

# *Paddling and People with Disabilities*



*Janet Zeller*

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# Why, What and Where

- Why paddling and people with disabilities?
- What do program providers need to know?
- Where are some resources for more information?

# Why Paddling?



















57 million people have a disability







Population is aging....





**People recreate with their friends and family.**





5 of these 11 paddlers have a significant disability.

# Terminology

A Practical Example...

Persons with Disabilities  
Accessible

“buzz words” like physically challenged,  
differently-abled, specially enabled.....

Don't use them

**Not** Handicapped  
= “H Word”



*And there are the laws....*

# The laws address accessibility through

- Facilities

- Programs

# Accessibility:

*Federal agencies:* (by the agency, on federal lands, or with federal funds)

- Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968:
  - New construction / alteration is to comply with the applicable accessibility requirements.
  
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:

Programs and activities are not to exclude a qualified person just because they have a disability

...unless their participation would fundamentally alter the program.

  - Applies to:
    - Federal agencies
    - Businesses / organizations receiving federal funds or using federal lands for its program.



# Where does it say...

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990:
  - Programs and facilities are not to exclude a qualified person just because they have a disability.
  - New construction/alteration is to comply with the applicable accessibility requirements.
  - ADA applies to:
    - State and local governments
    - Public accommodations
      - Businesses, organizations and other entities.....  
that are open to the public.



Facilities must comply with applicable.....

# Accessibility and....

- *Universal Design of Launches & Landings:*
- *2010 ADA Standards for Water Access Facilities:*
- Wednesday 9/11  
10 AM  
Janet Zeller  
U.S. Forest Service
- Wednesday 9/11  
10:45 AM  
Bill Botten  
U.S. Access Board

at Smithfield Center



**Programs are to provide integrated access  
...a qualified person must not be denied participation  
only because they have a disability.**



*ADA of 1990 and Section 504 of 1973 Rehab. Act*

The laws put the responsibility on those providing the program .....

to ensure that a qualified person with a disability can participate in that program ... “at equal” ..with “independence, integration and dignity”.

**ADA of 1990 and Section 504 of 1973**

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**ADA of 1990 and Section 504 of 1973**



- Does every person... including every person with a disability.. have to be allowed to participate?
  - Yes....
  - but only IF that person is “qualified”.
    - = meets the non-discriminatory essential eligibility requirements/criteria (ECC) for that program\*.

\* Rehab Act: 29 USC 794; 7 CFR 15e.103.4 (USDA); 43 CFR 17.202(k)(4)(USDOJ); ADA Title II 42 USC 12131(2) and 28 CFR 35.104.



# “qualifications”

- Are there participation requirements for the programs you provide?
  - Participation requirements = essential criteria to be eligible
- Same essential eligibility criteria must applied to Everyone.

# Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC)

- EEC= the basic functions essential for “safety” (risk management) that every person must be able to do to participate in that program .
- The question for every person who wants to participate
  - Does that person meet the EEC for that program?

# Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC)

- Who writes the EEC ?
  - The program provider
    - EEC must be based only on the participants ability to perform the basic essential skills required for “safety” (risk management) in that activity.



# What must be in an EEC?

The benchmark skills needed for safety:

- Risk management related to safety— such as enter, exit, capsize and self rescue considerations?
- Can a companion assist in some or all skills and still meet the “safety” essential?
- Must be applied to ALL participants.
  - (written in non-discriminatory language)



## Example: *Possible basic E.E.C. for a tour lead by a canoe outfitter*

*Each participant must ...*

- Be able to tolerate water between X and X degrees and bright sunlight for X minutes or more.
- Have the ability to follow verbal and/or visual instructions.



## *EEC Example continued....*

### *Each participant must ...*

- Wear all protective equipment recommended/required.
- Enter and exit the canoe independently or with the assistance of a companion.
- Remain seated and balanced with the use of adaptive equipment if necessary.
  - Adaptive equipment must not inhibit a wet exit.






## *EEC Example continued....*

- *Each participant must ...*
- In the event of a capsize each person must have the ability to independently:
  - get out from under the watercraft;
  - remain face up in the water with the aid of a lifejacket;
  - make progress to the shoreline.

# Post the EEC

- Where information about the program is provided:
  - Your website
  - Brochures
  - Waivers
  - ETC.

# Accessible Outreach

- Kiosks etc.:
  - Reach Ranges (48 inches max.), Operable Controls (ADASAD/ABAAS).
- Signage:
  - Sharp color/contrast, 3/30/3 format
  - Caution on overuse of ISA 
- Web accessibility:
  - Federal agencies Section 508
    - Webpages screen reader compliant, etc.



Resources....

# Canoeing and Kayaking for People With Disabilities



Canoeing and Kayaking for People With Disabilities

Zeller

American Canoe Association



**Janet A. Zeller**  
American Canoe Association

# *Canoeing and Kayaking for People with Disabilities*

- General guidelines and legal requirements.
- Checklists
- Disabilities and their implications for paddling---  
teaching suggestions
- Adaptation how-tos & lots of adaptations.
- Rescues and Paddling Trip Tips
- Essential Eligibility Criteria

## FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENT UPPER LIMB (ARM AND HAND)



### Commonly Related Conditions

arthritis, cerebral palsy, hemiplegia, quadriplegia, multiple sclerosis

### Possible Implications for Paddling: Teaching Suggestions and Adaptations

#### Weakness in forearm or hand and unable to grasp paddle firmly

For a paddler who has difficulty holding a paddle firmly, try a lightweight, unfeathered, straight-shaft paddle. If the paddler still has difficulty, an adaptation for just the weaker hand may be enough to provide sufficient paddle control. If not, adapt for both hands, adding to the adaptation's complexity as necessary.

At first a hand adaptation may feel tight enough; however, as the person begins to paddle, he may find his hands slipping out of the adaptation after every few strokes. In that case, first give some pointers based on your observation of the paddler's technique before rushing to change the adaptation.

Examples of technique tips to try first:

- Encourage the paddler to push with one hand while pulling with the other hand. To conserve energy, the paddler can relax the hand that is pushing.
- Sea kayakers or lake paddlers may want to use more of a touring stroke than a power forward stroke. During the touring stroke, the paddle shaft is held in a more relaxed, lower position relative to the water surface, and the paddle blade moves farther from the kayak very naturally. The paddle moves less forcefully through the water, so the shoulders, arms, and hands can conserve energy.
- Ensure that the paddler slices up with the paddle blade's edge coming out of the water cleanly at the stroke's end rather than lifting the flat face of paddle blade up from the water and in doing so lifting the water with it. Rotating the torso, if possible, not only provides additional power for the stroke, but also makes the slicing and lifting motion more natural.



Developing a paddle grip adaptation.  
Photo courtesy of  
Northeast Passage-NH.

### Oversized paddle grip (canoe or kayak)

An oversized grip helps paddlers who have difficulty fully closing their hands to hold the paddle more comfortably (see figure 8.1). This grip adaptation requires only two simple items: duct tape and pipe insulation foam. Wrap the paddle shaft and grip with a 6-inch (15 cm) length of foam where the hand will be gripping the paddle shaft; then tape the foam in place. You can adjust the size by trimming the foam or wrapping the tape tighter around the area. Apply the tape carefully to avoid folds and creases that can easily create blisters or wounds from abrasion.



Figure 8.1  
Oversized paddle grip.

### Bicycle style paddle grips

Bicycle style paddle grips can be cut, placed on the paddle, and secured with tape (see figure 8.2). Grips with finger grooves help the paddler keep her hand placement on the shaft as she grasps the paddle.

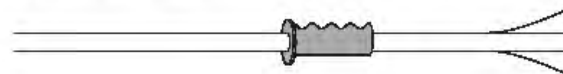


Figure 8.2  
Bicycle style paddle grip.

### Inner-tube paddle grip adaptation on a paddle shaft (canoe or kayak)

The inner-tube paddle grip is an easy and inexpensive adaptation that can compensate for a lack of grip strength (see figure 8.3). It requires only pieces of a used mountain bike inner tube and cable or zip ties. If a person also needs the oversized grip, build the oversized grip first.

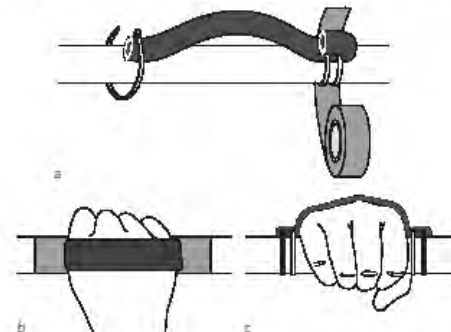


Figure 8.3  
Mountain bike inner-tube paddle grip: (a) construction, (b) top view, and (c) front view.



# Adaptive Paddling Workshops





# Commercial Adaptations

## ■ Creating Ability:



[creatingability.com](http://creatingability.com)

# *Summary*

- Accessibility is more than a legal requirement, it is an opportunity to open more programs to more people.
- Through the use of EEC, people with and without disabilities can participate more safely in programs.
- **Both** the integration of people with disabilities and safety/ risk management can be achieved.





# Inclusive Paddling



# Resources

- Toolbox=

*Canoeing and Kayaking for People with Disabilities*,  
by Janet Zeller (2009)

-available from the ACA and other sources.

- Adaptive Paddling Workshops:

- 4 day in-depth session
- Classroom, hands-on, working with experienced instructors and with a novice paddler who has a disability.
- Annual Schedule at  
[http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=Courses\\_Adaptive](http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=Courses_Adaptive)

# Resources

- Commercial Adaptations: *Creating Ability*  
<http://www.creatingability.com>
- U.S. Forest Service Accessibility website:
  - <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/accessibility>
- Additional questions: [jzeller@fs.fed.us](mailto:jzeller@fs.fed.us)



