

Katama South Beach
Update on Progress on Implementation from the March 2024 Recommendations¹
(The March 2024 Recommendations are attached.)

While many of the observations and recommendations from the February 2004 recommendations for this beach are generally still applicable and are attached, it was felt that a fresh look at beach accessibility would be most helpful. This is because significant parts of this beach and some of the entrances/routes to the beaches have been significantly altered due to winter storms and then from the resultant restoration efforts. Thus unlike the other beach updates, you will **not** see a red italicized progress report on each recommendation. Overall, unfortunately despite the opportunity presented by the restoration work, with one exception, overall accessibility has not been improved. The one exception is the installation of a ramp to the wooden structure that houses the changing stalls and porta potties in what was previously marked Path 5.

Again, in conducting these most recent visits the USDA Forest Service standards were used.² Where relevant there is reference to the previous configurations, and as noted the original 3/24 evaluation report and recommendations which is based on observations prior to the restoration work is attached.

As with the 3/2024 report, these are recommendations, and there remain several different options to make one or more of the beach routes fully accessible. It will ultimately be up to the responsible to the Town officials to make the choices and implement the necessary actions to bring the beach up to standard. However, to some degree the observations below do point out some of the pros and cons and other factors of each option to aid in the decision making. And we would be happy to meet to discuss the options and the various factors. We had requested an recommended the development of an action plan by Edgartown, as we did with the other towns, county and other beach operators, but have not received one.

Observatons of Katama (South) Beach on September 3 and thereafter

Note: Only one or no more than two of the entrances to this beach must be becoming fully accessible unless it be shown that is not possible. However, each entrance is discussed to help determine which one or two of the entrances would be the most suitable.

Right Fork entrance/route --1st beachgoer entrance

Most or all of the previous parking, including the accessibility parking remains the same. There are three accessible spots adjacent to the dressing and bathroom areas. Surface area is firm and

¹ 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 and therefore were done before the winter storms and the ensuing beach erosion and restoration and alterations. This update was based on a 9/3/24 site visit and observations before and after the 9/3 visit all in the summer months. Observations and findings were based 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>.

²See note 1.

accessible in and around this small accessible parking area until approaching the beach entrance area where it gets sandy prior to reaching the wooden walkway.

Bathroom and changing rooms remain the same (2 of 7 enclosures are believed to be accessible). There is also a ramp leading up to them. The ramp itself appears compliant, however as previously noted, there is beach sand around and prior to the beginning of the ramp.

As was previously the case there is a wooden walkway (about 125-150 feet) that goes onto the beach but ends well before the high-water mark. The width is adequate at about 5-6 wide and unlike previous walkway, the surface is firm leading to and at the entrance to the wooden walkway. However, it only reaches the lifeguard station No. 3. The highwater mark is another 75 to 100 feet away. Parts of grade are compliant, but like the previous wooden walkway, most of route is too steep, particularly the middle section which has a moderate grade. The ramp also has 4-5 gaps over ½ inch wide, a couple being several inches wide.

New Unauthorized area next to Right Fork

A closed gate and sign indicates that this dirt road is an unauthorized area,. This dirt road route (which can accommodate vehicles) runs parallel to Atlantic Drive for about 200 feet, then curves toward the beach for another 200 or so feet where it reaches the beach entrance. The whole route is relatively level even to the beach, and thus all or some of it could potentially and somewhat easily be made an ADA compliant route. While the total distance is about 400 feet, a cut in at about 250 feet where it curves could become an accessible route for beachgoers. A bus stop was created or exists about 150 feet from the right fork entrance, indented from the road into the land by about 18 feet and runs about 60 feet long

This current “unauthorized” area is mentioned as it is one of several possible entrances (others discussed below) which could provide a more fully accessible route from the road to the beach and highwater mark than for example the current right fork entrance. The grade to the beach from this route (as well as others) is relatively level. Moreover, along where this lengthy route, curves, there is already a pedestrian-like path from the road that runs into and intersects with this wider dirt road. Making the route accessible using this path would shorten the distance from the road and parking area to the beach. It could be shortened still further if a new path was cut about 100 feet further east

2nd beachgoer entrance about .18 miles from Right fork entrance.

Entrance from the road onto path has a several inch drop. Easily addressed if this were to become an accessible entrance. Pathway/route about 210 feet to beginning of the beach and is wide enough. Currently consists of all beach sand. There is about another 60 feet to high water mark, but about 25 feet is quite steep. And probably not easy to overcome. There is a crosswalk on the road to the entrance of this pathway/route.

Observation Note

The above area (2nd beachgoer entrance and beach) and particularly 200-300 east encompasses a section that is quite level not only from the road to the beach but to the highwater mark thus providing an especially suitable topography for accessibility. This area which encompasses the next two or possibly three entrances below does not have the challenges presented by dunes, naturally

steep slopes or substantial drop offs from the beach to the water's edge that exist in other parts of the beach.

Former entrance

Approximately 300 feet from the 2nd beachgoer entrance near the beginning of this more level area, there is what appears to be an old pathway, that if redone could more easily become an accessible path/route all the way to the high-water mark. The route is straight and more direct and therefore shorter as well as being quite level

3rd entrance about .23 miles from Right fork entrance.

(Observation Note: In weighing relevant factors this entrance seems to be the best candidate to become "the" accessible entrance because of features it already possesses (e.g. changing area and porta potties), its level grade and relative ease with which it could be made accessible.)

Like some of the other entrances, there is a several inch drop from the road onto path which could easily be addressed. The sand pathway is of sufficient width. A firm surface would have to be created or installed. The pathway curves somewhat about half-way to the beach and in total is about 240 feet long to the beach entrance. It is quite level with only minimal grades with the exception of the end of the pathway just before the beach. There the grade both to and from the beach becomes moderate. However just before that slope there is an opening in the fence and informal pathway of about 40 feet in length that cuts more diagonally toward the beach, thus minimizes that steeper grade. It is suggested that the "informal path" be incorporated into the route to the beach to avoid the steeper grade presented by the current route. Either way, a firm surface (e.g a mat) would then have to be extended to the high-water mark.

No beach wheelchair present on the September 3, 2024 visit, though there had been one observed during previous summer visits.

4th entrance about .6 miles from Right fork entrance.

210 feet route from road to beach entrance consisting of all sand, followed by about an 18 foot somewhat steep drop onto the beach which is then followed by a 27 foot moderate slope to the high-water mark. The referenced steep area could be mitigated by installing at the beach entrance before the steeper slope a 100 foot or so wooden walkway or mat going in an easterly or westerly direction (parallel to the beach) thus avoiding that initial slope onto the beach. A mat perpendicular to the walkway would then be needed to the high-water mark.

5thnd entrance (aka sign former path 2) about .8 miles from Right fork entrance.

Some vertical parking within 30 or so feet for about 5-6 vehicles. Pathway shorter and direct but steeper on the upside and downside. It is about 160 feet to beach entrance and then 30 feet to the high-water mark. Lifeguard station adjacent. There are three porta potties about 200 feet east of this route during the Season. Not determined if one is accessible.

Richard Cohen, Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities
September 30, 2024

