



Putting

The Fun

Back into

Playing

Naturally

*creative design
& construction*

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**Natural Playgrounds Companies
Sole Source Information
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**Justification for sole source under the Federal acquisition
regulation, FAR 6.302**

Our playground at (the childcare center/our school/our park) has been in an unacceptable state for a long period of time. Currently, the play experience is limited to a large expanse of (wood chips/sand/poured-in-place rubber) and some old metal and plastic play apparatus that is no longer safe. Further, the flat area and lack of intriguing and challenging play opportunities means that our children are not having a rewarding outdoor play experience.

Based on this state of affairs, we began looking for a more exciting, challenging, discovery-oriented option. After extensive research, we learned that there is a new movement in this country away from manufactured playgrounds and toward more natural play environments. Though these kinds of playgrounds have been around for decades in Europe, they are relatively new to this country.

We discovered that the Natural Playgrounds Company here in the United States has been the one company whose sole purpose was to bring the natural play concept to this country. Over the past 15 years, they have successfully introduced Natural Playgrounds as a viable concept to the playground industry, and have designed *and* built numerous Natural Playgrounds throughout the country. As a result, they understand the developmentally appropriate activities for children and teenagers, adults, and the special needs populations, and the best ways to integrate nature with play.

The Natural Playgrounds Company pioneered the organic, nonlinear design techniques that make Natural Playgrounds unique play and learning environments, and has developed proprietary construction techniques that allow these unusual designs to be most easily and efficiently implemented. This company is also unique in that they also are able to approach and solve environmental issues, such as rainwater management, which other playground companies ignore.

From what we can find, no other company has the ability or the techniques to both envision and construct these unique playgrounds in a timely and cost-effective manner. For instance, they are the only company in the US that has developed a comprehensive installation

guideline for embankment slides which also meets all applicable safety standards.

We have also discovered that the Natural Playgrounds company is unique in that it combines challenging, discovery-oriented play environments and play elements with both the ASTM and CPSC playground safety guidelines, so that their Natural Playgrounds meet all licensing and safety standards. They are also designed to meet all ADA guidelines.

Because the Natural Playgrounds Company does not need construction documents to build natural play environments, several thousand dollars will be saved.

Sole Sourcing

From Wikipedia: "The term '**sole source contract**' means that there is only one company that can provide the contractual services needed, so any attempt to obtain bids would only result in that one company bidding on it, or other companies not being qualified."

Having one company capable of handling both the design and construction phases eliminates the need for a Project Manager overseeing numerous vendors, contractors, and service providers and all the miscommunication that usually accompanies a complex project.

Design phase of the project

The Natural Playgrounds Company is the only company in the United States that is devoted solely to the design of natural play and learning environments, and the design and testing of natural play and learning elements. This is significant in that all 22 people in the company are dedicated and focused only on the constant improvement of the natural play experience and nothing else.

The company has designed over 150 natural play environments ranging in size from 3,000 square feet to 180 acres which have included natural play areas for handicapped populations, fitness and challenge courses, mud runs, master plans for school campuses and municipal parks, master plans for agritourist farms, and numerous Natural Playgrounds for Montessori, Waldorf, Elementary, Middle, and High schools.

Construction phase of this project

The Natural Playgrounds Construction Company is the only landscape contractor in the United States which focuses solely on the construction of Natural Playgrounds, and which is familiar with all the ASTM, CPSC, ADA, and age-appropriate specifications and guidelines required to construct a safe, accessible, natural play environment.

Secondly, during the past five years, the Natural Playgrounds Construction Company has focused solely on building Natural Playgrounds throughout the United States, so we have developed many proprietary construction processes that make our work efficient, fast, and more cost-effective than any other company in the US.

Thirdly, because of our extensive and focused experience, we don't need construction documents which will save thousands of dollars.

Sole source Language

The idea behind developing a sole source argument, is to identify particular skills, credentials, experience, and other attributes a contractor *must* have in order to make the entire project a success. Sometimes you can ask bidders to prequalify prior to starting the process. The idea here is that any bidder must meet all the criteria before even submitting a bid.

Here are some criteria for both the design and construction phases.

Because Natural Playgrounds are a relatively new play concept requiring a very specific skill set, all bidders must meet these minimum requirements/criteria/requests

Design

- at least 15 years of experience designing Natural Playgrounds in child care, school, and municipal settings;
- intimate knowledge of ASTM and CPSC playground safety standards *as they apply to Natural Playgrounds*;
- at least one person on the staff must have attended CPSI training, and must understand how the ASTM and CPSC playground safety guidelines apply to natural play environments;
- intimate knowledge of ADA standards *as they apply to Natural Playgrounds*;
- at least five years of experience working with a landscape contractor on the construction of natural playgrounds;
- intimate familiarity with construction details of natural play and learning elements;
- familiarity with stages of child development such that risk factors can be minimized during the design process;

Construction

- at least six (6) years of experience building Natural Playgrounds in child care, school, and municipal settings;
- intimate knowledge of ASTM and CPSC playground safety standards *as they apply to Natural Playgrounds*;
- intimate knowledge of ADA standards *as they apply to Natural Playgrounds*;
- at least five years of experience grading specifically-shaped hills with exact precision in 3 dimensions. The footprint of the hill structures must be precisely staked out and the slopes and grades in all dimensions must be followed to meet CPSC and ASTM playground safety requirements and erosion control issues*;
- a construction manager who has at least three years of experience building Natural Playgrounds and natural play and learning elements;
- intimate familiarity with construction details of natural play and learning elements;
- familiarity with stages of child development such that risk factors can be monitored and enforced during construction;
- the ability to identify and avoid potential playground safety hazards during construction.

- a wide combination of skill sets including organically-shaped concrete work and stamped concrete work, irrigation, carpentry and building, soil preparation, plant knowledge, and drainage. An intimate knowledge of playground safety requirements also needs to be applied to all those skill sets.

* We've found many contractors that are excellent at grading for drainage, but that none follow grading plans exactly. They pitch things so that they drain but never pay precise attention to the footprints of hill structures which then affects the placement of all other design elements and can cause significant site adjustment issues.