

## **Advancing Universal Access to Waterfront Recreation Along the Hudson Estuary**

In recent years, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) has worked with multiple partners to increase Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant waterfront access along the 100 miles of shoreline on both sides of the Hudson River for people with disabilities and mobility issues.

In addition to enhancing opportunities for an often-underserved population, this project increases visitors to waterfront areas, such as beaches and boat launches, offering the opportunity for recreation-based economic impact for coastal communities.

The accessibility project began with an assessment in 2013 of 18 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) boat launch sites along the river. A December 2014 report included specific recommendations to bring each site into compliance with the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design; for example, removing a raised edge on a fishing pier entry ramp, marking handicapped parking, and lowering pier railings for wheelchair users to be able to use a fishing rod or crab trap.

### **NYSG Continues to Serve ADA**

In 2016, NYSG partnered with Cornell's Yang-Tan Institute at the Northeast Americans with Disabilities Act Center, Ithaca, NY; and the NYSDEC Hudson Estuary Program to assist the resource managers of public boat launch sites located along both sides of the Hudson River in understanding user accessibility issues as identified by a user perspective survey.

The project partners sponsored a workshop at the FDR Wallace Education Center, Hyde Park, NY, to review ADA guidelines and present accessibility options to site managers.

To date, five sites (municipalities/coastal communities) along the Hudson River from Albany south to Yonkers in NY's mid-Hudson region reported implementing physical changes, or actively scheduled changing some aspect of parks or boat launches based on information provided in the accessibility reports.



*ADA-access kayak launch ramp along NY's Hudson Estuary.  
Photo: N. Holochuck/NYSG*

In 2017, NYSG and Cornell will work specifically with interested site managers to develop transition plans for accessibility. Changes implanted via the plans will ultimately ensure that all visitors regardless of physical ability will be able to use recreational resources along the Hudson Estuary. Encouraging this increased access will enable tourism dollars to benefit nearby coastal businesses.

### **Partners:**

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson Estuary Program
- Northeast Americans with Disabilities Act Center
- Yang-Tan Institute of Cornell University

### ***The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is New York Resilient Communities & Economies***

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

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