



Launch into Spring

Spring is a time of awakening when the outdoors comes alive with colors, sounds, and energy. Launching kayaks into the water when birds are chirping, fish are jumping, and flowers are blooming reconnects us to the beauty of a new season. What a great time to be outdoors!

As we transition to spring, BoardSafe Docks closes out a busy winter season helping customers improve access for all abilities to the great outdoors. BoardSafe's adaptive kayak launches, accessible fishing piers, gangways, pedestrian bridges and rowing docks provide access for all who wish to recreate on the water.

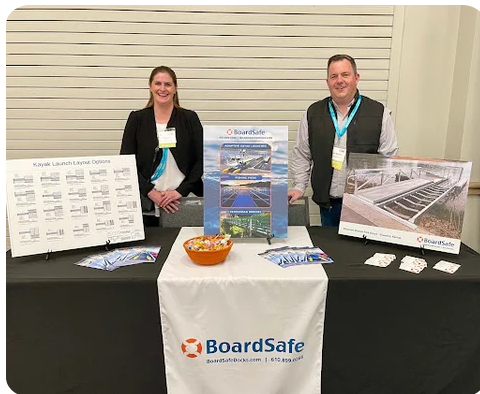
BoardSafe Docks Continues to Inform and Educate About Accessibility

Local and regional governments and organizations overseeing waterways recognize the need for programs that provide universal access to the water for people of all abilities, including features for paddlers with disabilities.

As organizations plan inclusive facilities, they look to [BoardSafe](#) for input in design and manufacturing. BoardSafe's innovative, durable, and ADA-compliant water access products are offered turnkey, from design and engineering, through manufacturing and installation.



Representing BoardSafe at the Tennessee RiverLine Summit are Tom Warchol, a BoardSafe Partner, Kelly Beals from the Business Development Team, and Bill Bogdan, an adaptive sports enthusiast who has partnered with BoardSafe to share the important message about universal design and access for all.



Thank You for the Opportunity to Meet You!

As we seek to meet, inspire, and educate public and private organizations, BoardSafe attends conferences throughout the year to make connections with adaptive sports enthusiasts and their communities.

[NJASLA Conference](#) in Atlantic City, NJ, January 28-30. As Premier Sponsor, BoardSafe was honored to be part of creating an atmosphere of learning, inspiration, and connections to help lead the way for the future of landscape architecture.

[2024 Tennessee RiverLine Summit](#) in Hardin County, TN, February 25-28. The Tennessee RiverLine Summit presented by BoardSafe is the annual gathering of partners, trail enthusiasts, and visionaries committed to transforming the Tennessee River into North America's next great regional trail system. This learning event

offered amazing networking sessions and ignited a continuing passion for the Tennessee RiverLine.

[Fox River Summit](#) in Burlington, WI, March 14. The Fox River Summit is an annual gathering of organizations and stakeholders who build partnerships and develop a dialogue about the issues important to managing the watershed. Tom Warchol presented information on “The Value of Investing in Universal Access Kayak Launches for Paddlers with Disabilities.”



[Project Profile - Shawnee Mission Park Marina Upgrades](#)

Shawnee Mission Park, the largest park in Johnson County, and the most visited park in the entire state of Kansas, has reopened after a \$1.6 million renovation.

The popular marina opened last summer after undergoing extensive renovations that began in November of 2022. The popular new features include a massive new ADA-accessible dock, a new ticketing booth, dock-level bathrooms, upgraded security cameras, and a storage facility for the marina’s 85 boats. The final addition to the park’s impressive amenities is a BoardSafe Adaptive Kayak Launch. Visitors can rent kayaks, tandem kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards, and pedal boats to launch into the lake. The inclusive features offered by [BoardSafe’s kayak launch](#) provide all paddlers with a safe and stable launch when entering and exiting their vessels. What an exciting draw this will be for the park!

[BoardSafe Docks has been published!](#)

In an effort to share our mission and vision about the importance of designing and building water access points for universal access, BoardSafe has shared our message in NRPA Parks and Recreation Magazine and PA Recreation and Park Society Magazine. Please help us share this important message.

NRPA OPERATIONS

Ensuring Kayak Launches Are Adaptive and Inclusive

By Lori Lingner

When you enter a kayak and push off into a river or stream and propel around a body of water, nature surrounds you at every level. Paddling and exploring the water bring families and friends together, connect people to nature, and promote exercise and wellness. Kayaking is an activity that almost anyone can participate in — young and old, novice and experienced, and people with mobility limitations and physical disabilities. It's easy to understand why the popularity of paddle sports continues to grow.

The Benefits of an Adaptive Kayak Launch
For paddlers with disabilities, paddling offers rehabilitation and socialization. Adaptive paddlers describe the freedom of leaving their wheelchairs and transferring into a kayak as "liberating." While there have been steady improvements in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility at parks and recreational facilities, most water access points continue to be designed with minimum ADA standards and sensitive features, including paddlers with moderate to severe disabilities from participating.

More important than the number of access points at recreational facilities is the quality of the accommodations offered at launch sites. All too often locations deemed accessible cannot be used by paddlers who require additional features. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance the paddling experience for everyone on the water.

The Three Most Common Challenges Faced by Adaptive Paddlers

1. Kayak launches are designed by individuals with limited understand-

ing of the additional features paddlers with disabilities require to enter and enjoy paddling vessels safely.

2. Barriers to participation are not recognized and are overlooked.
3. Additional features required by adaptive paddlers are missing or not developed to the extent necessary, creating additional barriers that result in the need for lifting, rigging or pulling, as well as the possibility of tipping over and possible injury to paddlers and volunteers.

Simply put, accessible and adaptive are not synonymous when it comes to accessing the water for paddling or kayaking. Launches designed with minimum standards of accessibility often will exclude paddlers who need additional adaptive features the most. This oversight is never the intention of parks, communities and municipalities leading to create universal access. But rarely it happens. Accessible features will get you to the water, and adaptive features will get you into the water.

If gaps in diversity, equity, and inclusion are to be bridged, the best solutions should come from paddlers who understand the barriers to inclusion. While there is no one launch that will serve 100 percent of paddlers' needs or remove 100 percent of the barriers, education, understanding and improved access points with additional adaptive features will enhance the paddling experience for most paddlers.

Ensuring Inclusivity
How can parks and recreation professionals, activists, engineers and community stakeholders ensure their kayak launch has adaptive features that include the widest range of users?

1. Design kayak and canoe launches with adaptive paddlers in mind.
2. Educate themselves and others about the adaptive features that will enhance the paddling experience for adaptive paddlers and all users of the launch.
3. Understand accessible launches may look good to able-bodied paddlers, but may end up excluding rather than including paddlers with disabilities due to the lack of adaptive features, incorrectly designed features or overlooked barriers.

The greatest difficulty reported by most paddlers is getting in and out of their vessels. Upon entry, kayaks and canoes can tip, shift or roll over. Adaptive features can ensure safe access in and out of the water and allow paddlers with disabilities to independently enter and exit their vessel. As recreation stakeholders, we all share responsibility for shaping the future of our country's outdoor spaces, supporting an inclusive lifestyle and improving quality of life for all.

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Including the Excluded

The Difference between an Accessible vs. Adaptive Kayak Launch

by Jeff Tintle, BoardSafe Docks

The radiant sun presided over springtime rejuvenation as songbirds cheered the eager kayakers slipping into their boats. It was harmonious: camaraderie on the Erie Canal and oneness with nature — at least for all but one paddler in the group.

Of the kayakers, Ken Byrne was the only adaptive paddler. A life-threatening accident at the age of 18 shattered his lower vertebrae, as well as his ability to enjoy the outdoors — or at least he thought. Medically classified as a C4 tetraplegic, Ken is an avid fisherman, kayaker and wheelchair basketball player. Ken is an inspiration to all who know him, unfortunately, what makes him most is not his own physical limitations but a lack of appropriate accommodations in the community. In many cases, simple adjustments — like an additional handle or increased spacing to accommodate a wheelchair — are the difference between his participation or exclusion.

That spring day in Upstate New York, Ken found himself frustrated, embarrassed and lamenting the lack of a few additional adaptive features — essentially on a kayak launch perceived as "accessible" but excluding him from his favorite hobby.

In his love for kayaking, Ken is not alone. The nonprofit Outdoor Foundation tracks participation levels for outdoor activities and reported that paddlersports like kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddling have

proliferated over the past decade. Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic drove more people outside, seeking to distance themselves from others and commune with nature. This allowed Americans to rediscover the great outdoors by connecting to nature and experiencing the benefits of improved physical and mental health.

It is no wonder that many adaptive paddlers like Ken describe the freedom of leaving their wheelchairs and transferring into a kayak as "liberating."

"What I love about kayaking is that when you get out on the water, we're all on the same level, looking eye-to-eye. I don't need to look up at my friends, nor do they look down at me," says Ken, speaking in both literal and figurative terms.

Most important that the number of access points — and the extent thereof in this article — is the quality of the accommodations at these sites. "Many times, even when a location is deemed 'unlabeled accessible,' more who live with physical disabilities like myself will cannot use

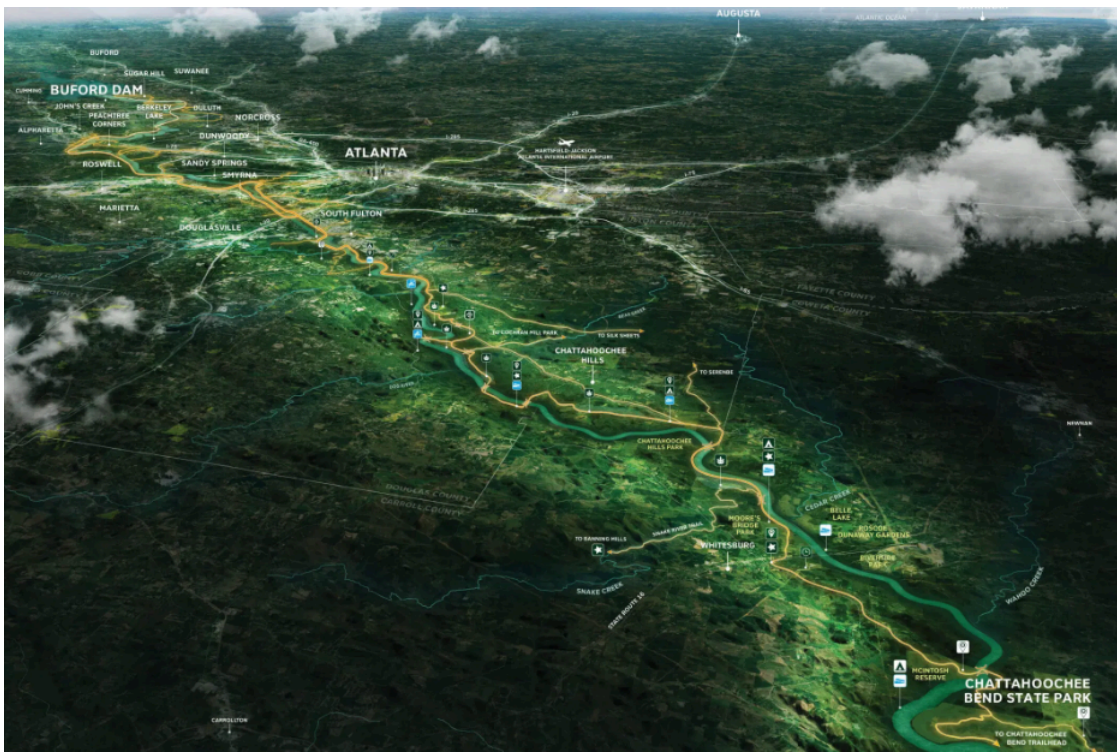


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BoardSafe forms an exciting partnership with the Trust for Public Lands!

Two locations have been identified on the Chattahoochee River in Atlanta, GA for a BoardSafe universal access kayak launch. BoardSafe is finalizing the design and engineering for launch sites that will be installed later this year. The [Chattahoochee RiverLands](#) is a nonprofit that connects everyone to the water. In Atlanta, the Trust is creating 100 miles of new trails and parks, connecting 19 cities across 7 counties, and building 42 water access points with 8 campsites.

This video, [Making the Chattahoochee RiverLands a Reality](#), explains more about their mission and vision.



To learn more about how BoardSafe helps our customers improve water accessibility, visit our website at [BoardSafeDocks.com](https://boardsafedocks.com).

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