

**Effective Communication Policy
Under the Americans with Disabilities Act**

I. Purpose of the Policy

Effective communication is essential in providing quality programs and services. This policy addresses how the Georgia Department of Natural Resources will ensure that communication with people who have communication disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.

II. Definitions

Auxiliary aids and services are devices or services that enable effective communication for people with disabilities.

(A) For people who are blind, have vision loss, or are deaf-blind, this includes providing a qualified reader; information in large print, Braille, or electronically for use with a computer screen-reading program; or an audio recording of printed information.

A **“qualified” reader** means someone who is able to read effectively, accurately, and impartially, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.

(B) For people who are deaf, have hearing loss, or are deaf-blind, this includes providing a qualified notetaker; a qualified sign language interpreter, oral interpreter, cued-speech interpreter, or tactile interpreter; real-time captioning; written materials; or a printed script of a stock speech.

A **“qualified” interpreter** means someone who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively (i.e., understanding what the person with the disability is saying) and expressively (i.e., having the skill needed to convey information back to that person) using any necessary specialized vocabulary.

(C) For people who have speech disabilities, this may include providing a qualified speech-to-speech transliterator.

A **“qualified” transliterator** means someone trained to recognize unclear speech and repeat it clearly.

III. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities in our programs, services and activities. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources will provide, free of charge, appropriate

auxiliary aids and services when necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources cannot require an individual to bring someone to interpret for him/her. DNR can rely on a companion to interpret in only two situations:

(1) In an emergency involving an imminent threat to the safety or welfare of an individual or the public, an adult or minor child accompanying a person who uses sign language may be relied upon to interpret or facilitate communication only when a qualified interpreter is not available.

(2) In situations *not* involving an imminent threat, an adult accompanying someone who uses sign language may be relied upon to interpret or facilitate communication when a) the individual requests this, b) the accompanying adult agrees, and c) reliance on the accompanying adult is appropriate under the circumstances. This exception does *not* apply to minor children.

Under exception (2), DNR may *not* rely on an accompanying adult to interpret when there is reason to doubt the person's impartiality or effectiveness.

IV. Requests for Auxiliary Aids and Services

Requests for an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication in receiving a service or participating in a program provided by DNR should be done as soon as possible, by submitting the appropriate request form. Requests should be made at least two weeks (10 business days) in advance of a scheduled event to allow time for scheduling. Request forms are available on the Department of Natural Resources website under Accessibility, as well as, at each DNR location. All requests for auxiliary aids and services will be addressed promptly and in accordance with ADA requirements. The individual requesting the auxiliary aid or service will be notified as soon as possible if DNR is unable to meet the request and an effective alternative will be offered. Alternate formats or assistance may be requested by mail, fax or phone to:

**Georgia Department of Natural Resources
ADA Coordinator
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S.E.
Suite 1252 East
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Phone: (404)656-2783
Fax: (770)324-4105**

DNR reserves the right to change, modify, or amend this policy at any time.