

Owen Park Way Beach

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

1. While not quite fully accessible, this is one of the most accessible beaches on the Island and commendably made so. This is due to previous town and state funding under the State Community Preservation Act.
2. It is recommended that one designated accessible space be added to the current pre-existing one in this 27-vehicle parking lot. *Not accomplished. The suggestion remains desirable due to the location and popularity of the beach.*
3. There is a well-constructed and maintained wooden walkway from the parking lot onto the beach that comes within about 15' of the high-water mark or more specifically a swimming or boat pier. The pier begins at the water's edge and projects out into the water over 25 feet. Beach mats could be placed and arranged from the walkway to provide an accessible route to the high-water mark. There are several alternatives.
 - A. Beach mats could be placed on one or preferably both sides of the wooden walkway (toward the end of the walkway), angled toward and running to the water's edge. This would be approximately at a 45-degree angle.
 - B. Or, one beach mat could be placed at the end of the wooden walkway extending directly to the pier. In that way all individuals would have access to the pier and to the high water mark. With that option it would be desirable to have short beach mats (about 10-15 feet) flaring out at a right angle from each side of the extended mat at the high water mark (which would be at or near the beginning of the pier).

Wooden walkway extends to the high-water mark. And there also continues to be a beach mat that extends out perpendicular from the walkway 15- 20 feet onto the beach sand. It is suggested that another mat be installed from the end of that mat to the high water mark parallel to the wooden walkway. Alternatively, one beach mat could replace the current mat running at about a 90-degree angle to the high-water mark.

- C. Would be happy to discuss to provide clarification or elaboration. Of course the beach manager or town officials may have other ways to achieve the same result, an accessible route to the high water mark.

Note: In using beach mats to extend the route, it will be necessary to ensure that where the mats and the wooden walkways or pier meet, there is no more than a ¼ inch rise from the mat to the walkway/pier. Beveling may be needed.

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 8/31/24 visit.

4. As the survey response indicated, this beach provides both a large beach wheelchair and a floating wheelchair. It is suggested, if already not being done, that the floating wheelchair be available only when lifeguards are present and water conditions permit.

Beach wheelchair present but not a floating wheelchair.

5. While the toilet and shower facilities are accessible, accessibility signage should be installed. It is noted when onsite in 10/23, one of the showers was not in working order.

Both shower facilities appear to be operational as well as the two bathrooms. All appear accessible. Shower facilities still do not have accessibility signage. Bathroom accessible signs need replacing as they are worn out and hard to read.

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

As the hill from Main Street to this beach is quite steep, is there public transportation that goes all the way to the beach entrance? This would be important for individuals with physical disabilities and older citizens and others who rely on public transportation and who would be challenged by the hill.

Richard Cohen, Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities
Original Recommendations' Report 3/2024, updated 10/11/24