Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

Key Findings and Recommendations
Improving Accessibility
for Visitors with Disabilities

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Jim Northup, Park Superintendent

Project Coordinators
Chris Case, Facility Manager
Greg Bruff, Chief of Interpretation & Education
Steve Howard, Maintenance Supervisor

National Center on Accessibility

Dr. Sherril York, Executive Director

Project Team
Jennifer Skulski, Director-Marketing & Special Projects
Brent Wells, Visiting Research Associate

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1. Background

Approximately one in five Americans has a functional impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, and one in seven American families are affected by a family member with a disability. Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act more than 20 years ago, we are seeing Americans traveling with higher expectations regarding the level of accessibility to national parks and other major tourism destinations.

Considerable planning efforts have been underway at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, the majestic park located along 40 miles of Lake Superior shoreline. Both a General Management Plan (GMP) and Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) have recently been completed to guide park planning over the next 20+ years. As a result of comprehensive planning, improved access for visitors with disabilities has been identified as a priority. Upon request of the Park, a team from the National Center on Accessibility (NCA) conducted a two-day on-site consultation to review access for visitors with disabilities to interpretive, exhibit, and audio-visual programs and physical facilities.

The National Park Service and the National Center on Accessibility at Indiana University have a cooperative agreement that dates back to 1992. Through this cooperative agreement, NCA is able to conduct training, technical assistance and research for including people with disabilities in parks, recreation and tourism. Over the last five years, NCA has conducted accessibility assessments of more than 50 national parks and provided recommendations for improving access to programs and facilities for visitors with disabilities. NCA recommendations for access improvements to parks have included parks such as Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Everglades National Park, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, San Antonio Missions National Historic Park, Harry S. Truman National Historic Site, Montezuma Castle National Monument, and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. NCA familiarity with the different types of NPS assets, operations, and the facility management system, has enabled these units to convert work order and cost estimates to requests for funding while prioritizing accessibility improvements to the benefit of park visitors with disabilities.

It should be noted that the nature of the scope of work for this project was specific to a two-day on-site consultation including tour of major facilities and meeting with park staff. The following report includes a summary of findings and recommendations to make the park experience more accessible to visitors with disabilities. This report does not include the greater level of detail that would be presented following a comprehensive accessibility assessment. The more comprehensive assessment, conducted either internally by the accessibility management team or externally by contractor, is highly recommended as the next phase of this transition planning process.

2. Park Purpose, History and Themes

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore was created in 1966 as the first national lakeshore and with the purpose of preserving the diminishing shoreline and providing public recreation opportunities. The park is framed by spectacular geological cliffs along the shoreline. The shoreline offers inspirational scenic vistas, 200 ft high rock forms, sand dunes, unspoiled beach and forest.

The Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) was completed for the Park in 2010. The LRIP identifies primary interpretive themes of Change, Diversity, Protection and Magnificence. Change is highlighted by the dramatic landscape and constantly changing geologic processes. Diversity is illustrated through variety of habitats and species within the forests, wetlands, dunes, rivers and lakes. This theme is also

illustrated through the various people that have traveled through and lived in the area. Protection is a primary interpretive theme whereas the park has been established for protection of the Lakeshore resources including management of the land, water, and people. The Lakeshore is the only NPS area authorized by congress with a legislated buffer zone. Magnificence as a primary interpretive theme is supported by scenic viewing areas and trails whereby visitors can benefit from the beauty, inspiration, seclusion and refuge that is Pictured Rocks.

Secondary interpretive themes of cultural and natural history provide other learning experiences for visitors. Most notable of the Lakeshore history is its contribution to maritime navigation through the interpretive experience at the Au Sable Light Station.

Primary opportunities for visitor experiences include:

- Self-guided interpretation of the national lakeshore;
- Ranger-led talks and tours;
- Hiking trails;
- Camping (RV, tent and backcountry);
- Hunting;
- Fishing;
- Beach use, boating, canoeing and sea kayaking;
- Concession-operated tour boat cruises; and
- Winter activities such as cross-country skiing and snowmobiling.

3. Referenced Standards and Guidelines

The National Park Service is legislatively mandated to provide accessible facilities and programs for their visitors with disabilities. Based on these mandates, the National Center on Accessibility utilizes the following accessibility standards and guidelines for their assessment:

- Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 as amended (U.S. Access Board, 2004; General Services Administration, effective date May 8, 2006);
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1978, Section 504;
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 508;
- NPS Director's Order #42: Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs and Service;
- National Park Service Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media (August 2009);
- Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas (U.S. Access Board, October 19, 2009);
- Principles of Universal Design;
- Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design;
- NPS Audio-Visual Accessibility Initiative for Visitors with Disabilities D24(2420) (October 20, 2006); and
- Revised Draft Guidelines for Accessible Public Rights-of-Way (U.S Access Board), November 23, 2005).

4. General

Park management views the new GMP as the critical document to plan, manage and protect the Park for the next generation. As the only national park with a legislated buffer zone, planning efforts focus on the balance of protecting resources while facilitating economic development in the region. County road H58 has been paved within the last three years and is expected to bring more visitor traffic. Traditionally it has been difficult for larger RVs to make the long gravel stretch required to access more serene areas of the Park. For the first time in the park history, RV traffic is navigating newly paved areas to access the Park. This was even evident during the onsite visit to a trailhead where the parking area was full and the drive was lined with five or six recreational vehicles and/or trailers.

The GMP calls for improved accessibility for visitors with disabilities in the Park. However, it does not address specifics as to what facility assets require barrier removal. An extensive accessibility condition assessment of the Park has not been completed. Accessibility improvements are addressed as secondary to other prioritized repair and rehabilitation projects. Since an extensive accessibility assessment is not current, Park planning documents lack an active transition plan where accessibility improvements have been prioritized and scheduled.

The startup meeting for the onsite visit was productive. Recognizing the importance of access for visitors with disabilities, the Park has budgeted $120,000 to begin work on accessibility improvements. Park management is seeking guidance on a variety of issues that present unique challenges for implementing accessibility improvements, among them: communication and delivery methods for interpretive programs, waysides and exhibits; design and dispersion of accessible camping units; beach access routes; and respect to the historic significance of the Au Sable Light Station. Park management expressed the importance that accessibility for visitors with disabilities be viewed in a holistic, “suite” of opportunities. By using this “big picture” approach, park management believes they will be able to prioritize accessibility improvements so that visitors can gain a quality experience when viewed in its entirety. To facilitate this planning process, park management would like to develop a matrix describing the accessibility of programmatic opportunities and experiences in the park.

5. Barriers to the Visitor Experience

Physical barriers to the environment and barriers to effective communication of information impede visitors with disabilities from gaining the total park experience and benefitting from the park story and major interpretive themes. It is critical that people with disabilities are able to participate and benefit from the same information, experiences and opportunities– of the same quality – as other visitors without disabilities.

Significant barriers to accessibility, outlined by disability groups, include but are not limited to the following:

5.1 Low Vision or Blindness

Information that is strictly provided in print, graphic and visual format is not accessible to people who are blind. Textual and graphic information that is presented should have sufficient font sizes, contrast and lighting to be the most accessible to people with low vision. People with low vision or blindness experience barriers accessing programs through lack of alternate formats for publications, lack of tactile experiences in exhibit areas, and an absence of audio description. Special consideration should be given to the development of primary and secondary publications, signs, maps, waysides and other

graphic/textual information. All new video productions should include audio description, a secondary track that provides description of the visual images presented on the screen. Interpretive staff training in audio description could also contribute to adaptive preparation for live presentations to benefit people with visual and cognitive impairments.

5.2 Hearing Loss or Deafness

Information that is provided in audio format such as park orientation videos or ranger-led talks can be a communication barrier for people with hearing loss or who are deaf. Audible information presented in videos or information kiosks should be open captioned. An assistive listening system to amplify the sound should be made available for people with hearing loss. This would include a system installed for assembly areas, such as the visitor center where the visitor orientation video is shown. A separate portable system should also be utilized for ranger-led talks. A procedure should be developed for visitors to request a sign language interpreter in advance. The policy and procedure should be publically posted through the park web site and other marketing publications. The procedure should also identify a central coordinating person/unit and the contractual service providers available locally/regionally.

5.3 Cognitive Impairments

When interpretive information is conveyed through large amounts of text the concepts and reading level may be too advanced for people with cognitive impairments. By default, interpretive information is often presented in signs, panels and waysides as advanced text with intricate illustrations or graphics. Interpretive content should be written and designed for delivery to benefit multiple modes of learning styles. Content should be presented at fifth to seventh grade reading levels with supporting graphics. Incorporation of tactile elements, assistive listening devices and audio described programs will also provide an enhanced learning opportunity for visitors with cognitive impairments.

5.4 Mobility Impairments

A continuous accessible route from point of entry to all features/amenities of the park is necessary to enable people with mobility impairments access to the suite of visitor experiences. Excessive running and cross slopes can impede people with disabilities from independently accessing the park. People with limited stamina and balance will benefit from pathways with shorter segments of lesser running slope, and resting intervals where benches are provided. Firm and stable surface material used on accessible routes is critical for people with mobility impairments and who may use assistive devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes or crutches.

6. Key Findings and Recommendations

The two-day site visit should be viewed as a "snapshot in time." The following findings have been identified and recommendations made based on the conditions and process of the park during the site visit. The recommendations presented in this section are purposed to address the "big picture" and overarching system of accessibility management at the Lakeshore.

6.1 Accessibility Management

With commitment from the Park Superintendent, an Accessibility Team for the Lakeshore has been formed and includes representation from facility management, maintenance, interpretation and education. It is critical to the success of any accessibility management program that these units work together to prioritize and plan for accessibility improvements, review policy, evaluate and measure successful implementation. The Accessibility Team should continue planning for improved access for

visitors with disabilities. The team should meet, at a minimum, semi-annually to review accessibility improvements. However, it should be prepared to meet more frequently on specific projects and during the review of policies/procedures. Whenever programs are planned, new facilities are constructed or maintenance is conducted, ask "how does accessibility apply in this circumstance?"

6.2 Professional Development and Staff Training

The accessibility standards under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) continue to undergo significant updates from the applicable standards used during the design and construction of existing park facilities. In 2012, the ABA is expected to be updated again with the release of final standards for outdoor developed areas including trails, campgrounds, picnic areas, viewing areas, and beaches. A commitment should be made to support ongoing staff training. Within the maintenance division, project team leaders should have training to develop a better understanding of the application of the accessibility standards and the "why" rationale to significant provisions. This training will serve to benefit the Park during repair/rehab projects to existing facilities and project supervision for renovations and new construction. Within the interpretation division, specialists should have training on program access for people with disabilities. All staff could benefit from seasonal staff training addressing customer service for people with disabilities.

6.3 Network

The accessibility standards are minimum guidance as to what constitutes an accessible feature. Wherever possible and reiterated in Director's Order 42, park personnel are encouraged to design above and beyond the minimum guidelines using, instead, the principles of universal design to benefit the widest spectrum of park visitors. The Accessibility Team should network with other parks and the regional accessibility coordinator to keep updated on the most current rulemaking, innovative projects and best practices in the field. The Accessibility Team should also keep contact with the Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL), as the primary resource serving people with disabilities in the Upper Peninsula. Public comment and feedback should be gathered from SAIL and other disability organizations regarding the prioritization of accessibility improvements and planned projects. These groups should also be notified when improvements are made to help publicize new access for prospective visitors with disabilities.

6.4 Balance Physical and Program Access

Planning for accessibility improvements to benefit people with disabilities can concentrate on physical access to the environment and fall short of addressing access to programs, activities and services. Planning should direct efforts at making the suite of visitor opportunities accessible to people with disabilities, starting with assessment of the programs, activities, services and opportunities made available through the park. Facilities serve to support these programs, activities, services and spectrum of opportunities. By looking at how the facility/asset/feature/amenity supports the suite of opportunities, the Accessibility Team will be better able to prioritize accessibility improvements. This approach will also serve much more effective than prioritizing facilities simply on the basis of structure and required corrective action.

6.5 Publications and Trip Planning Information

Information regarding the accessible features and facilities at the park should be posted on the park web site under Plan Your Visit > Accessibility. This information should include contact information and procedures for making disability-related requests, such as a sign language interpreter. The information should be updated seasonally to reflect the most current information and add new information from

completed projects. The park unigrid brochure and other primary publications should be formatted to large print, Braille and electronic formats. Consider utilizing the large print unigrid template available through Harpers Ferry Center.

6.6 Visitor Orientation

For people with visual impairments, it is difficult to understand the spatial relationship of the facilities within the park and the significance of the geological features of the cliff along the lakeshore. A new park map for kiosk signs is recommended to be designed using raised lines and tactile elements for significant points of interests such as location of the visitor center, campgrounds, trails, etc. A tactile map of the lakeshore and relationship of Lake Superior to the Great Lakes is recommended for the visitor center and other visitor points of entry to the Park. In addition, the creation of 3-dimensional models to be displayed at exterior locations is recommended to tactually convey the significant rock formations such as Miners Castle and the location of the Au Sable Light Station.

6.7 Waysides and Interpretive Exhibits

Interpretive waysides are located throughout the Park. The waysides are heavy with texts and graphics to convey the interpretive story. This format is not accessible to people with visual impairments. The Park has also started to refer visitors to use a cell phone number or scan a quick response code (QRC) to get more interpretive information at a site. The cell phone tour is not accessible to people with hearing loss, while the QRC is also not accessible to people with visual impairments. Neither method addresses access for people who do not have cell/smart phones or have plans with limited airtime. Unfortunately, the 2010 LRIP does not address how to make either the waysides or self-guided tour media accessible to people with disabilities. It is recommended that the Park develop a wayside plan, complementary to the goals of the LRIP whereby the interpretive themes are presented in multiple modes – text, graphics and audio. Further, any content delivered via cell phone number or QRC should be prepared for delivery in multiple modes accessible to all visitors.

6.8 Trail Access and Visitor Information

Hiking through the forested areas, to prominent water features and rock formations is considered one of the primary park experiences. Many of the trails have slopes and cross slopes that exceed the proposed accessibility guidelines for outdoor developed areas. It is recommended that all of the park trails are more thoroughly assessed to collect data on the trail length, distance to prominent features, average slope, cross slope, tread width and maximum grade. From this information, work orders can more accurately be developed to take corrective actions and make these trails accessible to the maximum extent required by the proposed guidelines. In addition, it is highly recommend that a design plan for trailhead signage and brochures be developed. All trails should have trailhead signage that includes a descriptive profile of the trail and objective information on slope, cross slope, maximum grade, obstacles and distances to prominent features. This information should also be made available in trail brochures. Through the provision of this objective information, visitors will be able to determine which trails and distances they will be able to traverse based on their individual abilities.

6.9 Picnic Areas

Picnic facilities and open space areas are located throughout the park. It is recommended that the proposed accessibility guidelines for outdoor developed areas be followed as a means to define accessible picnic units and picnic facilities. At each location, 20 percent of the total number of picnic units is proposed to be accessible. This includes use of an outdoor recreation access route linking the accessible features within the facilities, like the parking, picnic unit, shelter, campsite, comfort station,

or trailhead. This also includes a continuous 36 inch clear width around the perimeter of the accessible units and clear floor space for the wheelchair accessible seating locations at picnic tables.

6.9 Camp Sites

The site visit was limited to the Hurricane River and Little Beaver Lake campgrounds. Most of the "accessible" camp sites located throughout the park do not fully meet the proposed accessibility guidelines, are usually positioned next to restrooms, and lack dispersion within each loop. Campers with disabilities should have the same type of site selection choices as campers without disabilities. Accessible camping units should be designated at each campground. It is recommended that design services be utilized to develop model plans for accessible camping units accommodating recreational vehicles and tent camping. In addition, each camping facility should be evaluated to develop a dispersion model whereby the accessible camping units are positioned in choice locations throughout each facility. The current hold and release policy for the accessible camping units should be maintained to which the accessible camping units are the last of the first come/first serve to be occupied by non-disabled campers. In addition, it should be clearly posted at the camping facility kiosk that non-disabled occupants of the accessible camping units will be asked to move in the event a camper with a disability requires the accessible unit.

6.10 Beaches

Access to the beach and waterfront play is considered part of the visitor suite of opportunities at the Park. Currently, none of the beaches have accessible routes beyond the parking facilities. The proposed guidelines for outdoor developed areas call for beach access every ¼ mile, triggered upon new construction of a beach or during beach nourishment. It is recommended that beach access routes are created at each beach from the parking facility, over the sand and to the high tide level. Concentrated efforts should begin at the Hurricane River day use area, Sandpoint and the new Lake Superior Overlook. These areas should be prioritized for construction based on the most frequently used areas.

6.11 Concession Cruises

The most spectacular views of the lakeshore and geologic formations are found offshore on the boat-excursion tour run by Pictured Rocks Cruises. It is recommended that the Park continue work with the concessionaire to support prioritization, planning and implementation of accessibility improvements so that people with disabilities can fully participate and benefit from this excursion experience.

7. Recommendations by Visitor Use Area

The following recommendations are presented by location/visitor use area and purposed to provide a general focus for improving access at each location.

7.1 Interagency Visitor Center

An interagency visitor center is staffed at Munising. This location is often a first point of arrival for visitors new to the park. Personnel are available through the information desk to ask questions. A small interpretive exhibit area focuses on the geologic interests and animal habitats of the area. A 15-minute orientation video plays in an adjacent classroom with 15-20 person occupancy.

To assist visitors with orientation and wayfinding, a tactile map with raised lines and tactual features is recommended for this space. This tactile map is also recommended for repetitive installation at other high traffic destinations within the park.

The story of this land and waterfront is considered one of the main interpretive themes. However, there are not very many opportunities for visitors to gain information on the spatial relationship of this lakeshore to the entirety of Lake Superior or the other Great Lakes. A three-dimensional tactile model of the lakeshore is recommended to provide visitors with a dimensional orientation to the area. Another series of tactile models would replicate significant geologic formations. A tactile map would signify the relationship of this lakeshore within Lake Superior and the surrounding Great Lakes. This series of tactile models is recommended for repetitive installation at high visitor use areas and as a complement to locations where ranger-led talks are presented.

The video shall be projected with open captions displayed for all showings.

7.2 Miners Castle

This is one of the busiest day use areas within the boundaries of the Lakeshore. It is specifically sought out for the spectacular view of the Miners Castle formation. Two boardwalk scenic overlooks have been constructed, one at the contact station and another down a trail. The contact station/gift shop and restrooms are constructed on raised boardwalk with at least a 12” change in elevation. Ramp access to this area is at the rear and the accessible routes are not easily seen by visitors from entry at the parking lot. Install directional signage to the ramps. Install handrails at each ramp.

The safety barrier at the overlook is constructed with two small plexi cut outs for viewing by people seated in wheelchairs or children. One of the windows was obstructed by tree foliage. Reconstruct the overlook platform with new safety barrier material that allows for unobstructed viewing. The installation of an additional wheelchair-accessible telescope is recommended.

While the trail leads off to the lower viewing platform, visitors are unaware of the trail conditions to access the prominent viewing area. The trail is a combination of asphalt, boardwalk, and stairs. Install trailhead signage for the paved trail to the lower viewing platform with a description of the trail profile including average running slope, cross slope, maximum grade, distance, and obstacles like the stairways.

7.3 Miners Beach

A new Huffcutt restroom building has been installed at this location. However, the parking lot surface is gravel and lacks an accessible firm and stable surface as part of the accessible route. It is recommended to pave either the entire lot or at least the accessible parking spaces. Signage should be installed to designate each of the accessible parking spaces.

An information kiosk with tactile raised line map of this area is recommended along with the installation of trailhead signage. The trailhead signage should give a profile of the trail with average running slope, cross slope, maximum grade, distance, and obstacles.

To provide access to the programmatic opportunity of the beach and waterfront, a beach access route should be constructed. Design options could include installation of a switchback boardwalk from the parking lot down to the beach elevation. For the beach access route across the sand to the high tide level an option may be to install a converted plastic floating dock system into the sand. This would

provide more permanent installation for inclement weather where a portable path system would likely drift away.

This site may also provide an opportunity for installation of an accessible kayak launch.

7.4 Miners Falls Trail

This is a 1.5 mile trail. This area is often recommended to visitors with limited time in the park so that they may view and experience a wide range of park features including the rock formations, beach, forested trail and waterfall. The current trail has segments that exceed the maximum allowable running slope for trails. The trail should be fully assessed and design services consulted on how the trail may be re-routed to meet the accessibility guidelines.

7.5 Munising Falls

Park staff consider this the best accessible opportunity for a trail experience to view the falls. However there are segments of the trail that have a slope up to 12% and cross slope up to 9%. The entire trail should be assessed and design services consulted to make the trail accessible. The restroom building was undergoing renovation during the site visit.

7.6 Boathouse at Sand Point Headquarters

A former U.S. Coast Guard station is located at the Boathouse at the Sand Point Headquarters. The vessel is taxied out of the boathouse and made available for public display and ranger-led talks during the high visitation of the summer months. The 15 ft-plus change in elevation makes viewing the vessel within the boathouse impossible. Since the vessel is meant to be outside on display during interpretive programming, it is recommended a design plan for the accessible routes and viewing stations be developed.

7.7. Au Sable Light Station

The Au Sable Light Station is located at the end of a 1.5 mile historic gravel road. This road is closed to public traffic and requires visitors to hike to the destination in order to participate in the interpretive program and light station tour. During the summer, public transportation is provided on a limited Saturday schedule for visitors who have difficulty making the distance. The Single Keeper's historic former residence is used as a contact station, gift shop and interpretive exhibit space. There is a 6-8 ft change in elevation to the front entrance. There is an equivalent change in elevation to the Double Keeper's residence and light station.

Develop a long range interpretive plan for the Au Sable Light Station. The plan should define the major interpretive themes and these themes should be the priorities for creating an accessible experience at the light station. Special consideration should be paid to address content for people who are not physically able to go to the top of the light station. This could be achieved through the development of a virtual tour kiosk or video and display of key artifacts at the fog horn building. With modifications to the existing concrete sidewalk, this path to the foghorn building could be made completely accessible and serve as an ideal educational destination and resting spot for people who cannot physically access the light tower. Consider developing an orientation video for the light station that can be shown in the fog horn building and other locations in the park.

The roadway trail to the light station should undergo assessment including cultural landscape evaluation. It should be determined whether the surface can be either paved or converted to a crusher-

fine limestone mix with equal parts quarter-minus stone and dust or other firm and stable surface. While the occasionally scheduled public transportation provides access for people with mobility impairments, the schedule does not accommodate visitors on days outside the transportation schedule. A procedure should be put into place whereby visitors can request accessible transportation 24-48 hours to benefit from the light station experience.

7.8 Hurricane River Campground

There are 22 camping units in this campground, two of which are designated as accessible. However, they do not meet the proposed accessibility guidelines for outdoor developed areas. Premium locations are considered those located on the lake view side. The camping units are located adjacent to the inaccessible vault toilets and across the street from the premium sites that have lake views.

The park is currently in the concept planning stages with Denver Service Center (DSC) to revitalize the day use area of the camping facility which includes access to the amphitheater and route to beach. The subtle elevation change here may present the best location for providing beach access on this east end of the park. It is recommended that the plan development with DSC include a beach access route from the parking to the high tide level, day use features, and layout for accessible camping units. The accessible camping units should be dispersed between all types/classes of camping opportunities.

7.9 Lake Superior Overlook

This location is a newly designated scenic viewing location that was under construction at the time of the site visit. The pull-off parking lot has been paved with asphalt and precast vault toilet building installed. There is up to a 30 ft change in elevation from the parking lot and scenic overlook to the beach/water level. Originally beach access was not planned for this area. However, during the time of construction, visitors have begun parking here and traversing the steep dunes to gain access to the beach. Park staff has expressed concerns over the damage this has caused to the dune and proposed building a stairway to channel visitors to the beach. It should be noted that as this is new construction, any newly constructed path to the beach should include an accessible route for visitors with disabilities.

7.10 Little Beaver Lake Campground

This camping facility has eight sites in a loop aside Little Beaver Lake. The single camping unit designated as accessible is located next to the new vault toilet. It is recommended that accessible camping opportunities be dispersed among different types of experiences. In this case, at least one camping unit is recommended for placement with a lake view and a greater distance from the restroom. The site should be graded and configured to accommodate the clear floor space necessary for the accessible camping units.

7.11 Sand Point

This busy day use area provides an opportune location for beach access with minimal grade change. Design services are recommended to be consulted to create a beach access route from the parking lot across the beach to the high tide water level.

7.12 Pictured Rocks Cruises

In the present condition, none of the five-vessel fleet for the Pictured Rocks Cruises meets the minimum accessibility guidelines for passengers to board and ride. It is recommended that efforts be concentrated on making one vessel fully accessible to start. During the site visit, the *Miners Castle* was determined to be the vessel most feasible. Improvements should include constructing a new ramped

gangway from the pier to the vessel. There is a 14" change in level into the passenger seating area. This area could be retrofitted with a portable ramp or platform lift to lower a wheelchair user into the cabin. The last row of seating should be removed to provide wheelchair accessible seating and adjacent companion seating shoulder to shoulder.

Develop a procedure for acquiring a sign language interpreter. This procedure should be made readily available to the public, including posting on the website. It should include instructions and contact information for making the request for accommodation. For day-of ticket purchasers, who do not make the accommodation request in advance, provide a written copy of the narration. This procedure is already in place. However, upon review it is evident that the tour guide elaborates in much greater detail. Therefore it is recommended that the document be rewritten to more accurately reflect the content of the narrated tour. Also consider inserting numbered stations in the document with photos of prominent features to orientate passengers with the corresponding stops along the tour. A visitor orientation video is shown at the ticket office/gift shop and is available for purchase. This production is ideally presented with the captions on for all showings for people with hearing loss or who may be deaf.

As accessibility improvements are made, be sure to update the concessionaire web site and brochure. Information on the accessibility of the cruise tour and procedures for requesting accommodations will help people with disabilities better plan for their visit to the Lakeshore.

8. Summary

Park management has clearly demonstrated a commitment to improving access for visitors with disabilities through the establishment of an accessibility management team. This on-site visit and discussion with the NCA team is but one more step in the multi-phased process for transition planning. Upon receipt of the recommendations presented in this report, park management is encouraged to continue the planning process with the initiation of a comprehensive accessibility assessment and the development of accessibility-focused work orders for the Facility Management Software System (FMSS).