

DRAFT
ADA Guidelines for UNOLS Vessels
Tele-web conference
1:00 pm Eastern (9:00am Alaskan)
10 February 2006

Meeting Summary Report

Welcome and Introductions – A phone / web conference was held on Friday, February 10, 2006 to discuss the project to establish ADA guidelines for UNOLS Vessels. Terry Whitledge of the University of Alaska and the UNOLS Fleet Improvement Committee (FIC) opened the meeting at 1:00 pm EST. Terry has agreed to Chair the ADA Guidelines Committee. The items of the agenda <200602adaag.pdf> were addressed in the order recorded below. Slides that were presented during the meeting are available at <200602adaap01.pdf>.

Meeting participants introduced themselves. Participants included:

Committee Membership:

- Terry Whitledge (UAF) – Chair, FIC member
- Amy Bower (WHOI) – Sea-going Scientist with visual impairment
- David Chapman (UDel) – Naval Architect funded to study ADA accessibility on research vessels.
- Jim Cochran (LDEO) – Sea-going scientist, FIC Member, non-voting member of the ERROC
- Dennis Nixon (URI) – UNOLS Risk Manager

The following Committee Members were unavailable to participate in the Conference:

- Matt Hawkins (UDel) - Safety Committee Representative
- Eric Buck (SIO) - Ship Master
- Al Suchy (WHOI) - Marine Superintendent
- RVTEC Rep – Joe Ustach (Duke)

Observers:

- NSF – Dolly Dieter and Holly Smith
- NOAA – Stephen Manzo
- UNOLS – Peter Wiebe and Annette DeSilva
- Naval Architect – Dan Rolland (JJMA)
- PEOShips – Dave Barkdale
- LDEO Ship Operator - Paul Ljunggren

Dave Chapman reported that he has been funded by NSF to study oceanographic research vessel accessibility for persons with disabilities. This is a 2-year project that began on October 1, 2005. He would like to recruit a UNOLS representative for his committee. The Research in Disabilities Education (RDE) section of NSF is supporting the effort.

Discussion of Charge to Committee - Terry Whitledge explained that the major objective of this first meeting is to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of what is expected and to discuss how we can move forward. The first task item to establish draft ADA guidelines for the Regional Class must to be addressed over the next couple months, as they are needed soon. In general, the ADA Guidelines for R/Vs should try to make the ships as accessible as feasible within budget and operational constraints.

There has been an effort made on behalf of the Government to draft ADA guidelines for passenger vessel. These should be evaluated to determine how they could apply to research vessels.

Discussion:

- Dolly noted that although our immediate task is to consider ADA Guidelines for new ship construction, modifications that can be made during conversion efforts should also be considered.
- Voluntary vs. Required - Stephen Manzo asked if this effort to establish ADA guidelines is voluntary. Dolly replied that it goes beyond voluntary. NSF is required to provide facilities that are ADA accessible. They would like to make their facilities as accessible as feasible. Dave Chapman remarked that he feels there is a legal requirement to provide ADA accessible vessels. Rather than get in a long discussion, he offered to discuss the issue with Dennis Nixon in more detail after the meeting.
- Crew Guidelines - Stephen Manzo asked if the Guidelines should apply to both crew and the science party. He said that NOAA has stringent medical standards for their crew. Dennis Nixon added that operation groups are allowed to require that the crew meet physical standards. If a crew member has a disability that does not impact the operation or safety of the vessel, and if accommodations can be made to allow the crew member to work with the disability, then the individual can be permitted to work.

Description of Tasks – Terry reviewed each task item and discussion followed:

Task: Draft Preliminary ADA Guidelines for the Regional Class Acquisition effort - Terry reported that this is the first order of business for the committee. It will be challenging since the Regional Class ships are probably more difficult to accommodate accessibility needs in comparison to larger vessels. Amy agreed with this in terms of mobility, but reminded the committee that some visual impairments could likely be accommodated.

Terry suggested that the committee evaluate existing documentation and recent ship constructions and conversion efforts to develop recommendations that are feasible for the Regional Class design. These include:

- The draft ADA paper by Terry Whitledge.

- The draft ADA Guidelines for passenger vessels <<http://www.access-board.gov/pvaac/guidelines.htm>>. David Chapman indicated that there is another document on the Access Board website that is useful. He will provide the URL to Terry and Annette.
- Modifications implemented or included in the designs for the ARRV, *Marcus Langseth*, and *Hugh R. Sharp*. Since the *Sharp* is closest in size to the Regional Class vessels, it would be of particular interest.

Discussion:

- Dolly suggested that the Committee also explore how ferry ships are addressing ADA accessibility. Dave Chapman indicated that he could provide a paper he prepared for a 53-foot water taxi.
- Dan Rolland reported that PEOShips has received proposals from design/build teams who are interested in construction the Regional Class vessels. The proposals are currently under review. Awards to the two selected design/build teams are expected in March. The teams would likely start the design process in April. Committee recommendations would be most useful if they could be sent by that timeframe, especially those recommendations that could impact the ship design.
- Dave Chapman stated that are some recommendations that could be provided now to PEOShips. These recommendations would make the vessels much more accessible and include things like an ADA science stateroom on the main deck with access to labs and galley on the main deck. Amy added that there should also be safety tripping on the deck.
- Dan Rolland stated that the Regional Class design/build teams would need guidance on the degree of accessibility that is required. The guidelines should be clear and straightforward.
- Terry suggested the end of March as a deadline for a draft of the Regional Class guidelines.

Task: Convene a 2-day Community Workshop to define shipboard and procedural guidelines required to accommodate sea-going scientists with disabilities. – Terry explained that when this project was initially discussed the suggestion of having and workshop was made. He asked the committee for thoughts on this suggestion. He feels that a workshop could be useful and speakers/experts could be invited to attend.

Discussion:

- Amy Bower thought a workshop would be useful and suggested that it be held on a research ship. Invite individuals with disabilities so that the workshop could be a practical exercise. In a real way it could demonstrate the practical aspects and evaluate possible modifications.

- Dave Chapman stated that there is an association of individuals with disabilities on Martha's Vineyard that could perhaps provide input.
- Dave Chapman reported that as part of his study he will conduct a survey that will be distributed to ship users and operators. He will share the results with this committee.
- Terry added that the results of the workshop could be used to help prepare the final guidelines and develop ideas on how to accommodate disabilities.
- Peter Wiebe remarked that once the guidelines are drafted, there should to be a way to evaluate the cost and feasibility of them. Questions of implementation are important.
- Dan Rolland questioned how the USCG would interpret sub-chapter U, if research vessels were configured to accommodate ADA. He asked if they would they start to look at Research Vessels more as passengers vessels?
- Dennis Nixon replied with the example that Teddy Kennedy (he has a mobility disability) was first denied access to one of the SEA research vessels. In response, Teddy requested a physical test so that he could demonstrate that he was capable of going to sea. He passed a physical test. Since that incident, SEA has taken out many individuals with disabilities. A continuing, stable disability has been accommodated and the USCG hasn't questioned the interpretation of Sub-chapter U.
- Amy Bower indicated that she has had a long relationship with SEA and that they are prepared to accept disabilities on their vessels. She offered to contact SEA for their input on this project.
- Dennis Nixon indicated that holding a workshop on a ship could be useful, but first the committee should prepare some draft guidelines. The committee should have recommendations to evaluate during the workshop.
- Peter Wiebe agreed that the committee should have a draft guideline before the workshops, then at the workshop try to finalize the document.
- Dolly Dieter indicated that she is supportive of the symposium.
- As for a timeline, it was suggested that the draft guidelines be available by mid summer, then in early fall the workshop could be held.
- Workshop participants could include members of this committee as well as representation from individuals with disabilities.
- Terry suggested that an option that could be considered is having specialized wheelchairs that are modified to be more compatible with ship passageway widths. Dave Chapman expressed concern over this suggestion. He indicated that there have been reservations among the ADA community to use a different, non-standard chair.

Task: Establish General ADA Guidelines for new ship construction/conversion. Terry reviewed the details of this task item, as it will be the focus of the project. It includes:

- Defining the UNOLS philosophy for accommodating persons with disabilities at sea.
- ADA guidelines for UNOLS Vessels should take into consideration:
 - The various vessel sizes
 - The nature of the disability (hearing, vision, and mobility).
 - Levels of compliance should be recommended.
- Estimated costs associated with the various design modifications necessary to accommodate ADA requirements should be evaluated and defined.

Discussion:

- There was a suggestion to add an item to the last bullet – “evaluate the ease of the engineering aspects associated with implementing the recommended modification.”
- Dennis Nixon expressed that he has a philosophic issue with the tasking to evaluating the costs associated with changes. We should work to act in the best faith of the law. Modifications that can be made should be made; we ought to be doing this anyway. Amy agreed.
- Dolly Dieter commented that if the necessary modifications would result in 15% cost increase, or if the ship size would have to increase significantly, we should be aware of these issues, so that options can be considered.
- Terry explained that he sees the effort of evaluating the costs as an outcome, not a driver for the project.
- Dan Rolland commented that in regard to the Regional Class ships there is a target construction cost of what is affordable. If they put more money in one area, it will be at the expense of another area.
- Terry stated that we want to work to accommodate as much as possible and make the vessels as accessible as feasible.

Task: Draft procedural guidelines for at-sea research operations by seagoing scientists with disabilities. Terry reviewed the tasking details. The guidelines should consider shipboard mobility and access areas, research operations, and evacuation / safety procedures.

Discussion:

- Amy Bower explained that when she goes to sea, she normally is accompanied by a sighted guide. She feels that the guidelines would be helpful to each operator and ship captain. She feels that every time she goes to sea, she must start from scratch in terms of explaining the procedures that are needed for an individual with a visual disability.

- Dan Rolland commented that procedures for embarkation and egress from the ship are very important. These activities can be challenging on some vessels and in some conditions, such as in ports with big tidal ranges. SWATH vessels with high freeboards, can also present challenges.

Suggested Project Reference Material – Terry reviewed the suggested reference material list (included in slides). These items will be posted on the website. If any one has additional reference material, it can be sent to the UNOLS Office.

Dave Chapman reemphasized that he is looking to recruit a steering committee member for his study. He added that all meetings would be by phone conference. He would like to include a sea-going scientist and preferably a FIC member. This would be someone who could look after UNOLS interests.

Discussion of Procedural Strategy – Terry reviewed the items that should be considered while developing guidelines. These included the class of vessel, science, living, and weather deck spaces, new construction vs. refit, and type of science mission. It was suggested that the tasking be broken down to smaller categories. Peter Wiebe suggested that the Committee identify the guidelines that would be suitable for all vessels.

Timeline – The Committee discussed the timeline and agreed to work to the following:

- Provide ADA Guidelines for Regional Class Ships – Late March /early April
- Convene a Workshop – Late August/early September (after a first working draft of the guidelines are available)
- ADA Guidelines for new ship construction and conversions – First draft in summer 2006.
- Procedural ADA Guidelines for at-sea operations – This would be the final task and would be carried out after the design guidelines are drafted. Procedural guidelines can be evaluated during the workshop/ship visit.
- Draft ADA guidelines available for review at the Fall UNOLS meetings – Week of October 4th.

Next Steps: There was a general discussion on the activities that should take place in the next couple of months:

- Peter Wiebe suggested that the Committee obtain any written guidelines that were prepared during the recent design/conversion efforts of the *Sharp*, *Langseth*, and *ARRV*. These could be used as a starting point.
- Annette will create a project web page. It will be password protected.
- Annette stated that the Committee lacks representation from an individual with a mobility disability and she asked for suggestions. The individual should be a sea-going scientist.

Paul Johnson (UW) was suggested, but he has recently been appointed to another UNOLS committee. The individual doesn't have to be confined to a wheelchair. Amy Bower commented that there is a check box on NSF proposals to indicate if the PI has a disability.

- Dan Rolland asked for additional information about the process to establish ADA guidelines for the Regional Class vessels and what level of access is required. Dave Chapman replied that they could provide the Regional Class design/build teams with the current ADA guidelines for passenger vessels. The guidelines address construction. The guidelines also include scoping requirements based on the number of individuals the ship can accommodate.

Next Meeting - Terry Whitledge wrapped up the meeting by requesting that we schedule the next Committee phone/web conference for the 3rd week of March. The Regional Class ADA Guidelines will be discussed during the meeting.

Summary of Near-term Action Items:

TASK	Assignment
Evaluate reference material that is posted on the project website	Committee
Obtain information on how ferry ships are addressing ADA accessibility.	Terry Whitledge
Provide a paper on ADA guidelines for a 53-ft water taxi	David Chapman
Contact SEA for their input on how they accommodate ADA on their vessels	Amy Bower
Recruit a steering committee member for Dave Chapman's study.	Annette DeSilva and Terry Whitledge
Obtain written guidelines that were prepared during the recent design/conversion efforts of the <i>Sharp</i> , <i>Langseth</i> , and <i>ARRV</i> .	Jim Cochran – <i>Langseth</i> Terry Whitledge – <i>ARRV</i> Matt Hawkins - <i>Sharp</i>
Create a password-protected project web page.	Annette DeSilva
Recruit a committee member with a mobility disability. Ask NSF for a listing from their proposal database.	Annette with input from all.

The meeting adjourned at about 2:30 pm EST.