

Making Outdoor Programs Accessible



Why Do Outdoor Programs Need to Become More Inclusive?

Each year, parks and nature centers are visited by an increasing number of people with disabilities, including those whose needs are not apparent. As outdoor educators, interpreters, and guides, we are challenged to accommodate visitors with a variety of physical, cognitive, sensory, and learning disabilities.

Taking the necessary steps to accommodate people with disabilities actually improves your programs' effectiveness with all audiences. Research has shown that everyone's brains are wired differently. Therefore, outdoor programs are most effective when they incorporate a variety of learning styles and are supported by appropriate aids and services.

What Is Involved?

In most cases, creating universally designed programs need not be costly or time-consuming. *NatureAccess*[®] trainers at the Mohonk Preserve provide the expertise to help you work with your physical setting, modify instructional presentations, and utilize appropriate aids and supports.

Workshops are tailored to your needs and may include:

- Nature Deficit Disorder and Sensory Functioning
- Disability Etiquette and Sensitivity Training
- Challenges to Learning and Understanding
- Developing Accessible Activities
- Managing Challenging Behaviors
- Strategies: Assistive Technology, Instructional Techniques, Alternative Formats
- Site and Facility Assessments and Consultations

If your park or center is open to the public, it must serve a diverse public.



How Do I Gain the Tools to Make My Programs Accessible?



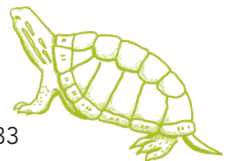
The *NatureAccess*[®] program provides outdoor leaders with specific strategies and accommodations to make their programs accessible. Mohonk Preserve has trained thousands of outdoor professionals at national parks, camps, nature centers, and governmental organizations. Hands-on workshops are tailored to your needs and provide participants with the tools and skills needed to better serve diverse audiences of all ages.

Copies of *Making Outdoor Programs Accessible*, the 62-page soft-cover book, accompany trainings and are also available separately.



For more information, visit mohonkpreserve.org or contact:

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About



In 1994, we realized that children with disabilities were being left behind at school on days when their classmates attended outdoor programs at Mohonk Preserve. As a result, *NatureAccess*® began as a planned approach to inclusion.

NatureAccess is proactive, working in collaboration with individuals, teachers, parents, social workers, and physical and speech therapists to assure access to the outdoors for people of all ages and abilities.

The success of this program has inspired a variety of inclusive services at the Mohonk Preserve, including summer camps, interpretive programs, exhibits, and professional trainings and consultations.

Today, *NatureAccess* continues to offer accessible services and outdoor programs while bringing nature indoors for those whose disabilities prevent them from venturing outside.

NatureAccess received the **1996 Accessibility Award** from the Association of Independent Living Centers in New York, and the **2006 Beyond the Letter of the Law Award** from the Resource Center for Accessible Living.

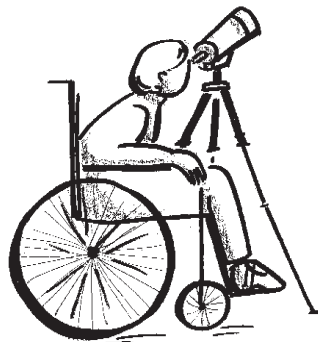
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Mohonk Preserve is the largest member- and visitor-supported nature preserve in New York State. Founded in 1963, the Preserve manages extensive carriage roads and foot trails, while continuing to safeguard the fragile ecosystem and to provide recreational opportunities and educational programs.

A crucial part of the Preserve's mission is to encourage visitors to experience and learn about the natural world around them. Our programs in environmental education, ecosystem research, and land management encourage visitors to respect the land and use it responsibly.

The Mohonk Preserve is part of a 40,000-acre natural area in the northern Shawangunk Mountains that draws hikers, bird watchers, rock climbers, skiers, and myriad researchers and ecosystem scientists.



Serving People with Disabilities in the Outdoors



... Tools for
Outdoor Educators,
Rangers, Guides,
and Other
Group Leaders