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February 15, 2008

Mike Murray. Superintendent
Outer Banks Group
1401 National Park Road
Manteo, NC 27954

Dear Mike,

Aaron McCall and I sat down together two weeks ago to work on filling in the "Alternatives Options Workbook." Almost immediately, we ran into insurmountable difficulties. We were very reluctant to answer questions on the basis of hunches and opinions, but to provide reasoned and informed feedback virtually all the questions require information that we don't have yet. We expect to receive this information at some point in the upcoming negotiations. We assume this information will be collected and organized as part of the NEPA compliance process.

I think it might be useful to state The Nature Conservancy's priorities for a successful and beneficial outcome of these negotiations:

Our top priority for these negotiations and the resulting plan is for NPS to take whatever steps are appropriate and necessary to ensure the ecological integrity of the natural communities on NPS lands and waters. This is our "whole ecosystem goal" and we will be evaluating alternatives as well as we can with this in mind.

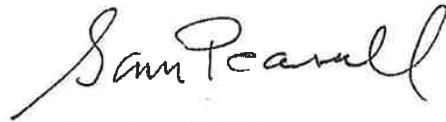
Our second priority for these negotiations and the resulting plan is for NPS to take whatever steps are appropriate and necessary to ensure the maintenance of viable populations of all species identified as conservation targets for these negotiations. We assume these are the species and groups of species listed on page 82 of the workbook. For the most part, TNC does not bring a lot of expertise to the table on individual species, so we will tend to defer to the recommendations provided by the experts provided that their advice does not unnecessarily subordinate the whole ecosystem goal to individual species conservation.¹

¹ This sounds like something that should never happen, but in fact, it is common. We often see systems managed to enhance a few species to the detriment of many others, and ultimately to the whole system. This is especially true if the target species is very beautiful or very interesting, preferred game for hunting or fishing, or specifically protected by statute, which can make subordination non-optional.

Our third priority for these negotiations and the resulting plan is for NPS to take whatever steps are appropriate and necessary to ensure that benefits from the NPS lands and waters are fairly distributed and available to residents, visitors, and *in absentia* supporters of the Outer Banks, ensuring that all can have a high quality experience insofar as it is possible. In the context of this priority, we will support some sort of balance among the kinds of access that are needed (e.g., motorized, pedestrian, facilitated handicapped). We acknowledge that many arguments will be presented on these issues, and that these arguments will be founded on a whole range of issues ranging from aesthetics to economics to social justice. These important considerations are outside the scope of The Nature Conservancy's mission, but as residents and visitors we do have a stake in their resolution. It is important to note that we will support a balance of public uses only if that balance is consistent with the conservation goals expressed in the first two priorities.

We are honored to be asked to participate in the "RegNeg" process, and look forward to helping in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Pearsall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sam Pearsall, Ph.D.
Director of Science
SamPearsall@tnc.org