# Session 7 Script

Hello, and thank you for coming to my presentation. My name is Kaliegh Walther, and I am doing my presentation on the Accessibility of the Great Salt Lake State Park in Magna, Utah.

First, I just wanted to give some quick history on the Great Salt Lake. It is a small remainder of Lake Bonneville, which was here during the Pleistocene era. Lake Bonneville eroded away roughly fourteen thousand, five hundred years ago but it left behind a few other lakes in its wake. The Great Salt Lake is the largest one of those lakes, and it is also the largest saltwater lake in the western hemisphere. It is fed by the Bear, Weber, and Jordan rivers, and the Great Salt Lake has no outlet. So, therefore the Great Salt Lake is very saline, with the rivers feeding into the lake all the salts and minerals and nowhere for them to go, during the summer heat the water in the lake will evaporate leaving behind all the salts and minerals. Due to that high salinity, only extremophiles can live in the lake. There are no fish or anything else of that sort, the lake’s only inhabitants are brine shrimp, brine flies, cyanobacteria, and algae. If you remember as a kid, hearing about or having Sea Monkeys, those are brine shrimp and there is a photo of a brine shrimp to the right. I took that photo in the visitor’s center so there is a bit of a glare, but you can see what the brine shrimp look like. There’s no scale on the photo, but brine shrimp in general are roughly about half an inch long, so they are quite small.

The Great Salt Lake State Park was opened to the public in 1978. It offers several recreational activities such as camping, sailing, and sightseeing. If you notice, ‘swimming’ is not on that list, and that is mainly due to the high salinity in the lake. The smell of the surrounding area is quite pungent, and during the summertime when the temperature is warm enough to swim, that is when the brine flies come out. They are basically small gnats, but they are everywhere. So, while it is possible to go swimming in the lake, people do swim in it, it is not a very pleasant place to go swimming. The State Park does offer a mostly wheelchair accessible Visitor’s Center, and I will cover that later in this presentation.

For my methods: On November 25th, 2020, I visited the State Park and surveyed the area for multiple forms of accessibility. Wheelchair accessibility, if someone was using crutches, a walking boot, a cane, etc., as well as those without mobility issues. I surveyed the self-guided Silver Sand beach tour, the Visitor’s Center, restrooms, docks, and campgrounds.

The top set of photos show the entrance to the Silver Sands beach self-guided tour. On the left is a photo of the path leading to the beach going down, and on the right is a photo of the same path going up. There are no railings, and it is not paved, so if you were using crutches, a walking boot, a cane, or other mobility assistance, it would be very treacherous and honestly probably quite frightening to go down and up the trail. If you were using a wheelchair, going down the path would again probably be a bit treacherous and scary, but it would be possible. However, going up the path, it would not be possible to do it by yourself, most likely. Most people using a wheelchair, both manual and motorized, would not be able to go up that path by themselves with no assistance.

Below the path photos are the photos of Silver Sands beach. The photo on the left shows that there are areas that are very easily accessible. The beach can lead straight into the lake if you did want to swim in it or touch it, there is very easy accessibility in some areas. However, the photo on the right shows that there are other areas where it is not easily accessible, with large rocks blocking the way to the water.

Unfortunately, I did not get a photo of the entrance to the Visitor’s Center, but there are ramps leading up to it, so it is accessible. The bottom middle photo shows that there is a porch with educational signage providing information about the history of the area, the Great Salt Lake, and the surrounding wildlife. Towards the back of the Visitor’s Center there is a large porch for viewing and seating, however there are stairs leading up to the porch and leading off the porch. If you are in a wheelchair or are otherwise unable to utilize the stairs and you would like to go onto the back porch, you would have to go through the Visitor’s Center. So, if for some reason the Visitor’s Center is closed, you would not be able to access the back porch if you are in a wheelchair or other form of mobility assistance. And the photo on the top right shows the view from the back porch, which is quite lovely, so as long as you are able to access it, you would be able to enjoy it. The restrooms: I did not get any photos of the restrooms, and there are also no gender-neutral restrooms, all of the restrooms are ‘men’s’ and ‘women’s’. I went into the women’s restroom and there is a wheelchair accessible stall, however the sinks and the soap that are available were quite high and therefore not accessible if the visitor was in a wheelchair. This is obviously quite an issue if there are some who are unable to wash their hands after using the restroom, and especially so given the current pandemic in which we are living.

The photo on the middle right shows a ramp leading to the dock. All docks do have ramps leading to them, however most of the ramps are quite steep and some of them are a bit uneven. There was a ramp leading to the dock (not photographed) which had a large gap between the ramp and the dock. The gap was around 1.5 – 2 inches, so if you were in a wheelchair, it might be quite difficult to get the wheelchair up onto that ramp.

This bottom right is a photo of a few of the campsites. Each campsite looks just like this, which is very nice; they are very easily accessible. There is gravel on the ground, but it is packed quite tightly. Each campsite offers a firepit and a wheelchair accessible picnic table, so the campsites available at the park are quite accessible by all.

My conclusion of the accessibility of the Great Salt Lake State park: The State Park does have accessible features allowing everyone to enjoy the park, however most of those features are quite impractical. For example, the path leading to the beach where there is no railing, that definitely needs some work. I would highly suggest pavement, or at the very least a tightly packed gravel much like the campsites, but at least something that is less steep and allows better accessibility by all. The State Park also needs ramps leading off and on the Visitor’s Center porch, as again if the Visitor’s Center was closed, you would not be able to access that porch if you were in a wheelchair or otherwise unable to traverse the stairs. And my final recommendation would be to add wheelchair accessible sinks to the bathrooms, as well as create gender-neutral bathrooms so there is accessibility for all, no matter who you are or your level of physical mobility.

Thank you for listening to my presentation, again my name is Kaliegh Walther, and let me know if you have any questions.