

Outdoor Americans with Disabilities Act

The federal government manages approximately 640 million acres of land across the United States. This land belongs to the American people, whose taxpayer dollars support maintenance and management. Yet, much of the land is inaccessible to those with disabilities due to prohibitions on motorized vehicles and a lack of routes on federal lands.

Senator Lee introduced the Outdoor Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure that public land is accessible to all Americans, not just the able-bodied. This legislation defines “disability-accessible land” as one square mile with at least 2.5 miles of authorized roads accessible to motorized vehicles. It directs federal land management agencies to coordinate with state, local, and Tribal governments to determine which roads offer access to diverse recreation opportunities and prioritize access to those roads. The bill also requires that local stakeholders be involved in decisions regarding road closures in their communities.

Bill Specifics

- Defines disability-accessible land as one square mile of public land with at least 2.5 miles of authorized roads accessible to motorized vehicles or offroad vehicles.
- Requires the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, to prioritize updating travel management plans and motor vehicle use of the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service.
- When developing motor vehicle use maps, the Secretary concerned must:
 - Account for the length of roads in each square mile of public land under their management;
 - Prioritize roads that provide access to diverse recreation opportunities;
 - Coordinate with federal agencies, state, county, and local governments, and Tribal governments to determine which roads offer the best access to disability-accessible land; and
 - Have the authority to revise routes on public land in response to changes in local conditions.
- The Secretary concerned may not close roads that would disqualify land from disability-accessible status unless the road was for temporary emergency access or it is a threat to the health and safety of visitors.
- The Secretary concerned will provide notice of any proposed road closures, allow for a public comment period, and conduct a public hearing regarding the closure.
- For any roads closed, the Secretary concerned will nominate and establish a new road.
- Road closures and new roads will be categorically exempt from NEPA.
- Nothing in this Act establishes new roads or trails or prohibits the Secretary concerned from establishing new roads or trails on public land for motorized and off-road vehicles.