



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site Wright Brothers National Memorial

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

1401 National Park Drive

Manteo, NC 27954

252-473-2111



December 2, 2008

Mr. Pete Benjamin
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Raleigh Field Office
P.O. Box 33726
Raleigh, NC 27636-3726

Dear Mr. Benjamin:

Following is a summary of Cape Hatteras National Seashore's 2008 breeding season results related to the Re-initiation Notice identified in the Second Amendment to the Biological Opinion for Cape Hatteras National Seashore's Interim Protected Species Management Strategy (dated March 28, 2008).

Piping Plovers

1.a. Eleven breeding pairs of piping plovers were found on the Seashore surpassing the minimum required level of six (6) breeding pairs of piping plovers per year.

1.b. The eleven (11) breeding pairs produced thirteen (13) known nests surpassing the minimum required level of 8.25 nests (75% of the number of breeding pairs producing nests per year).

1.c. The eleven (11) breeding pair and thirteen (13) nests resulted in seven (7) chicks fledged (0.64 fledged chick per breeding pair), which is below the target level of producing an average of one (1) fledged chick per breeding pair, per year.

The following statements address the new measures in the Re-initiation Notice of the Second Amendment to the Biological Opinion.

- a. The Seashore documented 13 nesting attempts for 11 pairs. The number of nesting attempts for all breeding pairs was less than double the number of breeding pairs.
- b. The Seashore did not document more than two nests for any one breeding pair. Of the 11 breeding pairs, only two pairs re-nested.

Sea Turtles

a. The state wide average for the past 5 years (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) is 652.4. The 112 nests on CAHA in 2008 represent 17.2 % of the state wide average over the last 5 years.

- c. In 2008, there were a total of 112 nests and 103 false crawls resulting in a 0.92:1 false crawl to nest ratio. This falls within the acceptable false crawl to nest ratio.

As provided in 50 CFR §402.16, re-initiation of formal consultation is required where discretionary NPS involvement or control over the action has been retained (or is authorized by law) and if the amount or extent of incidental take is exceeded. Based on the above triggers for re-initiation of formal consultation (based on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Second Amendment to the Biological Opinion dated March 28, 2008), we request re-initiation of formal consultation on our failure to meet the target level of producing an average of one (1) fledged chick per breeding pair, per year.

Various factors are responsible for our failure to meet this target including storm events and predation. We believe that mammalian predation on nesting shorebirds was reduced as a result of our trapping efforts on the Seashore.



Following is a table of mammals that were removed from the spits and Cape Point prior to and during the 2008 nesting season. Although it would be difficult to show a direct correlation with just one year of trapping and one nesting season, we believe that the increase in PIPL pair numbers at South Point is correlated to the number of predators removed from this area. The Seashore is currently working on completing a predator management environmental assessment. No trapping has occurred at the Seashore since July 2008.

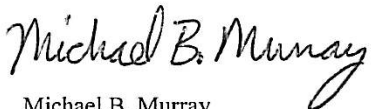
Mammals removed from piping plover nesting areas from Sept 2007 through July 2008				
Species	Location			
	Bodie Spit	Cape Point	Hatteras Inlet	South Point
Feral Cat	6	15	26	6
Raccoon	15	40	17	5
Mink	0	0	1	10
Opossum	16	27	17	0
Muskrat	0	0	0	1
Otter	0	2	2	1
Grey Fox	6	0	0	0
Red Fox	8	1	0	0
Nutria	0	23	6	20

In comparison to the rest of the state, piping plover reproductive success at the Seashore was higher than the statewide average. In North Carolina reproductive success was very low for a second year in a row with only 19 chicks surviving to fledge from the 64 pairs (0.3 chicks per pair) (Pers. Comm. S. Cameron). At the Seashore 11 pairs fledged 7 chicks (0.64 chicks per pair), the second highest area of productivity in the state.

As required under the reporting requirements of the biological opinion, the annual reports will be submitted to your office on or before January 31, 2009. These reports will contain detailed observations and data related to the breeding season and provide additional basis for evaluation of the 2008 breeding season performance.

If you have any questions about the information provided, please contact Britta Muiznieks at (252)995-3740.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Murray
Superintendent

cc:
CAHA Chief Resource Management
CAHA Wildlife Biologist