

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

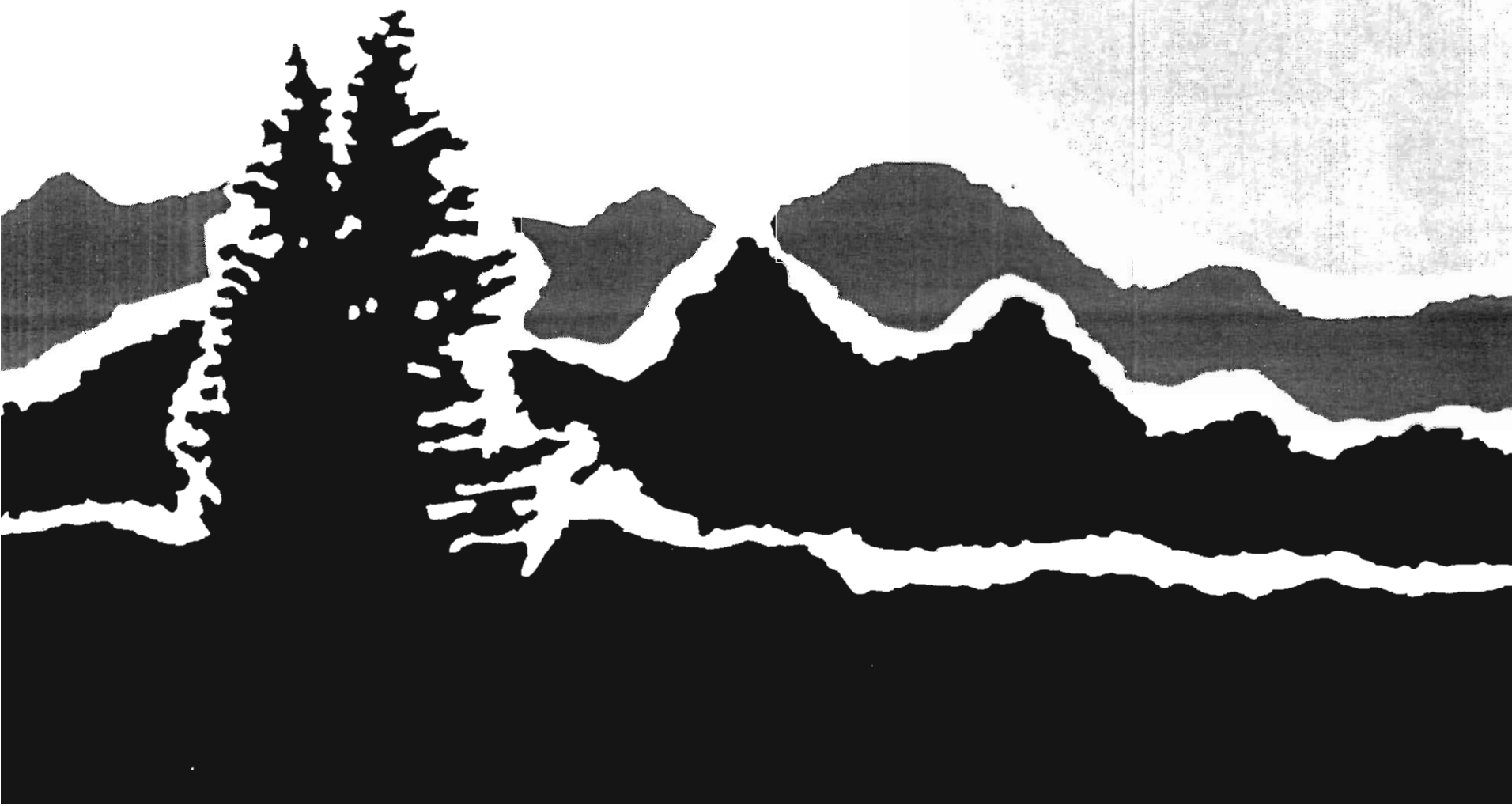
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# Access America's Great Outdoors

## National Forests Are for Everyone!

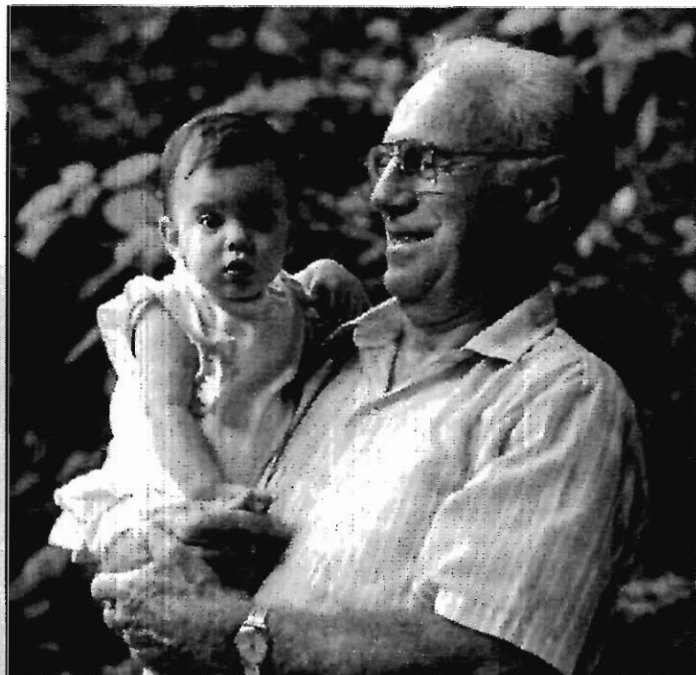


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# Access America's Great Outdoors

## National Forests Are for Everyone!



USDA/AFS 00-CS-10850

With nearly 200 million acres of majestic mountains, deep rugged canyons, pristine high lakes, wild rivers, immense forests, and open meadows, the National Forest System provides the largest variety of outdoor recreation opportunities in the United States.

To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy recreation in national forests, the Chief of the USDA Forest Service has established an agency goal of "being the leading provider of accessible outdoor recreation opportunities in America."



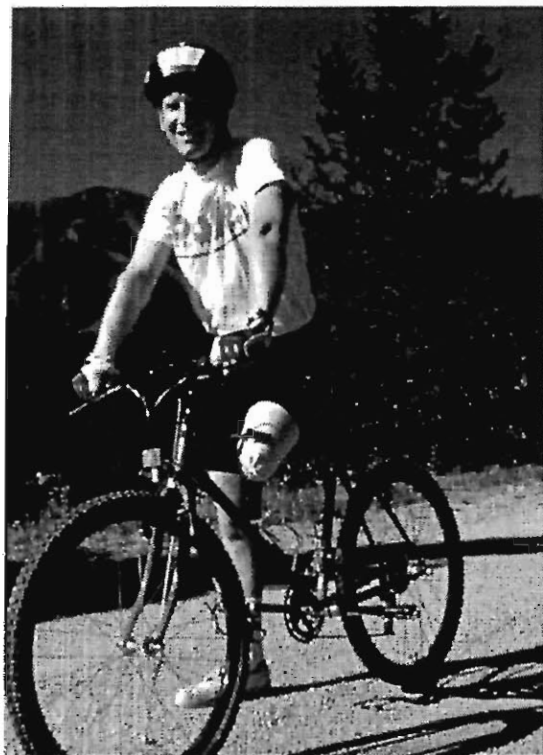
USDA/AFS 93-RN-2584/Created Butte Ski Resort

## Choices Are Important

Most outdoor recreationists have the freedom to choose the type of recreation activity they want, the setting they want it in, and the personal level of challenge they desire for a quality recreation experience. People are drawn to the national forests for different reasons. Some seek the solitude of the primitive backcountry; others, a rustic campsite nestled in the woods; yet others, a social setting with convenient facilities. *It's simply a matter of choice.*

Yet, for millions of Americans, choices for a desired recreation experience are limited. Historically, recreation facilities and programs were created by traditional design for the "average" person, which usually excluded people with disabilities. Thus, many people have become conditioned to viewing the great outdoors as inaccessible.

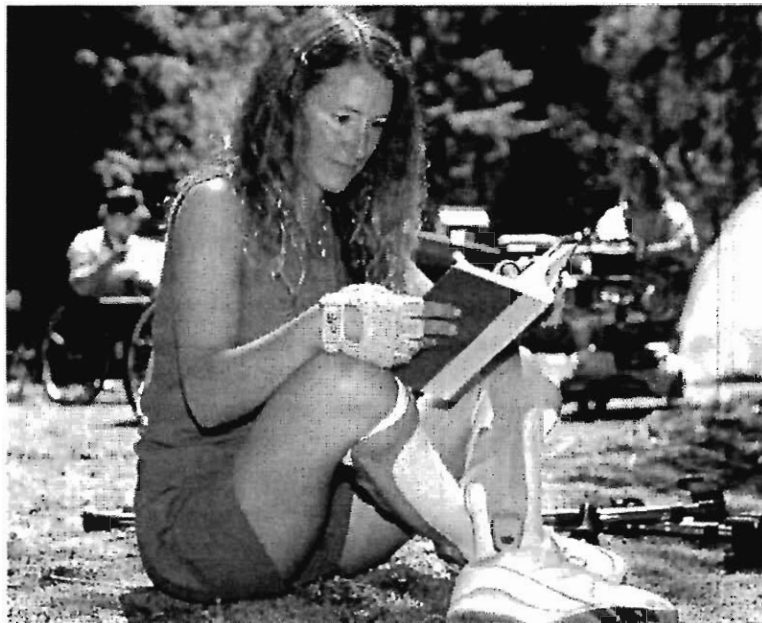




USDA/FIS 00-CS-142

## Expectations for Accessibility

Recreation uses and customer expectations have changed. Recreationists, land managers, and designers are recognizing that all people should have the opportunity to participate in outdoor recreation. In response to this, the Forest Service, in cooperation with other Federal agencies and non-profit partners, is developing the *Design Guide for Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation*. With this *Design Guide*, the Forest Service is breaking new ground in the area of accessibility by focusing on **universal design**, which is at the heart of access to outdoor recreation.



Tom Irwin/FIS 00-CS-2689

## Universal Design/Removing the Barriers

Universal design is a relatively new approach that considers the needs of all users—children, the elderly, and people with mobility, sensory, cognitive, and temporary disabilities. In this approach, aspects and elements of accessibility are incorporated in the earliest planning stages and are designed to blend into the natural environment. The goal of universal design is to develop facilities, programs, and services that foster a sense of dignity, independence, and social integration for all visitors.



USDA/FS 06-CS-0487



Tom Ince/FS 03-CS-2660





The main premise of the *Design Guide* is to link customers' expectations, choices, and accessibility. Just as people seek different recreation experiences in the national forests, so do their expectations of accessibility vary. To ensure that a diversity of recreation settings and customer expectations are considered, the Forest Service uses the **recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS)**, an innovative recreation management and planning tool that divides outdoor recreation settings and levels of accessibility into four broad categories: **urban/rural** (easy), **roaded natural** (moderate), **semi-primitive** (difficult), and **primitive** (most difficult).



**Urban/Rural**  
(Easy)



**Roaded natural**  
(Moderate)



**Semi-primitive**  
(Difficult)



**Primitive**  
(Most difficult)



## The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Matches Expectations and Settings

Because **urban/rural settings** are generally highly developed, people expect an **easy level of accessibility** to facilities and programs. For example, a visitor center and its displays and programs are to be fully accessible. Trails in such settings are likely to be paved, with only gentle slopes. Developments such as fishing sites and scenic overlooks would include handrails designed for both safety and accessibility.



Jill Hauserman/FS 90-CS-0989



Tom Haeck/FS 90-CS-1089







**Roaded natural settings** are somewhat less developed than urban sites. People come here expecting a **moderate** level of accessibility. Rustic campsites nestled in the woods may have leveled surfaces; instead of asphalt, campers might find compacted gravel surfaces. Trails, too, may be of natural compacted material, and slopes may increase slightly. Handrails at fishing sites may be replaced by natural materials such as boulders, giving anglers a greater sense of adventure and of being “out on the water.”



Tom Irsai/PS 00-CS-2676



Tom Irsai/PS 00-CS-2683





**Semi-primitive settings** seldom offer developed features, and expectations of a **difficult** level of accessibility prevail. Campers are usually left to their own devices to pick out a relatively flat piece of ground for their tents. Trails, often in rugged terrain, are likely soil, narrower and steeper. Accessibility is a secondary consideration. Scenic overlooks and fishing sites occur as part of the natural environment.



USDA/USFS 93-RN-2579



David Scheel/USFS 90-CS-0988/Wilderness Inquiry





At the far end of the spectrum are **primitive settings**, where preservation of the natural environment is the primary concern and accessibility standards are often not applicable, and the sense of personal risk and challenge is great. As a result, people expect the level of accessibility to be the **most difficult**. People access primitive areas by various means—canoes and kayaks, on foot and on horseback.

One important point to remember is that all developed structural elements—restrooms, water hydrants, picnic tables, and cooking units—when provided, will be designed to meet full accessibility standards at all sites.



Greg Law/PS 92-CS-1015

USDA/AFIS 911-RN-2350



## Who Benefits?

We all do! Better than half the American population will benefit from campgrounds, restrooms, trails, and other visitor facilities and programs that are designed with access for all in mind.

- One in five Americans (43 million) experiences a disability.
- One in ten Americans (25 million) is temporarily disabled at any one time.
- Nearly one in three older Americans (11.2 million of the 30 million people over age 65) has a disability.

These numbers multiply. If one family member cannot participate, most likely the entire family will be affected. So it's clear that the initial figure of 43 million is actually just the beginning. The number of people directly benefitting from universal design can easily be multiplied three or four times.

*Universal design just makes good sense.*





Tom Ince/SFS 90/CS-1224

## Forest Service Commitment

The Forest Service is committed to providing all recreation visitors to the national forests the opportunity to participate in programs, services, and facilities to the highest level of access practicable.



Wilderness Inquiry

## You Can Get Involved

*Discovery...Challenge...Adventure...Freedom!* Our national forests provide invaluable opportunities for recreation experiences to be remembered for a lifetime.

You can help make that happen! Designing accessible facilities and programs goes beyond Federal laws and standards—it's just the right thing to do and the Forest Service invites you to get involved in the process! *Become a partner!*



Peter Wing/USFS 00-CS-0212





Karl Perry, FFS 93-RN-1000



Involving people is the first step in obtaining successful designs for accessibility. Partners help us get the job done. With ideas, planning, construction, and funding, YOU can help make a difference to ensure a quality recreation experience for everyone. Contact your local national forest office (listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service), and help us achieve **Access to America's Great Outdoors**.



Timothy, FFS 98-C-5 0025a

Special thanks to Crested Butte Ski Resort for the photograph on page 3 and Wilderness Inquiry for the photographs on page 9, on page 12 (right), and on page 15.



Wilderness Inquiry





Greg Latta/FPS 9-3-RN-2582/Wilderness Inquiry

The **Access America's Great Outdoors** effort is in response to the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Persons of any race, color, national origin, sex, age, or religion, or with any disability are welcome to use and enjoy all the facilities, programs, and services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Discrimination in any form is strictly against agency policy and should be reported to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.



