

Lambert's Cove

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. The parking lot has 40-50 parking spaces, and it would be desirable to add an accessible parking space to the one that already exists. It could be at the "drop off spot." A universal accessible drop off spot could then be added to the left of the entrance.

A second accessible spot was added next to the pre-existing one as recommended. As a matter of practice, space to the left of the entrance is used as a universal drop off spot, according to the attendant, though it is not marked as such.

2. The route from the parking lot to the beach has many good accessible elements, and it appears well maintained against roots and rocks and other protrusions from the ground or the adjacent wooded areas. And at about 8' in width, the route is clearly wide enough and is level. However, only about 20-25% of the 500-600' route consists of a firm and stable surface. The rest consists of sand or beach sand. It is recommended that the entire route be made firm and stable.

No progress on this recommendation. In addition to the deficiencies noted above, beginning midway down the route, there are some large rocks mostly buried but sticking up 2-4 inches or so. As the rocks are partly or fully covered with sand, they are not easily seen and present a tripping hazard and certainly for someone with significant visual impairments.

3. The significant challenge is the hill at the end of the trail before the beach. The south slope is about 170 feet long and the north side about 150 feet, both very steep, far exceeding the maximum grade under federal and state accessibility specifications. We would like to explore whether there are alternatives to enable a wheelchair user or other individuals with mobility impairment to reach the beach without assistance. Switchbacking or alternative routes come to mind, but it may be that it is not feasible to make it fully accessible and thus come under one of federal/state exceptions.³ The survey response indicated that a wooden walkway is used. As our follow up occurred after the Season, it had apparently been removed.

An extensive wooden walkway is present as well as a five-foot wide, 30-40 foot beach mat as an approach to the hill and wooden walkway. Both the walkway and mat are in good condition. The walkway also has a railing. As to the steepness, it exceeds the allowable grades under the ADA and related standards to enable for example a wheelchair user or other person with a mobility

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 9/2/24 visit.

³ For allowable exceptions to accessibility under the USDA Accessibility Guidebook, pp. 76,31-35, go to: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Accessibility-Guide--Book.pdf>

impairment to navigate the route without assistance. It is not known whether alternatives have been explored and ruled out and one of the federal/state exceptions apply. See comments below on a possible alternative that may be worthy of exploration.

There are some discrete but important deficiencies within the existing framework which are relatively easily addressed. One is a drop from the end of the wooden walkway to the beach surface. It is about 4-6 inches and at a about 70-degree angle. This should be graduated or beveled so that rise is no more than a 1/2 inch rise or sloped to no more than 10 degrees.

Secondly, the route needs to be accessible all the way to the high-water mark. That could be accomplished by extending the wooden walkway or by installing a beach mat.

POSSIBLE ACCESSIBLE ALTERNATE ROUTE THAT MAY BE WORTHY OF EXPLORATION

Contiguous to the Lambert's Cove beach is the James Pond Preserve. Like Lambert's Cove, James Pond Preserve has a parking lot and a trail that leads to the same steep dune and the Lambert's Cove Beach. And like Lambert's Cove, parts of the James Pond trails are accessible, parts are not due to surface and width. Similarly, James Pond has mats at the approach approach to the steep dune and then and a wooden walkway over the dune. MV Land Bank who owns or controls the James Pond Preserve installed a metal stairway on the beach side of the dune descending to the beach and beach sand. The distance between the two beach entrances, once on the beach is about 200-300 feet.

Obviously, the dune at the James Pond location substantially exceeds the allowable slope for accessibility, as it does at the Lambert's Cove location. However, there may be a potential alternative worth exploring that could provide fully or substantially compliant access to the beach.

As the James Pond pathway reaches the dune, and just before it, to its westside there is a potential route that runs parallel to the dune in westerly direction all the way to the endpoint of the dune, thus providing a potentially level access route to the Lambert's Cove beach. It is distance of about 1/10 to 2/10 of a mile but is relatively level the whole way. It is not known whether that land is privately or publicly owned or owned by MVLB or subject to an easement or could be to enable the development of accessible route around the dune to the beach. These questions may be worth exploring given the beauty and popularity of the Lambert's Cove beach. A joint or cooperative effort and ultimately agreements between the Town, MVLB and possibly private landowner(s) would appear to be needed. It is suggested that the relevant parties at least begin a conversation about this idea to see if it at least potentially feasible from a legal or land use perspective.

4. While we understand from the survey response that there is a large wheelchair available during the Season, it is suggested that a floating wheelchair also be made available if lifeguards are present, water conditions permitting. *Did not see either type of wheelchair or lifeguards or a lifeguard stand.*

5. We also understand from the survey response that there is an accessible porta potty available during the Season. *Observed two porta potties in the parking lot just before pathway. Good location, but neither accessible.*

6. *For an update on the progress made on the cross-cutting recommendations with respect to this beach and Aquinnah's other beaches, see accompanying Progress report on those recommendations.*

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