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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **ANCA and IRRC release guide to improving usability of sites along Scenic Byways**

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SARANAC LAKE – April 9, 2015 – The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) and Inclusive Recreation Resource Center at SUNY Cortland (IRRC) are releasing a guide to improving accessibility at destinations along three main tourism corridors in the North Country. A free webinar from 2:30 to 3:30 on April 28 will introduce this resource and discuss accessibility issues throughout the region.

Entitled “Improving Usability for All Visitors,” the guide is the result of a multi-year collaboration between the two organizations to address the needs of visitors to the Adirondack North Country region who experience challenges in enjoying the same experiences as others due to mobility, vision or hearing impairments.

Working in partnership, ANCA and the IRRC conducted inclusivity assessments at more than 400 tourist information centers, museums, heritage sites, recreation areas, and chamber of commerce offices in the 12 counties traversed by the Adirondack Trail, Central Adirondack Trail and Olympic Scenic Byways. Each assessed site received feedback on ways to increase usability for people with disabilities. Information gathered during the assessment phase was used to develop the guide released today.

Funding for this initiative was provided by the Federal Highway Administration through the New York State Department of Transportation’s Scenic Byways Program. The guide and site assessment results will be available in printed form and online through ANCA’s website.

With sections devoted to Communication, Travel Paths and Alternatives, and Staff Ambassadors, the guide lays out 10 “tips” any establishment can use to improve its ability to provide an inclusive and enjoyable experience for visitors with disabilities.

According to annual visitor studies conducted by the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST), the number one reason visitors come to this area is to engage in outdoor activities and view natural assets.

“ANCA is committed to improving access for those with disabilities,” said executive director Kate Fish. “This guide will help tourism destinations, as well as surrounding restaurants, hotels and retail businesses, understand and accommodate better their visitors’ diverse needs and enable them to enjoy our region independently and with dignity.”

“According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 1 in 5 people in the United States have a disability,” said Lynn Anderson, IRRC director. “This resource will help our communities to be more welcoming and inclusive, so we don’t turn away anyone hoping to take advantage of the wealth of recreation opportunities our region offers.”

“This guide will be a terrific asset for stakeholders in the region’s communities as they seek to update their tourism infrastructure and enhance the visitor experience,” said ROOST president James McKenna. “Improving accessibility is a huge step toward meeting the needs and the expectations of the contemporary traveling public.”

To register for the webinar, email: [InclusiveRec@cortland.edu](mailto:InclusiveRec@cortland.edu).

**Photo Caption: The guide from ANCA and the IRRC lays out 10 “tips” any establishment can use to improve its ability to provide an inclusive and enjoyable experience for visitors with disabilities.**

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