group can be directly considered in determining how a program should be tailored. This coalesces with the principle of encouraging feedback from participants, so that the park can address issues for future programming. Furthermore, within the process of the activity, ensuring that your park's facility and staff can address the individual needs of participants with disabilities is significant. This goes along with the principle of staffing an individual with therapeutic recreation experience, to not only assist but also to share knowledge with the predominantly general recreation staff. Finally, being fiscally responsible with your park's implementation is underscored with several guidelines, culminating in the idea of prioritizing programs that are feasible and inexpensiveness to the participant.

Future studies will focus not only on whether, and in what way, these practices are being implemented, but also how the currently increasing trend of adopting inclusion practices, across the nation, is impacting participation rates of persons with disabilities in local parks. This will aid in understanding the benefit of implementing certain practices over others. These studies will likely be based on the disabled communities' level of satisfaction after inclusive programming.

Research Design

*Online Statement on Inclusivity*

My study begins with a simple look at the Kentucky State Parks website. Here, I can look to find any mention of inclusion or accessibility, as it applies to the collective of the Kentucky parks system. This would serve as a message to the community about how the parks' leaders appreciate the needs of the disabled community and explain which components of their grounds and facilities are explicitly available, or potentially unavailable, to all. Further, it may elaborate on kinds of areas that may not be suitable and are exempt from the ADA, due to the reasons aforementioned in the previous section, as to discourage adventurous community members from inadvertently putting themselves in hazardous situations. This will be compared to the exemplary Florida State Parks website, where such information is provided and easily found.

*Survey Implementation*

The survey, see *appendix*, of all state park managers in Kentucky was chosen to gauge the availability of recreation programs, and other modifications, such as landscaping and staffing, for the differently abled population of the community. The information pertaining to who is each park's manger, and their contact information, was found at each park's webpage. Surveying each park's manager would lead to the greatest likelihood of receiving the most up-to-date and complete assessment on the status of their facilities. Further, survey responses painted a picture of the accommodations contained at each responsive park. An invitation to complete the survey was sent out in March, with reminder emails sent out to non-responsive managers every two weeks until mid-June. In mid-June an administrator from the State Parks informed me, through email, that he had essentially put a gag order on all park managers in regard to my survey, pending his review,

over concern of confidentiality and legal implications. Upon my reply, forwarding my survey to him, no further communication was received, effectively ending survey responses.

*Survey Design*

The survey was designed to gauge a baseline for inclusivity practices, based on best practices found in pertinent literature, modified for the state park setting. The array of characteristics that Kentucky State Parks' accommodations may or may not provide was broken down into four, potentially overlapping, general categories of disability: audial, visual, intellectual/cognitive, motor. Each category of questions inquired upon the availability of activities and practices found to be effective in promoting differently abled persons' inclusion. Further, consultation on terminology, as well as the question on Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS), came from meeting with a representative from the University's Human Development Institute. An additional and initial category gauged the level of inclusion that persons with disabilities have in each of Kentucky's state park's decision-making personnel.

To better understand where the parks may or may not fall short of the goal of full inclusion, the nuance of park categorization must be considered. Therefore, results from the survey were analyzed within super-categories of Recreation, Resort, and Historic; the three types of parks that Kentucky State Parks consist of. It is apparent, through deductive reasoning, that these types of sites will likely have inherent differences that require, in fairness, their evaluation to take place separately. With the kinds of accommodation available in each park revealed, I could form a scorecard, or guide, to Kentucky's State Parks based on their ability to serve members of the disabled community.

*Confidentiality*

Due to the nature of this survey being an investigation into the accommodations of the park system and its components, as opposed to the individuals running the parks, the use of confidentiality was not required under University IRB guidelines.

Findings and Limitations

*Website*

On the Kentucky State Park website, itself, there is no information on disabled person's accessibility or inclusionary policy. The relatively small amount of information pertaining to accessibility policies comes from a redirect link at the bottom of each page that brings you to the State website's page on accessibility policy in general. Compared with that of Florida State Parks, an exemplary model of displaying information on inclusionary policies, Kentucky State Parks gives no indication of how accessibility and inclusion are handled within the specific offerings of its various environments.

*Survey*

Here, results from the most pertinent survey questions from each category, broken down by park super categories, are laid out. Complete responses were received from 12 out of 49 parks, 5 recreation parks, 5 historic sites, and 2 resort parks

**Decision-Making**

The initial category of the survey consists of an initial question that speaks to actions taken to be inclusive that transcend the requirements of the ADA, while the second is more so along the lines of a policy that would be required by the ADA.
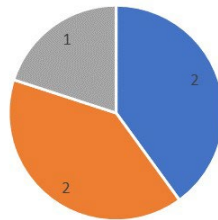
*Inclusion of people with disability in decision-making process for programming*
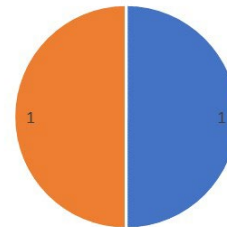
### Recreation Parks
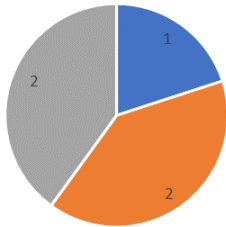


- Yes ■ No ■ No orgnaized activities

### Historic Sites



- Yes ■ No ■ No orgnaized activitie:

### Resort Parks



- Yes ■ No ■ No orgnaized activities

In each category of park, there are at least one or two parks that are taking this transcendent step toward ensuring that their park is fundamentally more friendly to the differently abled. This is one of the fundamental steps of becoming more inclusive, as seen in the literature, which one would hope would continue to become more common practice.

*Consideration of 'Universal Design' when acquiring new equipment or creating new activities*
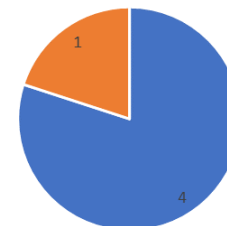
### Resort Parks
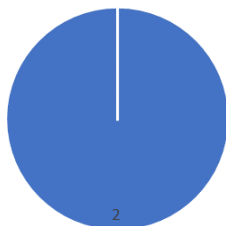


- Always ■ Most of the time

### Historic Sites
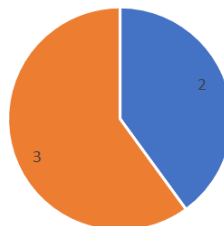


- Always ■ Most of the time

### Recreation Parks



- Always ■ Most of the time

The creation of programs accessible to all, if possible, is exactly what the ADA intended in this context. Every park surveyed takes this form of compliance seriously, marking at least a 4 out of 5 on the consideration scale.

**Visual**

This section may very well have a serious violation involved, in the very first question. If properly understood, it could easily be interpreted as a requirement of the ADA. Under Title II & III section 216.2, of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design "Interior and exterior signs identifying permanent rooms and spaces shall comply with 703.1, 703.2, and 703.5. …", which regard the proper use of braille where required. The second and third question may be less mandated, although may require burden of proof as to exception, in their absence.
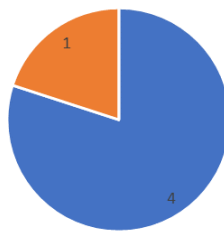
<u>*Braille on all facility room signage*</u>
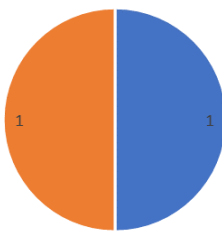


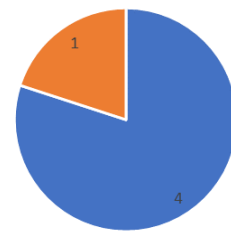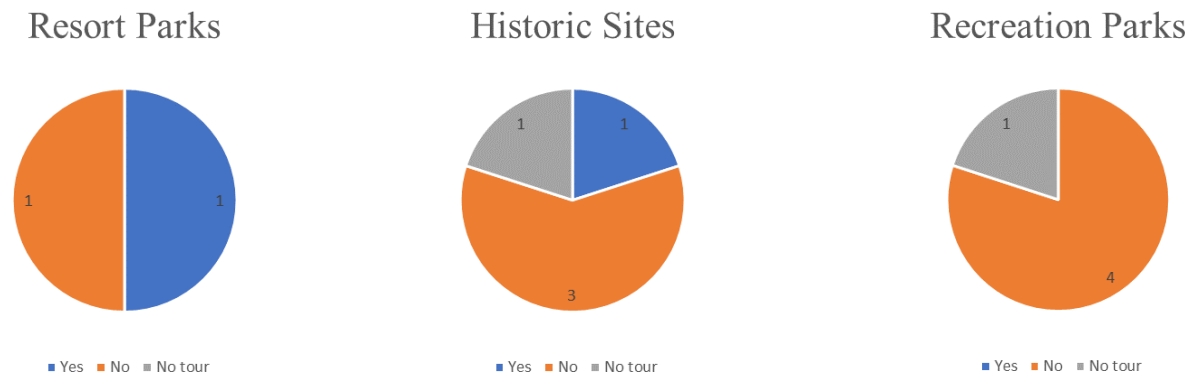This is as cut and dry as all accommodations on this survey. To not have braille on a room's placard could be a violation of the ADA. At least one park in each category potentially admitted to non-compliance here.

*Braille on permanent education/information displays*

| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|



| ■ Yes ■ No ■ Some | ■ Yes ■ No ■ Some | ■ Yes ■ No ■ Some |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|

This may be more of a transcendent inclusionary activity that is not necessarily required by the ADA. A couple of respondent parks do feature Braille in this capacity, increasing their efforts for inclusion of the visually impaired.

*Audio tour, or assistive technology, for self-guided tours*

| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|



| ■ Yes ■ No ■ No tour | ■ Yes ■ No ■ No tour | ■ Yes ■ No ■ No tour |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|

Only a couple of parks had self-guided tours that are inclusive to the visually impaired. It is likely that funding to accommodate this may have proven unreasonable for many parks.

**Audial**

For this section, the parks really struggled. It appears that the hearing impaired may have the toughest time finding accommodations in State Parks of Kentucky.

*Is a practitioner of American Sign-Language on permanent or long-term staff*

All parks answered "No" to this question. The lack of an ASL staff member certainly limits the ability of programming to be inclusive to the deaf and hard of hearing community. Alternatives do exist, but the cost for such devices may be a substantial burden on the park system. Moreover, interactive educational programming, such as touch tables or captioned "video games", could be provided as an alternative to oral education and communication.
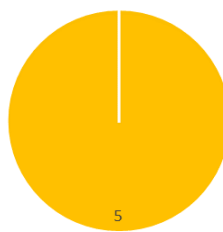
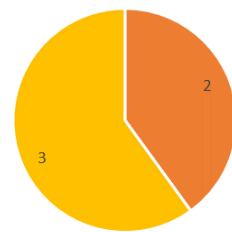*Captioning on all video displays*



| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|---|---|---|
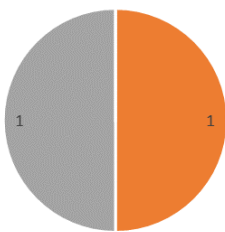
■ Yes  ■ No  ■ Some (50%)  ■ No displays        ■ Yes  ■ No  ■ Some  ■ No displays        ■ Yes  ■ No  ■ Some  ■ No displays

Of all the parks with video displays, only one of four had captioning. It is difficult to reason how captioning is an undue burden, especially if videos were produced after 1990.
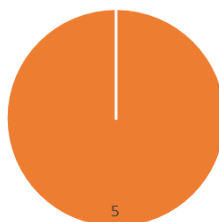
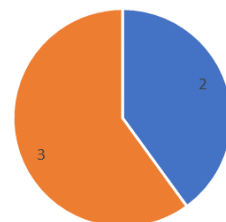*Provision of Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS)*



| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|---|---|---|

■ Yes  ■ No                ■ Yes  ■ No                ■ Yes  ■ No

Two of the recreation parks offer this service. There are various types of TRS. It may be useful to find out what kind they have and how old they are. In today's cellular age, this may be an outdated/impractical accommodation to take on the financial burden of purchase and installation.

**Intellectual/Cognitive**

This next section gives a picture of transcendence and potentials for undue burden. It may be that parks that answered no to these questions are doing so because their park is designed to be unaltered, or, in the case of Mineral Mound, highly altered, to the point where making accommodations to programming is an undue burden.
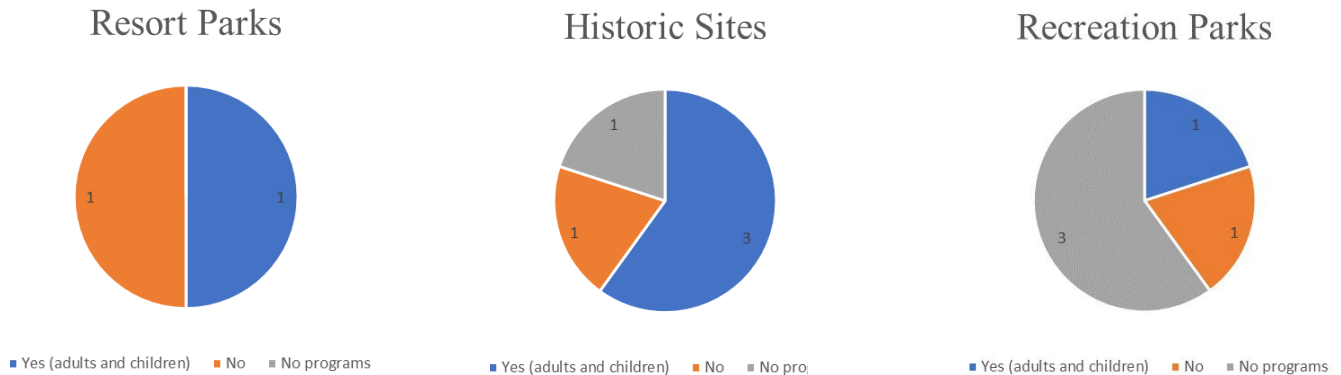
*Outdoor recreation programs that encourage the participation of people with disabilities*
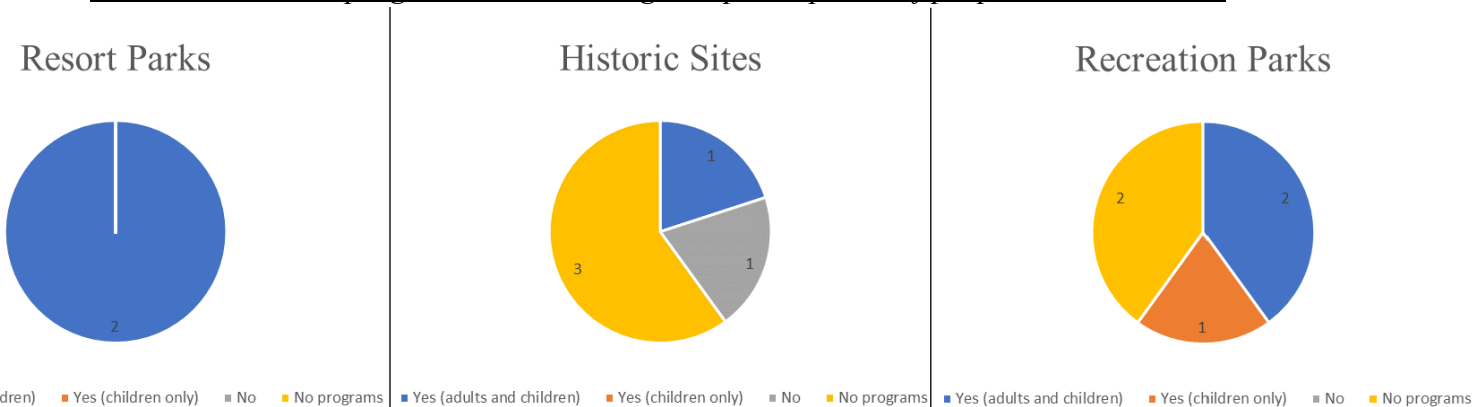


If a park had programming, six out of seven have programs that aim at encouraging the participation of persons with disabilities. This is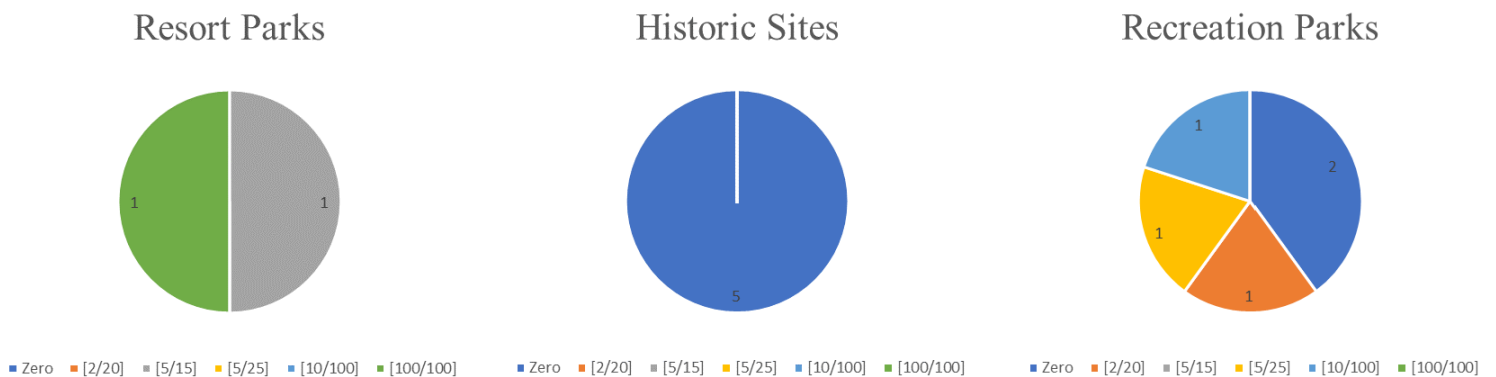 one of the highest scoring question in the survey. There is more inclusivity of this kind in the parks that responded than not.

*Natural/historical education programming that use universal design principles*

| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
|  |  |  |
| ■ Yes (adults and children)  ■ No  ■ No programs | ■ Yes (adults and children)  ■ No  ■ No pro| | ■ Yes (adults and children)  ■ No  ■ No programs |

For educational programming of universal design, there is less consistency in outcome than recreation. While our historic site respondents are more inclined to have these programs, the recreation and resort parks are split. In all super categories, there are some parks that do offer these programs, and some that do not.

*Regularly scheduled programming (educational or recreational) intentionally designed, or of universal design, for the inclusion of people with intellectual/developmental impairments*

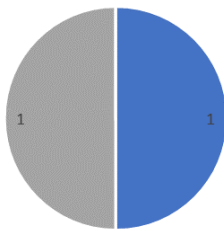| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
|  |  |  |
| ■ Zero  ■ [2/20]  ■ [5/15]  ■ [5/25]  ■ [10/100]  ■ [100/100] | ■ Zero  ■ [2/20]  ■ [5/15]  ■ [5/25]  ■ [10/100]  ■ [100/100] | ■ Zero  ■ [2/20]  ■ [5/15]  ■ [5/25]  ■ [10/100]  ■ [100/100] |

In this instance, zero may have been misinterpreted as meaning, either, no programs offered or no programs meeting this criteria. For, in the case of historic sites, at least 3 previously said that they have programs aimed at including persons with disabilities, yet this question they all answered zero. A deeper investigation, or question revision, would be needed to determine the meaning here. Otherwise, both recreation and resort parks had programs that were suitable for differently abled
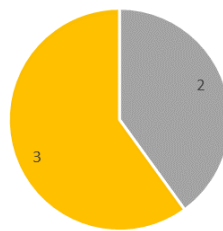
individuals. It would be interesting to see if the reason for non-suitability is due to the nature of the park, in the case of Mineral Mound we know it is because it is a golf course.

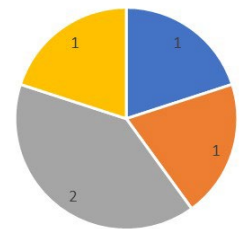*Staff members with prior professional experience working with people with cognitive disabilities*



This is a transcendent accommodation, for it goes beyond what is called for by the ADA. Having a person on staff of this caliber is not required for inclusion, but it would be interesting to know how much that weighed into the decision to hire. It would be interesting to see how this progressed throughout more respondents and through time.

**Motor**

In this section, the suitability of persons with motor disabilities to visit a park is evaluated. From wheelchairs to balance issues, there are plenty of people who need accommodations of this nature. Again, this is easily an instance where the fundamental alteration of the program clause may be in effect to stop inclusionary practices.
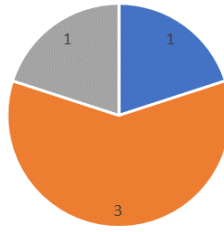
*Paved trail in otherwise natural areas*
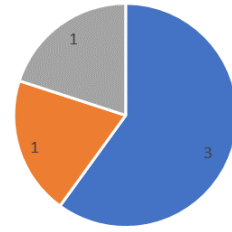
### Resort Parks
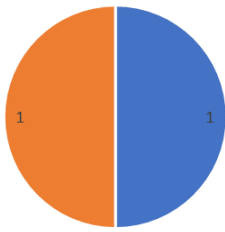


■ Yes  ■ No  ■ N/A (no natural areas)

### Historic Sites



■ Yes  ■ No  ■ N/A (no natural areas)

### Recreation Parks



■ Yes  ■ No  ■ N/A (no natural areas)

Having paved trails is essential for wheelchair users. It is not unpredicted that historic sites may have less of this feature, for their main attraction is usually an old building or historic grounds that aren't to be altered. The resort park saying no is more of a surprise, and perhaps a violation of the ADA, as fundamental alterations are likely prevalent in an inherently modified resort.

*Ramp access for all facilities*

### Resort Parks
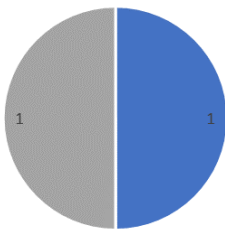


■ Yes  ■ No  ■ Some

### Historic Sites
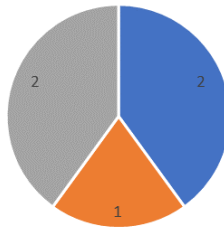


■ yes  ■ no  ■ some

### Recreation Parks
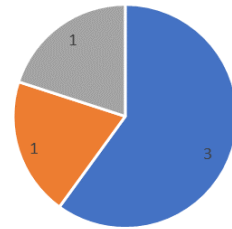


■ yes  ■ no  ■ some

This seems more problematic of a question to have at least one park in each category that said that not all or any of their facilities are wheelchair friendly. I'm surprised that those parks did not note that they had received requests for such accommodation. In the case of the historic site, it may be a necessary omission to keep the integrity of the program.

*Trails featured that are suitable for individuals with difficulty walking*
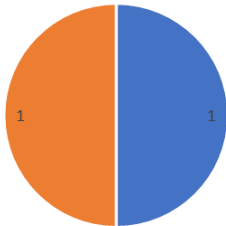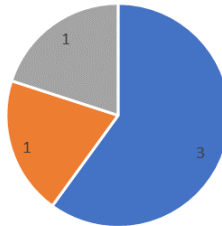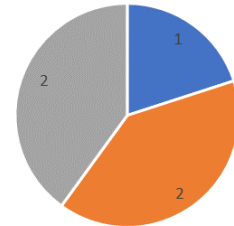


| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|---|---|---|

Every category of park had a representative that did have this characteristic. At each site, it may be the fundamental nature of the program impeding this transformative accommodation. It would be worthy of further investigation to understand why this accommodation may not be suitable at each park.

*Are key natural attractions/features accessible to wheelchair users*
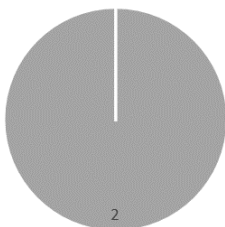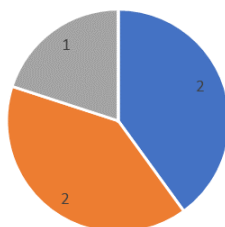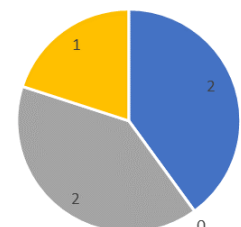


| Resort Parks | Historic Sites | Recreation Parks |
|---|---|---|

Here I found more yes answers than I expected. In this small sample, managers are advising that natural attractions are accessible by wheelchair. My expectation was that natural features would have been the foremost reason as to why a wheelchair user would not be permitted. This is a good trend to see.

*Are key cultural/historical attractions/features accessible to wheelchair users*
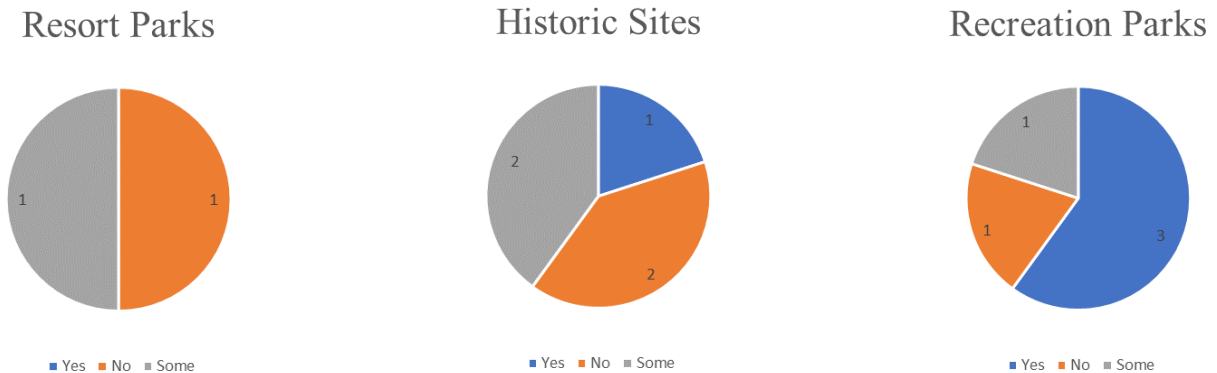


It appears that the Recreation parks are the most accommodating of this in our small sample. Looking deeper into the reasoning behind this lack of inclusivity, it may become evident that such accommodations would cause undue burden or fundamentally alter the nature of the program, such as with an historic house or natural landscape.

In total there were fifteen pertinent questions used to assess inclusivity. Several were more transcendent of the ADA, while others were more basic requirements of the law. Some of the negative responses were unexpected, such as a lack of braille on room placards at one park from each category. All parks who answered that they do not, or only partially, have an accommodation, were asked if they had ever received requests or complaints over the lack of such inclusion. In each of these instances, all parks were consistent in denying that this concern was ever brought up to them by a visitor. Respondents were split between answering that their park definitely had not received complaints or requests for an accommodation and stating that they simply had no knowledge of any complaints or requests.

In Figure 1, below, a scorecard delineates the status of each park within each inclusive practice surveyed for. From this, a guide to State Parks can be extrapolated for the use of members of the disabled community throughout the state. Most responsive parks proved deficient in total

inclusion of more than one category of disability. The least accommodated for disability category was hearing impaired. Audial accommodations are the least commonplace among our respondents. As a baseline, this scorecard could be compared with future renditions of this survey, to look for improvement or deterioration of accommodations offered. While many of these accommodations may not be required under the ADA, they do exemplify best practices if a park were to prioritize disability accommodation. It may be difficult for a park to provide an accommodation for reasons permissible by the ADA, however, upon legal challenge from the community, it would be on the Parks System to prove such undue burden or fundamental alteration before a judge. The most inclusive park surveyed was Lake Cumberland State Resort Park, being green for 3 out of 4 categories. Several other parks had various categories that were green, however there is a rather staggering number of parks with red categories, warranting potential for further investigation.

| Park | Representative member of the activities advisory board | Consideration of universal design in activities & equipment purchased | Braille on Facility Room Signage | Braille on permanent informational/educational displays | Audio tour or assistive technology for self-guided tour | Educational videos with captioning | ASL staff member | Provision of Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) | Outdoor recreation programs | natural/historic education programs | Intentional, or universal design of regularly scheduled activities (percentage) | Long-term staff professional experience | Paved Trails (shaded miles) | Ramp access for each facility | Easy difficulty walking trails (shaded) | Key natural attractions/features accessibility | Key cultural/historic attractions/features accessibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Resort Parks** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Carter Caves State Resort Park - Perry | No | Always | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | [5/15] | No | No | Yes | No | Yes (some) | No |
| Cumberland Falls State Resort Park - Mounce | Yes | Always | Yes | Some | Yes | Some (50%) | No | No | Yes | Yes | All | Yes 32 yrs | Yes (16 miles) | {7/8} | Yes (5 miles) | Yes (some) | Yes (some) |
| Barren River Lake State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Blue Licks Battlefield State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Breaks Interstate Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Dale Hollow Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| General Butler State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Greenbo Lake State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Jenny Wiley State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Kenlake State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Lake Barkley State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Lake Cumberland State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Natural Bridge State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Pennyrile Forest State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Pine Mountain State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Rough River Dam State Resort Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| **Historic Sites** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dr. Thomas Walker State Historic Site - Teasley | N/A | Always | Yes | No | No | N/A | No | No | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | No natural areas | [3/5] | N/A | Yes | Yes |
| Old Mulkey Meetinghouse State Historic Site - Rush | No | Mostly | Yes | No | Yes | N/A | No | No | No | No | N/A | N/A | No | [2/3] | Yes (1 mile) | No | No |
| William Whitley House State Historic Site - Vanhook | Yes | Always | Yes | No | N/A | N/A | No | No | N/A | Yes | - | N/A | No | Yes | Yes (2 miles) | Yes | Yes |
| Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site - Hildebrand | Yes | Mostly | Yes | No | No | N/A | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes | Yes (1 mile) | Yes (some) | Yes (some) |
| White Hall State Historic Site - Hood | No | Mostly | No | No | No | N/A | No | No | N/A | Yes | N/A | N/A | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| Big Bone Lick State Historic Site | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Isaac Shelby Cemetery State Historic Site | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Jefferson Davis State Historic Site | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Waveland State Historic Site | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| **Recreation Parks** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Columbus-Belmont State Park - Lynch | Yes | Always | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | Yes (1 mile) | [4/6] | No | Yes (some) | Yes |
| E. P. "Tom" Sawyer State Park - Price | No | Always | No | No | No | N/A | No | Yes | Yes | No | [2/20] | No | No | Yes | Yes (1 mile) | Yes (some) | No |
| General Burnside Island State Park - Lynn | N/A | Always | Yes | Yes | No | N/A | No | No | Yes | No | [5/25] | No | No | No | N/A | Yes | Yes |
| Fort Boonesborough State Park - Winburn | No | Mostly | Yes | No | N/A | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | [10/100] | Yes | Yes (0 miles) | Yes | No | N/A | Yes (some) |
| Mineral Mound State Park - Cary | N/A | Always | Yes | No | No | N/A | No | No | N/A | N/A | N/A | Yes 18yrs | No natural areas | Yes | N/A | Yes | Yes |
| Carr Creek State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Fishtrap Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Grayson Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Green River Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| John James Audubon State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Kincaid Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Kingdom Come State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Lake Malone State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Lincoln Homestead State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| My Old Kentucky Home State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Nolin Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Old Fort Harrod State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Paintsville Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Taylorsville Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Yatesville Lake State Park | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |

Column group headers: **Decision-Making** (Representative member of the activities advisory board; Consideration of universal design in activities & equipment purchased); **Visual** (Braille on Facility Room Signage; Braille on permanent informational/educational displays; Audio tour or assistive technology for self-guided tour); **Audial** (Educational videos with captioning; ASL staff member; Provision of Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS)); **Cognitive** (Outdoor recreation programs; natural/historic education programs; Intentional, or universal design of regularly scheduled activities (percentage); Long-term staff professional experience); **Motor** (Paved Trails (shaded miles); Ramp access for each facility; Easy difficulty walking trails (shaded); Key natural attractions/features accessibility; Key cultural/historic attractions/features accessibility)

*Limitations*

The foremost limitation to this survey was the lack of responses, concluding in an email stalemate with the Deputy Commissioner. Not having a complete list of responses hindered the ability to formulate the intended product outcome of an online guide for the community. Another limitation may have been in the wording of the questioning within the intellectual/cognitive section. While designed with the intention of mitigating this risk, it may have been possible for a multi-tasking, unfocused manager to misread the rather complex questions regarding their programming. It may have been more effective to ask the negative version of the question, such as "*Are any of your ___ programs unsuitable for persons with* X *disabilities*,", along with a follow up on how that is remedied in cases where the answer was yes. Further, questions did explicitly ask for the reasoning of non-inclusivity, whereas we may assume it is due to the fundamental nature of the programming or burdensome for a facility, it may have been something different. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is not within reason to identify if the trends that are seen within park respondents are representative of the entire park system, for such a small portion of parks responding leaves little ability to run significant statistical tests.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It appears Kentucky State Parks may need to revisit their efforts to maintain an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment for their differently abled customers. Based on the small sample of state parks that we were able to receive responses from, there appear to be at least some gaps in the provision of inclusive programming or facilities, or both, at each park. While no conclusion can be made as to the average park, some of the trends and individual findings within this survey were below par for reasonable accommodation. That being said, at least one park's answers, Lake Cumberland Resort Park, were very inclusive, and the variability between parks would lead one to believe that this occurrence would likely not be solitary within the complete responses of the state's park system. It would have been beneficial to the community to know this information about all state parks in Kentucky, to guide where they can find the programming and/or accessibility that they may crave.

A continuation of this survey, or a repeat version with revisions to the semantics of questions in the intellectual disability section as noted in the limitations section, is recommended to finish the baseline from which the parks' administration can reflect on and then work to enhance accommodation. To do so, it is necessary to gain the endorsement of the Deputy Commissioner of State Parks. Without his support, this effort will once again likely stall out. Moreover, if one, with more resources, cannot garner his support, it may be reasonable to go about filing suit to warrant responses through legal compulsion. Continuing this study is necessary to give this community the chance to speak out against discrimination and seek out inclusion within the natural setting. It very well could be that the reason for non-accommodation on some of these issues at hand are justified under the provision of the law that they are undue burden or a fundamental alteration. However, the burden of proof for that is on the parks. And, through the methods unfolded here, we know that

that would likely only apply to questions about programming within natural and historic landscapes. Still, some members of each super category were stating that they produce inclusive programming, while others stated they did not. It would be interesting to dig deeper into those differences, to see if an undue burden or fundamental alteration from such accommodation is reasonable to conclude at those without versus those with.

Nonetheless, within these questions are accommodations that certainly do not require undue burden. Some go beyond the requirements of the ADA, such as the hiring of staff with relevant skills. Yet many, including audial and visual accommodations, are arguably discriminatory to omit. Respondent parks were consistent in only one category, and it was in the lack of inclusivity for the hearing impaired.

Finally, there were questions that were not necessarily requirements of the ADA but do show transcendent non-burdensome inclusionary efforts. Of these, there was split responses throughout the parks, as with almost every category. However, there were more positive responses to these types of questions than expected. One such effort, on the other hand, for example, includes a lack luster effort by the park system at-large in their online message about accessibility. While Kentucky State Parks' handling of their display of accessibility policy online may be consistent with law, it may be frustrating for members of the community who are unsure of what to expect upon visiting a park. Others include, again with parks split in their provision, staffing and decision-making personal.

The ability for one park on this list to be so inclusive tells the story that it could be possible for most other parks, especially of the same category. This gives hope as to the future of the park system. With greater investment of time and fiscal allocations into considering and creating

inclusivity, Kentucky State Parks could be as inviting as any local park, who are steadfast working

towards the same goal.

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<u>Appendix</u>

*Survey*

# Inclusive Recreation in Kentucky State Parks

---

**Start of Block: Consent**

Consent By clicking "I AGREE" below, you agree that you have read the information provided in the cover letter and are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this survey. If you do not agree, please close this web browser

◯ I AGREE  (1)

**End of Block: Consent**

**Start of Block: Block 1**

Decision-making Are individuals with disabilities included on the advisory board, or in the decision-making process, for designing ${e://Field/Park%20Name}'s activities?

◯ Yes  (1)

◯ No  (2)

◯ This park does not host organized activities  (3)

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Universal New equip Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} take into consideration the idea of universal design (products that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics), when acquiring new equipment or creating new activities?

○ Always  (1)

○ Most of the time  (2)

○ About half the time  (3)

○ Sometimes  (4)

○ Never  (5)

**End of Block: Block 1**

**Start of Block: Vision**

Vis_Intro This next set of questions will pertain to accommodations for persons with vision disabilities.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Assistive tech Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} offer an audio tour, or assistive technology for the vision impaired, to accompany self-guided tours?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ No self-guided tours at this park  (3)

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

*Display This Question:*

*If Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} offer an audio tour, or assistive technology for the vision impaire... = No*

Assist tech request Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} ever received requests to provide audio accompaniment or assistive technology for self-guided tours?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

---

edu Braille Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature Braille on all permanent informational/educational displays?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Some  (6)

○ No educational or informational displays throughout this park  (3)

---

edu Braille requests Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests to provide Braille on informational/educational displays?

○ Yes  (4)

○ No  (5)

○ Not to my knowledge  (6)

---

room signage braille Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature Braille on signage for all facility rooms (restrooms, offices, auditoriums, etc.)?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ This park does not have facilities  (3)

**End of Block: Vision**

**Start of Block: Hearing**

hearing_intro This next set of questions will pertain to accommodations for persons with hearing disabilities.

---

ASL staff member Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} have a practitioner of American Sign Language on permanent or long-term staff?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

---

captioning Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} provide captioning on all video displays?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Some  (3)

○ No video displays in our park  (4)

---

captioning requests Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests to provide captioning on video displays?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

---

% captioned What proportion of video displays are captioned?

○ # of videos with captioning  (1) _____

○ Total number of video displays  (2) _____

---

TRS Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} provide Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS)?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

---

TRS requests Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} ever received requests for TRS?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

**End of Block: Hearing**

**Start of Block: Intellectual/Cognitive**

intel_intro This next set of questions will pertain to accommodations for persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities.

----

Outdoor rec Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature <u>outdoor recreational</u> programs and/or events that aim at encouraging the participation of youth and/or adults with disabilities?

○ Yes, both adults and children  (1)

○ Yes, adults only  (2)

○ Yes, children only  (3)

○ No  (4)

○ Park does not host outdoor recreational programs  (5)

----

*Display This Question:*

> *If Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature outdoor recreational programs and/or events that aim at enc... = Yes, both adults and children*
>
> *Or Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature outdoor recreational programs and/or events that aim at enc... = Yes, adults only*
>
> *Or Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature outdoor recreational programs and/or events that aim at enc... = Yes, children only*

# outdoor rec occur How many times per year are such recreational programs hosted?

| | 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 |
|---|---|
| Yearly Occurrences for adults and children, non-segregated () | |
| Yearly Occurrences for adults () | |
| Yearly Occurrences for children () | |

outdoor rec advert Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} advertise these programs?

◯ Yes  (1)

◯ No  (2)

outdoor advert type How does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} advertise these programs?

☐ Flyer  (4)

☐ Banner  (5)

☐ Information Sessions w/ schools or day centers  (7)

☐ E-mail to schools, camps, or day centers  (11)

☐ Newspaper advertisement  (8)

☐ Social media advertisement  (9)

☐ Other, please specify  (6) _____

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature outdoor recreational programs and/or events that aim at enc… = Yes, both adults and children*

*Or Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature outdoor recreational programs and/or events that aim at enc… = Yes, children only*

*Or Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature outdoor recreational programs and/or events that aim at enc… = Yes, adults only*

# of participants How many individuals participate in these programs/events on average?

|  | 0 | 15 | 30 | 45 | 60 | 75 | 90 | 105 | 120 | 135 | 150 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of Adult Participants () | |
| Number of Child Participants () | |
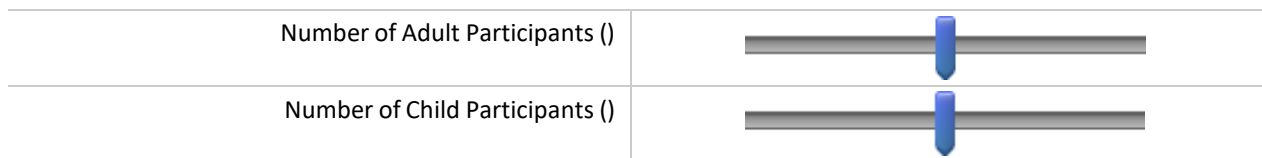
---

age separation Are these programs targeted to specific age groups?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

---

requests for outdoor Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests to host such outdoor recreational programs and/or events?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

---

edu programs Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} host natural/historical education programs that use universal design principles, specifically suitable for youths/adults with disabilities, upon request?

○ Yes, both for adults and children  (1)

○ Yes, for adults  (2)

○ Yes, for children  (3)

○ No  (4)

○ N/A (No educational programs or activities offered)  (5)

---

# of edu program How many such education program <u>sessions</u> are offered, each year on average?

|  | 0  10  20  30  40  50  60  70  80  90  100 |
|---|---|
| For Adults () |  |
| For Children () |  |
| For Adults and Children, non-segregated () |  |

edu prog. advert Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} advertise these programs to adult day service centers or k-12 schools? Select all that apply

☐ Yes, adult day service centers only  (1)

☐ Yes, k-12 schools only  (2)

☐ ⊗ Neither  (3)

edu program requests Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests for such educational programs?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Not to my knowledge (3)

---

suited reg. activity How many of ${e://Field/Park%20Name}'s regularly scheduled activities (educational or recreational) are intentionally designed, or are of universal design, for the inclusion of people with intellectual/developmental impairments? If no organized activities are conducted at ${e://Field/Park%20Name}, please put 0's in both boxes.

○ # of Intentional or universal design activities (4) _____

○ # of Total activities (5) _____

---

staff experience Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} have recreation staff members with professional experience in working with youth and/or adults with cognitive disabilities, before working at this park?

○ Yes, both adults and children (1)

○ Yes, adults (2)

○ Yes, children (3)

○ No (4)

○ N/A (no recreation staff) (5)

---

years experience How many years (combined if 2 or more) of staff experience?

|  | 0 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 20 | 24 | 28 | 32 | 36 | 40 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Years Experience with Children () | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Years Experience with Adults () | | | | | | | | | | | |

**End of Block: Intellectual/Cognitive**

**Start of Block: Motor**

Q57 This next set of questions will pertain to accommodations for persons with motor disabilities.

----

paved trails Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature paved trails in otherwise naturals areas?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ N/A (no natural areas)  (3)

----

miles of paved trail How many miles of paved trail in natural areas?

| | 0  10  20  30  40  50  60  70  80  90  100 |
|---|---|
| Number of Total Miles () | |
| Number of Canopy Shaded Miles () | |

paved trail requests Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests for paved trails?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

ramp access Does each of ${e://Field/Park%20Name}'s facilities have ramp access?

○ Yes  (1)

○ Some  (2)

○ No  (3)

○ No facilities at this park  (4)

% ramp access How many facilities have ramp access?

○ # of facilities with ramp access  (4) _____

○ Total # of facilities  (5) _____

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

ramp requests Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests for additional ramp access?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

easy walking trails Does ${e://Field/Park%20Name} feature trails suitable for individuals with difficulty walking (i.e. slight slope, small to no roots, easy trails)?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ No trails at this park  (3)

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

miles of easy trails How many miles of trails are suitable for persons with difficulty walking?

 0    10    20    30    40    50    60    70    80    90    100

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of Total Miles () | |
| Number of Canopy Shaded Miles () | |

---

req. or easy trails Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests for low difficulty trails?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

---

nat. features access Are key natural attractions/features of ${e://Field/Park%20Name} accessible to wheelchair users?

○ Yes  (1)

○ Some  (2)

○ No  (3)

○ No natural attractions at this park  (4)

---

% nat feature access What percent of natural attractions/features are wheelchair accessible?

0    10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

| Percent of natural attractions that are wheelchair accessible () | |
|---|---|

nat. access requests Have ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests for more wheelchair access to its natural attractions?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

his. feature access Are key cultural/historical attractions/features of ${e://Field/Park%20Name} accessible to wheelchair users?

○ Yes  (1)

○ Some  (2)

○ No  (3)
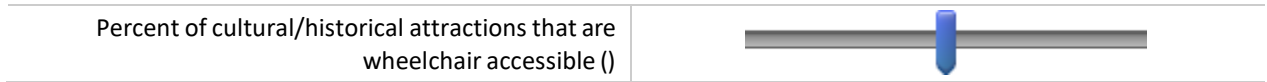
○ No cultural/historical attractions at this park  (4)

% of his. access What percent of cultural/historical attractions are wheelchair accessible?

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

| Percent of cultural/historical attractions that are wheelchair accessible () | |
|---|---|

his. access requests Has ${e://Field/Park%20Name} received requests for more wheelchair access to its cultural/historical attractions?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

○ Not to my knowledge  (3)

**End of Block: Motor**

**Start of Block: Closing remarks**

Final words If there is anything else you would like to expand on as to your park's efforts to be inclusive towards people with disabilities in their recreation or education programming, please say that here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**End of Block: Closing remarks**