

# National Park Service

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Cape Hatteras

National Seashore

#22



### NEWS

#### INTERIM ORV USE AREAS TO BE IDENTIFIED AT SEASHORE

**Date**

March 24, 2004

**Contact**

Outer Banks Group, (252) 473-2111

Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Use Areas are being identified in certain sections of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The Use Areas are being set in response to dune destruction from Hurricane Isabel which resulted in the opening of sensitive habitat and to provide for more consistent management of breeding and nesting bird closures.

The ORV Use Areas, to be in place by March 31, 2004, will be similar in size and shape to the historical use patterns. They will not decrease the sum total of shoreline miles currently open to ORV access and public recreation. In many beach sections where dune was lost, such as south of Ramp 55 and south of Ramp 70, the Use Areas will provide greater width of beach access to ORVs than what existed prior to Hurricane Isabel. Identification of ORV Use Areas will not impact the number of ramps open to allow ORV access to seashore beaches.

The Use Areas are an interim management measure which will be used until an ORV Management Plan is developed. "Identification of Use Areas is needed now to protect areas impacted by Hurricane Isabel, and to make protected species management more consistent and identifiable for beach users," stated Lawrence A. Belli, Superintendent, Outer Banks Group. "Development of the park's ORV Management Plan is a separate process beginning later this year, with public input opportunities anticipated to take place in 2005. Once the Plan is completed, ORV use management will be guided by the strategies outlined in the Plan."

The ORV Use Areas will be marked by white reinforced composite posts 150 feet landward from the average, normal high tide line or, if existing, at the vegetation or remnant dune line. Beach areas landward of the post line, although not open to ORV use, will be open to pedestrian use. The location of the posts will be evaluated several times each year for proper distance placement in relation to changing shorelines.

Park staff will begin placement of the posts the week of March 21st.

Prior to Hurricane Isabel (September 18, 2003), the existing dune line

[Home](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Activities](#)

[Facts](#)

[For Kids](#)

[In Depth](#)

[Management Docs](#)

[News](#)

[Plan Your Visit](#)

[Bookstore »](#)

[Employment »](#)

[Volunteer »](#)

[Search »](#)

[Contact Us »](#)

physically established ORV driving areas between the ocean and the dune in most beach areas. Overwash during the storm, and resulting flattening of the dune, exposed areas of the park once protected by the dune. Areas of special concern include sections of destroyed dune south of Ramp 4, south of Ramp 55, and south of Ramp 70. As the dune remains virtually intact at Cape Point, no Use Area will be established in that vicinity. As much remnant dune still exists along the Narrows south of Ramp 4, the Use Area will follow the remnant dune line, making the width of beach available for ORV use slightly wider than prior to Hurricane Isabel.

An access corridor will be identified to provide access from the ORV Use Area to the northeast corner of the pond on the Oregon Inlet spit. Access corridors to provide designated access to the Pamlico Sound from the beach south of Hatteras Village are being determined.

The NPS is in the process of determining the continued public use of sections of the interdunal road south of Hatteras Village, known as the Pole Road. Washover from Hurricane Isabel greatly changed some segments of this road.

Temporary wildlife closures within the ORV Use Areas may take place to comply with protection measures afforded protected nesting sea turtle and shorebird nests. The public will be informed when these temporary closures are to take place, and the NPS will route beach traffic around the temporary wildlife closure when possible. Some of these temporary closures may necessitate short-term rerouting of traffic around the landward side of the Use Area posts in order to provide continued beach access for ORVs. The temporary wildlife closures will be closed to both ORV and pedestrian use.

The open sand flats near the three inlets in the park (Oregon, Hatteras, and Ocracoke) are used by protected bird species. The park has traditionally managed protection of these breeding and nesting areas by closing much of the sand flats to ORVs and pedestrians, and adjusting the closed areas as breeding and nesting use changed. This reactive method of managing the bird closures has long been a source of consternation to ORV users and environmental groups because of the constant changing of size, shape, location and timing of the closed areas. Identification of ORV Use Areas will alleviate this consternation by providing more consistent and defined management of bird closures.

ORV users at Cape Hatteras National Seashore access the beach to fish, surf, and recreate along the beach at the shoreline. The open sand flats near the inlets are generally used by the public only to "short-cut" from one shoreline spot to another, rather than traversing along the ocean edge. Other public use of the sand flats often involves illegal behavior such as speed driving, and unsafe vehicle use such as making ORV "donuts" in the sand.

**Return to list »**