

Great Rock Bight Preserve

Update on Progress on Implementation of the March 2024 Recommendations and Compliance with Accessibility Standards¹

(March 2024 Recommendations in standard back font. Updated observations *in red italics*.)²

*Note: One of our February/March 2024 general recommendations to all municipal and non-profit beach operators was to provide an action plan as to how and when the necessary improvements would be made. To MVLB's credit, on April 1, 2024, MVLB furnished a "Universal Accessibility Projects and Timeline (hereinafter "Project timeline"). How MVLB has progressed relative to both their own project timeline and our recommendations are outlined below.*³

Parking Lot

1. The one accessible parking space is about 40 feet from the trail route to the beach and other trails. Consider moving it closer to the beginning of the route and making sure it is marked with an appropriate sign. Given the number of parking spaces in the parking lot(s) you might also consider adding one more designated accessible space near the entrance. The route from the current space to the trail entrance is accessible –firm, stable with no significant sloping.

Moving the current parking space was in the Action Plan for 2004 and presumably to be completed before the 2024 season. As of the September 5 this was not accomplished. The addition of a second accessible space was not mentioned in the Project timeline

Beach Access route

1. It does not appear feasible to make the trail route to the beach “wheelchair accessible,” in accordance with standards because of significant grades at various points. However, several improvements could be made to this wide and pretty well-maintained trail to make it accessible to many who might find it unduly challenging or too difficult to navigate and get to the beach, including many seniors, and persons who are blind or with visual disabilities or experience a moderate level of physical disability. Here are recommended improvements:
 - a. Generally, most of the trail is free from tripping hazards etc. However there are some notable areas where rocks are embedded in and protruding up from the ground and as

¹ For standards specifications/dimensions for beaches, see the USDA's Forest Service *Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails*, 8/2012 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Accessibility-Guide-Book.pdf>.

² The original recommendations were furnished in March 2024 and were based principally on June 2023 beach operators' self-surveys and September and October 2023 follow up on-site visits by Dukes County Assoc. Commissioner for Disabilities. This update is based on an 9/5/24 visit.

³ The project timeline merely referenced years (e.g. 2024, 2025) as opposed to more specific dates for implementation/completion. While it has been presumed that this meant before the season began in the year specified, clarification was requested.

well as the presence of logs. The rocks can easily be removed, and the trail smoothed over at those points. The logs seem like they may be performing a water diversion or some other function. If they serve or no longer serve any function they can and should be removed. If they are serving a function, is there another way to fulfill the function? If not, the logging system could use some improvement with an eye to be making them less uneven/challenging and by putting up warning signs notifying trail users of their oncoming presence. Finally, I do not recall seeing too many roots protruding up, but any that do so over ½” should be removed. Going forward your maintenance program should ensure that the route remains free of protrusions from the ground or from the sides of the trail.

The problems identified in this recommendation not addressed in Project Timeline nor accomplished as of the September 5 visit.

- b. There are two relatively steep areas along the route where steps have been installed. One area has wooden steps that were obviously installed some time ago. They are of uneven spacing and uneven height (some quite high). And they do not have any side railings. The other area has more recently installed metal steps of appropriate and even height and spacing with a railing system. They are therefore much easier to navigate. It is recommended that the older wooden step system be replaced with the same type of metal system.

This is specified in the Project timeline to be done both in 2024 and 2025. Clarification was requested. It was not done or started as of 9/5 site visit.

- c. Once on the beach, there is no accessible route to the high water mark which is about 50 or so feet in distance.. Consisting mostly of a rock surface it makes navigating very challenging even for non-wheelchair users. There should be one area at the actual beach entrance that is cleared and replaced with a more receptive and accessible surface. A 4-5 foot-wide or more beach mat could be used or a more natural surface. Clearing an area next to the beach mat might also be considered so that a 20-30 foot area on both sides of a beach mat or walkway free of rocks. It could be replaced with sand or a firmer surface.

Not mentioned in the Project timeline and nor accomplished.

Marl Pond

- a. While obviously not part of the beach or beach trail, it is recommended that the route to and around Marl Pond, a very scenic and bucolic area, should be restored to its previous accessible state. It had been subject to an accessibility grant and improvements in the 1990’s and now requires some TLC and other measures. For example, where grass has overgrown on what appears to be previously firm surfaces, the firm surfaces could easily be restored and maintained.

Addressing this recommendation was in the Project timeline for 2024 and presumably to be completed before the 2024 season. As of the September 5 it did not appear that this was accomplished. It should be noted that I only went part of the way around the trail but could view most of it.

- b. The grades in a few areas should be examined as they may exceed the allowable grades thus requiring ramping or other solutions.⁴ This includes the access route from the parking lot to the Marl Pond loop.

Not specifically addressed in the Project Timeline, nor was it addressed.

See also accompanying Recommendations Applicable to all Beaches and Planned Improvements.

Richard Cohen, Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities
Original Recommendations' Report 3/2024, updated 11/2/24

⁴See note 1.