



THE Louis Berger Group, INC.

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CAH

CONVERSATION

Date 12.19.08 Time _____

RECORD

Name: Mike Bilecki

Organization: **Fire Island**

Phone: 631 687-4760

RE: Fire Island vehicle management rationale

Background: There are over 4,000 home owners within the FIIS park boundary. No ATVs are allowed on Fire Island, only 4WD vehicles and other large highway-approved vehicles. The Park permitting systems does not extend to vehicles that stay within the communities in the park. Currently, the Park is engaged in negotiated rulemaking to update the driving regulations of 2-3 years ago that cover year round residents, electrical and other utilities and contractors (in other words, regular driving, not recreational driving). The new regs, which will likely involve the issuance of fleet permits to cover the significant number of contracting trips, would not extend to recreational driving. Only one 6 to 8-mile portion of the park—a wilderness area that begins at the eastern end and extends from the mean high tide line to the toe of the dunes (0.5 miles at its widest point) is open for recreational driving. This area is regulated and permits are required for entry. The area is open exclusively for fishing or hunting, and is shut down to recreational driving from January to October, a timeframe decided based on hunting and fishing seasons. The area is shut down entirely from March to September for the piping plover (T&E) breeding season. Smith County Park is located within the FIIS Park boundary and operates under its own driving regulations.

- a. Was there a **major issue** that precipitated the rec. management planning? Ecosystem protection? When. Recreational driving regulations were promulgated in 1984. The major concern was keeping down the number of vehicles driving on the beach (municipal, contractor) and related to time-of-year driving. Park visitors in the summer conflicted with vehicle traffic from contractors and residents. Additionally, April to August is the period during which effects to T&E species would be highest.
- b. Did you establish a **carrying capacity** to determine a cap on ORV use? If so, what type of area (i.e. a specific destination, a large area with multiple visitor destinations, etc) The carrying capacity number was developed based on the "rhizome rule", i.e. how many vehicles could be allowed on the beach without significant damage to plant rhizomes (root systems). A 1983 study entitled "Limitations for permits for off-road vehicles" was conducted by park staff (Jim Allen). Findings of the study guided permit policy.
- c. How were the requirements on the **size, weight and length of the vehicle** chosen? Weight limits were based on what bridges could handle. There are two bridges to the island.
- d. How was the **speed limit** chosen? – 20mph, based on a review of what other parks had done.
- e. How were **permit costs** derived? Were they based on carrying capacity or other data? Permit costs are set up to cover administrative costs of operating the permit system. In



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addition, a separate account was created for the permit program that includes funding which is used for T&E species supplies and equipment or other resources such as seasonal law enforcement rangers, as long as their connected to driving issues. Also covered: funds for upgrades and fixing the electronic gate system (in which a code punched at the gate contains information to track permit use) and a computer program that manages permit system.

Also contact Jay Lippard, Chief Ranger (631-387-4757) for more info on driving regs.

Written by _____