

A Beach within Reach—An Overview

An Accessibility Project of Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard, Martha's Vineyard Community Services Disability Services, and the Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities

Sharing mutual concerns about barriers to accessibility at Martha's Vineyard beaches, Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard, Martha's Vineyard Community Services Disability Services, and the Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities¹ began meeting in early 2023 to discuss their concerns and potential responses. Their commitment to plan and implement a way forward became an initiative called, "A Beach within Reach."

Stated simply, the Purpose of "A Beach within Reach" is **to make our Island beaches accessible to people of all ages and abilities**. The following summarizes the intended elements of the multi-year, multi-dimensional initiative:

- Assess the current level of beach accessibility by conducting a survey of Martha's Vineyard beach managers, using federal standards and best practices as criteria.
- Use survey data to offer feedback to Island beach managers and to begin promotion of solutions.
- Make survey data available to develop information for beachgoers to use in determining the suitability of specific Island beaches for their use.
- Build public awareness of required accessibility features and equipment.

INITIATIVE PHASES and TIMELINE

In Phase I, from June-September 2023, Beach Managers across the Island completed online surveys of beach accessibility features, based on current law and best practices.

In Phase II, from September-October 2023, the Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities and trained volunteers visited the beaches to gauge and note onsite user experiences.

¹ Initially, the Island Disability Coalition was part of the coalition. Due to staffing changes, MVCS-DS assumed its role in the initiative.

Next in Phase III, which began in October 2023 and will continue through April 2024, project leaders have completed data analysis and will provide feedback to the Beach Managers with recommendations for accessibility improvements. Summaries of the study findings will become available on each of the partners' websites, provided to local media and delivered by presentations to varied interested audiences.

Phase IV, scheduled for Spring 2024, will provide opportunities for public comments to recommend near term and long-range improvements. Project leaders envision ongoing collaboration toward the development and implementation of action plans and improvements.

READ the RESULTS OF our WORK in 2023 and early 2024.

Follow the links to a Brief Narrative Report of the Project, a Report on the Accessibility of Martha's Vineyard Beaches by the Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Disabilities (with complete results of the survey of Beach Managers), the complete Beach within Reach Survey Slides in a PowerPoint presentation, and a brief Public Information Slide Set.

We invite you to learn more about the initiative and watch for updates of its progress. We're working together, **so everyone can enjoy a day at the beach.**

