

DRAFT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

PUBLIC ACCESS

Estimated Percent Complete: 95%

OUTCOME: By 2025, add 300 new public access sites, with a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for boating, swimming and fishing, where feasible.

FACTORS INFLUENCING

- **Limited Public Sector funding for public access-** hampers the development of new sites and creates a backlog of major maintenance projects
- **Land use / ownership-** available land for access is limited by commercially developed waterfronts, residential uses, restrictions from Military installations and hydro-electric power facilities, as well as privacy and liability concerns from private land owners
- **Public Lands-** In some cases access on public lands is limited due to resource management concerns, insufficient staffing levels, or restrictions imposed by the type of funding used in the property's acquisition or development
- **Permitting Requirements-** permitting for sites can be a lengthy and complicated process, that can hinder new site development
- **Universal Accessibility-** further and earlier planning is necessary to insure sites comply with federal and state guidelines for ensuring access by a population with diverse physical capabilities
- **Local government capacity-** Many local governments face challenges when trying to create or enhance public access such as, lack of funding for land acquisition, capital improvements or ongoing maintenance, as well as concerns over liability and limited staff.
- **Conflicts among users-** conflict can develop when a site is designated or perceived to be designated for one use but is used in other ways, when use of an access site impacts or may be perceived to impact adjacent landowners and community (ex. parking issues, litter, noise), it can also arise among users based on who is perceived to have paid for the access site (ex. ramps paid for by taxes / fees on power boat owner, but heavily used by paddlers)
- **Railroads-** Railroad companies are generally opposed to granting at-grade crossings of rail lines for either vehicles or pedestrians, stating liability as their primary concern.
- **Climate Change-** The transition zone between water and land is where public water access sites are located and it is also where the first impacts of sea level rise will become evident. While most marine or water-related facilities are designed to be able to survive the frequent storm events and to a degree hurricanes, less emphasis is given to designs which address sea level change.

GAPS

- Lack of public access in urban centers that could provide increased public access for a large, diverse population
- Several specific stretches of waterways and bay shoreline were identified in the Access Plan where there are significant gaps in public access.
- Lack of paddle-in camping sites make a multi-day trip down one of the Bay's rivers difficult without a place to go ashore and camp for the night

MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

- Make funding for public access a priority
- Carry out and support more detailed assessments and project design for potential sites
- Fill strategic gaps in access along water trails
- Incorporate identified proposed public access sites and actions in key plans
- Further examine urban public access issues and needs
- Work with private sector funders to develop access
- Engage in hydropower relicensing processes to expand public access
- Explore options for resolving railroad crossing liability
- Establish a process that ensures public access is considered in the planning of all appropriate transportation projects
- Explore potential for additional access on public lands
- Managing land control for water access using various instruments
- Fully address accessibility at public access sites
- Incorporate identified proposed public access sites and actions in key plans
- Enhance Public Access for a Diverse Population
- Build opportunities for citizen stewardship
- Managing Land Control for water access using various instruments
- Track Progress towards 300 site goal
- Enhance Public Access for a Diverse Population
- Address climate change and sea level rise projections when planning and developing new access sites