

# Philmont disAbility Awareness Challenge Trek Site

The following proposal is made by the participants of the "Working With Scouts With disAbilities" conference at the Philmont Training Center, June 22-28, 1997. The implementation of this recommendation will enhance Philmont's ability to "deliver the promise" of scouting to every Scout.

## Mission:

To provide an opportunity for all Scouts to obtain "the Philmont experience."

## Recommendation:

To add an additional trek site to: [1] enable scouts with disAbilities to experience many the activities currently provided at Philmont, and [2] increase the awareness of Scouts who trek the backcountry to the issues encountered by Scouts with disAbilities.

Currently the vast majority of Scouts with disAbilities have limited access to the activities at Philmont that support "The Aims and Methods of Boy Scouting." By modifying an existing backcountry trek site such as Ponil or creating an additional site, Philmont could more effectively work towards the achievement of the three aims of Scouting growth in moral strength and character, participating citizenship, and development of physical, mental, and emotional fitness. "Boy Scouting is designed to take place outdoors." This method is restricted to many scouts because of their disAbilities and the nature of the current facilities. *While adaptations can rarely be made to our scouts, adaptations can be readily made to our facilities.*

The proposed site can be used:

- for treks by special needs troops.
- for treks by provisional troops made up of individuals with disAbilities whose troops are trekking the back country.
- as an additional site for traditional troops participating in backcountry treks.
- as a conference site for future classes (i.e. Basic and Advanced Camping Skills, NJLIC, Boy Scout Leader Training, Working With Scouts With disAbilities, etc).

Requirements for the proposed "hub" site could include:

- Accessibility by vehicles.
- Small tent city built in keeping with basic Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- Basic communications facilities (telephones, fax machine, etc).
- Basic medical facilities (first aid station with a medic/EMT).
- Dining facility with food warming capabilities.<sup>1</sup>
- Outside area with a canopy for Scouts to prepare their own food.
- Food resupply site for backcountry treks.
- Campfire facilities
- Handicraft and Scout Skills area.
- Swim tank with water current capabilities for therapeutic needs and teaching of basic water skills
- Limited hot water shower and latrine facilities built with basic ADA requirements in mind
- Snack bar/mini trading post
- Quartermaster facilities for tent city, etc.

<sup>1</sup> It is envisioned that one multiple use structure would serve all of the above needs. Some multiple use rooms within this structure could include; a joint dining room/conference room, the food warming area/food resupply point for backcountry treks, etc.

## Religious Services

The Philmont Chaplain will insure that a member of the Chaplain's Corps regularly holds services at the hub site

## Trail System

Branching out from the central "hub" camp are dual trail systems utilizing a wide variety of terrain serving activity sites. These activity sites would include many of those activities currently provided at Philmont that a scout with disAbilities can not be easily transported to. Trails would vary in length depending upon the terrain. It is envisioned that trails would not be longer than a mile and a half. These dual trails would have a wide, wheelchair accessible trail and a winding parallel trail that is slightly wider than the traditional backcountry trails. Some additional trail requirements include:

### Wheelchair Trail

- The wheelchair accessible trails should be wide enough to accommodate an eight-wheel type all-terrain vehicle or golf cart.
- The surface of this trail should be free of obstacles at the foot and head level and have a hard-smooth surface (blacktop, concrete, hard-packed dirt).
- The incline of the trail should not exceed one-inch rise per twelve inches lateral. There should be periodic locations where the trail is wide enough to accommodate two way traffic of two eight-wheel ATV's.
- A handrail guide for scouts with visual impairments on one side of the trail should be present along the length of the trail.
- Bridges with handrails on both sides would be necessary for this trail.

### Challenge Trail

- The winding parallel "challenge" trail should be approximately three feet wide and does not need to be a smooth surface.
- Bridges would not be required.
- Wherever possible enhance the trails with the beauty of nature (incorporate nature trail learning stations).
- Challenge trails should be linked to backcountry trails wherever possible.

These two trails emanating out of the hub site terminate at an activity site. Activities could be grouped into four sites: Indian Lore<sup>1</sup>, Western<sup>2</sup>, Water<sup>3</sup>, and High Adventure<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> The only activities replicated in all of the sites listed above would be those that are not readily accessible by transportation to existing sites.

## Trail Camp

A comparable dual trail system should be developed linking two neighboring activity sites with a trail camp located somewhere along these trails. (See attached diagram.) The trail camp could only have a firepit, outhouse facilities, and an in-camp water supply. No other structures would be located at this camp. It would be accessible from both the wheelchair trail and the Challenge trail.

## **Modifying Existing Site**

Ponil should be evaluated as an existing site to be modified to incorporate this recommendation. It has streams, woods, hills, level areas, and road accessibility. Other existing sites may also warrant investigation.

## **Additional Activities**

Although not usually available to traditional trail crews, these side trips might be made available to special needs treks. Barrier free transportation shall be provided to our scouts so they may participate in total Philmont experience. This should include excursions to Villa Philmont, the Philmont Museum & Seton Memorial Library, Kit Carson Museum, Petroglyphs, horseback riding, the New Mexico Story, Trading Post, religious services as needed, etc.

## **Special Equipment**

Although not all inclusive, the success of the disAbility Awareness Challenge Trek Site will be enhanced by the availability of the following equipment:

- Bus with a wheelchair lift.
- Trail wheelchairs.
- Eight-wheel All Terrain Vehicle or golf carts.
- Mini trailers to hook behind wheelchairs.
- Portable toilet/shower chair.
- Remote charging facilities for electric wheelchairs.

## **Staff Requirements**

Currently there are a number of qualified people available to meet the special needs of the disAbility Awareness Challenge Trek Site. This would include:

- State rehabilitation center staff members.
- College students currently studying special education, adaptive physical education, recreation, or physical therapy.
- Scouting volunteers and professionals with expertise in the area of special needs.
- Participants of the "Working With Scouts With disAbilities" conference.
- Sign language interpreters.
- Educators with experience in the special needs field.
- etc.

## **Organizational Support**

There are a number of organizations that currently support efforts to meet the needs of youth with disAbilities or are capable of aiding in the construction of the required facilities. They include, but are not limited to:

- Army Corps of Engineers.
- Military Reserve and National Guard units.
- Telephone Pioneers of America.
- Scout units.
- Philmont Training Center Conference members.
- National and Local Order of the Arrows units.
- etc.

## Financial Support

There are a number of organizations, corporations, and individuals who may, if approached, contribute to this worthwhile cause. Examples may include:

- Telephone Pioneers of America.
- Service Clubs (Lions. Rotary. Kiwanis. Shriners).
- Prime contractors and unions (Construction, Electrical. Plumbing. Engineering).
- National organizations that support people with disAbilities (MS Society, C P Foundation. National Head Injury Foundation, National Association for the Blind) National Foundations (Ford Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, Anderson Foundation).
- Sources recommended by the BSA National Board Members

## Vendor Suppliers

There are a number of experienced suppliers of adaptive equipment that address the needs of the disabled. Though not all inclusive, examples include:

- Ironhorse Productions, Inc
- Accessibility Products, Inc
- Wheelchair Getaways
- etc.

## Additional Sources of Information

There may be value in site visits to a Kiwanis camp, Easter Seals camp, or other camps for the disabled. In addition, a familiarity with the Recreation Access Advisory Committee's; Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines: Recreational Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas (US Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, July 1994: US Government Printing Office: 1995-400-001/40240) would be helpful.

## Additional Issues to be Evaluated:

Care should be taken and an assessment made to insure that modifying an existing site or developing a new site will not have an adverse impact on scouts participating in the existing backcountry treks. Proper scheduling may alleviate many of these potential difficulties.

- It will be necessary to develop criteria to qualify and prepare future participants in this activity.
- At some point in the future, professional staff should participate in an orientation session on the requirements of this new/modified trek site
- An effort should be made to gather the opinions and experiences of scouts with disAbilities, who have attended Philmont in the past few years.

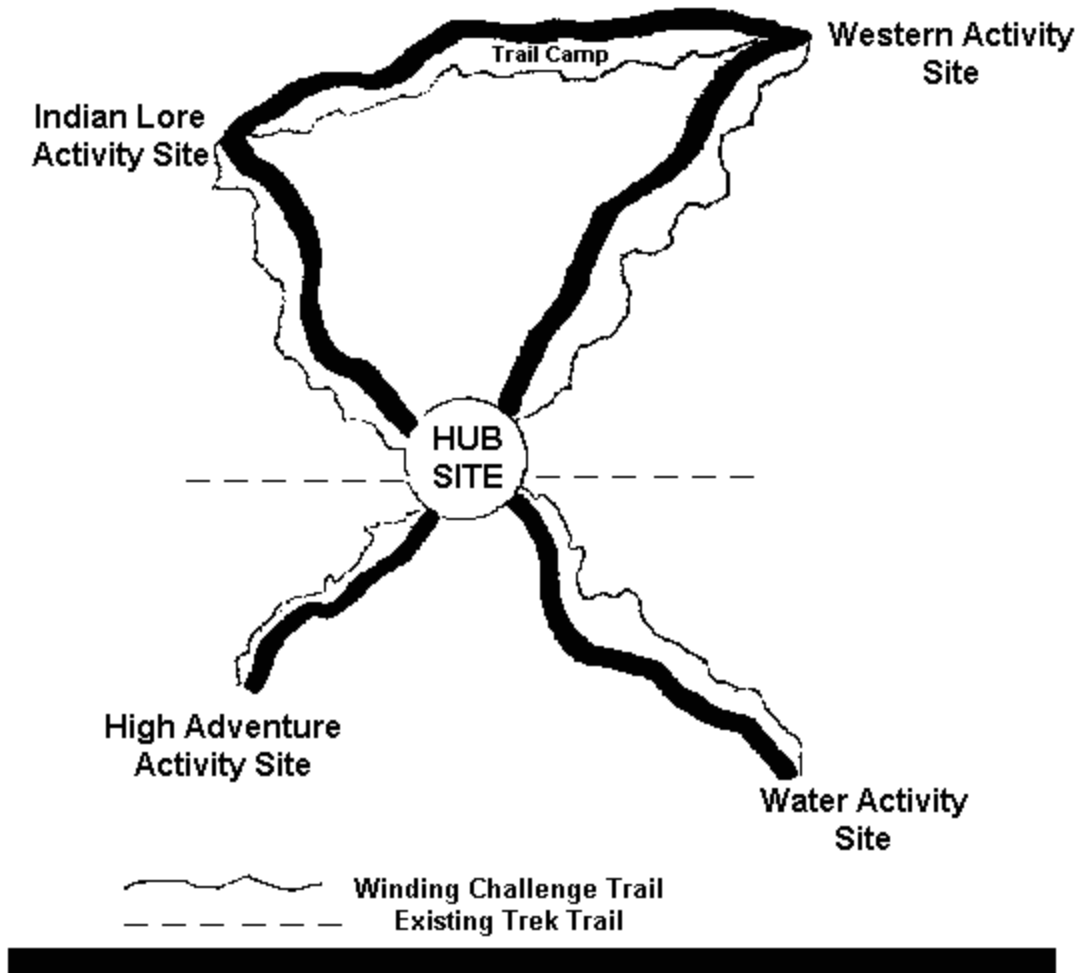
## Conclusion

By implementing the above recommendations, Scouting will enhance the Philmont experience for all members of the organization. Every effort should be made in the design and implementation to challenge each scout to the extent of their ability and not view all scouts with disAbilities as a class.

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# Disability Awareness Challenge Trek Site



Additional copies can be obtained from the Working With Scouts With disabilities (WWSWd) website (<http://www.boyscouts-marin.org/wswd>).