

A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE OUTER BANKS:



When I visited with you earlier this month, I told you that we would study further some of the problems that were bothering you and see if some adjustments in the boundary of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area could be made to meet our joint problems more satisfactorily. This we have done. Rather than make another three-day trip to your Islands, I believe that the best way to get the results of these studies to all of you in a clear and concise way is to print them in your local paper. Victor Meekins has agreed to see that every family on Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Bodie Islands, south of Whale Bone, gets a copy.

This issue of The Coastland Times contains a set of maps and descriptions which show in detail the new boundary lines for the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area. In general, the new lines leave more room for expansion around the towns and they bring in the boundary at Pamlico Sound to within 150 feet of the shores of Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands. The new boundary lines have the approval of the Secretary of the Interior; and I have discussed them with Mr. George Ross, Director, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, who also approves of them.

During the week of October 6, I met with many of you individually and in public meetings held in the towns of Ocracoke, Hatteras, Avon, and Rodanthe, to answer questions about the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area project. We discussed its purposes, boundary lines, and the programs for its acquisition and development. Congressman Herbert C. Bonner and others joined in several of the meetings and discussions. You asked many questions; many of these were on how the establishment of the Recreational Area would affect you personally, your business, or your property. I hope, and believe, that those questions were answered to the satisfaction of those who asked them.

In the public meetings, you brought out four main points: 1. Many of you were uncertain as to just where the Recreational Area boundary lines would be around the communities and felt that not enough room was being left for community expansion.

2. There was the question as to the rights of individuals to continue commercial and sport fishing.

3. There was concern as to whether your present hunting rights would be affected.

4. There was a feeling that once the Recreational Area is established the local people would be denied access to the ocean beach.

I wish to re-emphasize the answers to these questions, with the aid of the accompanying maps:

As to the first question, I promised you that we would restudy the boundaries and change them if necessary and desirable. The study was based on a personal visit to all of the communities involved, an analysis of the land needs of the communities and the Recreational Area, as well as the statements made to me by many local people personally and in public meetings. Our studies showed that the old Recreational Area boundary lines were too confining, so we have changed them in all cases by moving the boundary lines around the communities closer to the ocean. On the ocean side of the towns, new, approved boundary lines include in the Recreational Area only those lands along the ocean which are necessary to protect and control the sand dunes, to re-establish them where necessary, and hold them to protect the communities from the intrusion of the ocean. The National Park Service intends to resume the sand fixation work that it started in the 1930's and more firmly establish the dunes.

The boundary line has also been changed on the Sound side. It has been moved in to a distance of 150 feet from the shore lines of Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands, except in front of the communities, and the offshore islands outside of that line are eliminated from the Recreational Area. The boundary line of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Area does not extend in front of the communities on the Sound side. In the

case of Bodie Island it was more practical to describe a meets and bounds line, as shown on the accompanying maps, than it was to use an irregular line 150 feet offshore.

In regard to fishing and hunting (questions 2 and 3)—under the basic legislation authorizing the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, fishing and hunting rights in the Sound were reserved to the people. That being the case, there is no real need to include Pamlico Sound waters in the Recreational Area. This is so because the North Carolina fishing and hunting laws and regulations and those of the Federal Government which have been in effect for a great many years in the Sound area will still apply to waters both inside and outside the Recreational Area boundaries. Therefore, the new boundary line in the Sound has been set only 150 feet offshore from Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. That is purely an arbitrary distance. It brings the line close enough in so that everyone can know definitely where it is. Due to the irregularity of the shore line, it may be necessary to make minor adjustments in some places so that any small offshore islands will be either wholly in or wholly out of the Recreational Area. In other words, the line won't split any islands.

The following larger islands are excluded from the Recreational Area:

- Off Bodie Island—these, among others: Pond, Grun, House, Warren, Headquarters, Bells, Bowser, Cedar, Cutoff and Herring Shoal, Big Tim, and Little Tim Islands.
- Off Hatteras Island—these, among others: both Great Islands, Midgett, Noache, Gull, Big, and Kings Islands.
- Off Ocracoke Island—these, among others: Outer Green, Cockrel, and Negro Islands.

The guarantees in the laws relating to hunting and continuation of commercial fishing in the waters of the Sounds will apply within this 150 foot offshore strip exactly as they do outside of it. The State and Federal fishing and hunting regulations within this strip cannot be affected by any National Park Service regulation.

The law says that hunting will be permitted on Ocracoke Island, on the waters of the Sounds and on not more than 2,000 additional acres of the Recreational Area outside of the Pea Island Refuge and its waters. The law requires the Secretary of the Interior to designate the 2,000 acres to be open to hunting. At the time the law was passed, the Secretary of the Interior made an agreement with Mr. Lindsay Warren, then a Member of Congress, that the 2,000-acre hunting area would be selected by a committee composed of two representatives of the State of North Carolina, to be designated by the Governor, and one each from the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. The National Park Service will move toward the establishment of this committee and the designation of these lands at the earliest possible moment, after the lands have been acquired. Of course, no part of the 2,000 acres will be in the Pea Island Refuge.

Concerning access to the beach (question 4)—when I met with you I explained that when the lands for the Recreational Area are acquired and become public property there will always be access to the beach for all people, whether they are local residents or visitors from the outside. However, it will be necessary to establish certain regulations, such as to designate places for vehicles to get to the beach, in order to reduce sand dune erosion to a minimum; to manage ocean fishing where large numbers of bathers are using the beach; and to confine bathing to certain areas. These latter are safety measures, as it would be dangerous to permit surf fishing where there are large numbers of people in bathing and, likewise, fishermen would not want bathers to interfere with their fishing.

With the changed boundary lines in the Sound and the enlargement of the areas excluded for community expansion, as indicated on the accompanying maps, the establishment of the committee to determine the 2,000 additional acres of land on

the islands to be open to hunting, and making clear the problem of access to the ocean beach, I feel that we have found a reasonable solution that meets the needs and desires of a majority of the local people as well as the needs of the Recreational Area. I might add that if, at any time, the State is in a position to build a road on Ocracoke, we can easily reach agreement on the right-of-way for it.

Now, a word concerning the future development of the Area. As stated above, the National Park Service proposes to resume the sand fixation work; to re-establish the natural plant and wildlife within the area; and to provide access to the beach for everybody. We plan also to tell the story of the sea. Cape Hatteras has perhaps one of the most interesting and heroic sea histories in the entire United States, if not in the world. It is the plan of the National Park Service to establish a museum to tell the story of the sea, and especially the part that the Cape Hatteras coast line and you people have played in it. The fascinating history of the Outer Banks, combined with the story that is told at the Wright Memorial and at Fort Raleigh on Roanoke Island will make this part of North Carolina one of the most important tourist objectives in the United States.

As our plans move forward we will call upon the people of the communities on Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Bodie Islands to work with us in establishing the museum. Many of you have relics of the past and stories of great accomplishments handed down through your families that are needed to record and relate this history. It is hoped that when the museum is ready you will see fit to donate or loan appropriate objects for exhibit purposes. When our plans are formulated in more detail they will be made known to you, and we are going to ask for your advice and suggestions.

The National Park Service has always believed in free enterprise, and has practiced it in all the areas of the National Park System. In the case of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, we expect the people in the communities on the islands of Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Bodie to take care of the tourists. No developments for tourist accommodations are planned or will be permitted on government property. Consequently, the property within the communities will, without any doubt, have an increasing commercial value because of the existence of the Recreational Area; its greatest value will be for use in taking care of the public.

You have never experienced this kind of a development before, but we in the National Park Service have seen it many, many times throughout the United States when national areas are established. Business interests outside of your communities know what this development is going to mean to the communities; they are already among you and are acquiring land in anticipation of the establishment of the Area. They know that there will be a large influx of people and that land values will rise.

I would like to give you a word of caution: Hold your lands within your communities; don't let outside speculators come in and take over; join together and you people in the communities whose families have lived there for generations care for the visiting public yourselves and enjoy the prosperity that you so rightfully deserve because of your long occupancy of these lands.

The National Park Service and its staff stand ready to cooperate with you at all times in the development of your communities, if you want us to. I hope we can work together as partners, and that we can look forward to a long and pleasant association that will bring enjoyment to millions of visitors and prosperity to you.

In closing this message, I should like to thank the people of all the communities for the reception given us when we met with you on October 6, 7, 8, and 9, and for the frankness of your remarks, which enabled us to work out our joint problems.

Sincerely yours,
CONRAD L. WIRTH
Director, National Park Service

October 27, 1952