



Byron, Rebecca

From: Gutman, Lori
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2005 9:04 AM
To: Byron, Rebecca
Subject: FW: Hatteras Island residents ask for consideration - Outer Banks Sentinel

For the CAHA admin records when you have a chance...

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From: Dorn, Gregory
Sent: Tuesday, November 08, 2005 11:14 PM
To: Otto, Dana; Commerford, Jess; Gutman, Lori
Subject: Hatteras Island residents ask for consideration - Outer Banks Sentinel

http://obsentinel.womacknewspapers.com/articles/2005/11/06/top_stories/tops0573.txt

Hatteras Island residents ask for consideration

BY SUSAN WEST, SENTINEL STAFF

On Tuesday evening, the National Park Service (NPS) held the first of three meetings to take public comment on the scope of an interim protected species management strategy for the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The interim strategy will guide the management of off-road vehicle (ORV) use on the seashore until a long-term ORV management plan is completed in 2008.

NPS faces the challenge of developing a plan that balances the recreational use of the seashore with the protection of birds, turtles, and plants in the park. Piping plovers, loggerhead sea turtles, green sea turtles, leatherback sea turtles, hawksbill sea turtles, and the seabeach amaranth are protected under the Endangered Species Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects other species, such as colonial waterbirds and the American oystercatcher, found in the park.

Held at the Fessenden Center in Buxton, the meeting on Tuesday drew more than 125 Hatteras Island residents and property owners. Attendees had the option of turning in written comments, providing comments to NPS staff stationed at informational posters set up in the gymnasium, speaking to court reporters in private rooms, or speaking during the public hearing. Approximately 25 people elected to offer comments at the microphone during the public hearing.

Several speakers commented on the protected species protocol document issued by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) at the request of NPS. The document outlines conservation strategies for protected species based on an analysis of scientific data. USGS scientists do not consider factors, such as budgetary constraints or dual responsibilities of regulatory agencies, that could limit implementation

of those strategies.

After citing the closures recommended in the USGS document, Wayne Mathis said, "These recommendations could have come from the most radical group of environmental terrorists in the country."

"The recommendations would result in the closure of the entire park to all recreational activity," said the Buxton resident. "Preparation of the document was a waste of taxpayers' money. The report isn't responsive to NPS' mission to provide for recreational use of the seashore by the American people as Congress intended."

Speakers urged NPS to consider a full range of options for protecting sensitive species while providing vehicular access to the beach. "I strongly encourage the use of strategies that have been successful elsewhere," said Gastonia resident and Avon homeowner David Scarborough. "Extract the turtle eggs, hatch them in captivity, and then release them into the ocean."

Bob Davis said that an incubation facility would make a wonderful attraction for visitors to the seashore. "The idea that nature knows best makes for terrible management. Overwash is the primary threat to turtle nests. Nests need to be relocated," said the Buxton resident.

"If the park service would do something about beach erosion, then we'd have room for the piping plovers and the turtles," said Carol Dillon of Buxton.

All the speakers at the Fessenden Center agreed on the need to avoid the situation that arose last summer when NPS closed Cape Point to recreational use. "We suffered through a bad, bad policy for 36 days," said John Couch, owner of the Red Drum shopping center in Buxton. "Business at the gas station was off 20 percent. I sent employees home in the middle of the afternoon because there was so little business. Business at the tackle shop was off 50 percent on weekends."

Couch is president of the Outer Banks Preservation Association (OBPA) a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving vehicular access to the beach. At the end of the meeting, he presented Patrick Reed, the park's acting superintendent, with a petition asking NPS to minimize closures, to assure beach access, and to avoid the confusion and uncertainty created by NPS policy this year. More than 140 business-owners and 1,000 individuals signed the petition.

Dare County Commissioner Warren Judge said that the Dare County Board of Commissioners "unanimously and passionately passed a resolution asking that the residents and visitors of Hatteras Island always have access inside the park." Judge said that he hoped the development of the interim management strategy could be the springboard for restoring a good relationship between the park and the people.

The deadline for submitting comments on the interim protected species management strategy is Nov. 17. Comments can be sent on-line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/CAHA>, or mailed to Superintendent, Outer Banks Group, 1401 National Park Drive, Manteo, NC 27954.

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