

**From:** [Michelle Baker](#)  
**To:** [Mike Murray](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Your input requested  
**Date:** 03/09/2009 08:50 AM

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Mike,

Here is the alternative I most prefer:

1. My preference is Option C. A potential variation that would work is if fires were allowed after August or September X, with a permit and in set areas where no nests are known to occur. The permit would be restricted to "bull-pen" areas where there are no known nests, and fires would be prohibited from 12 a.m. (midnight) to 6 a.m. This would protect nesting females from May to August/September X, and then protect emerging hatchlings from August to November by putting fires only in nest-free areas.
2. I chose this option as it is the most protective of nesting turtles and emerging turtle hatchlings. Every year we document interactions between beach fires and turtles, often resulting in aborted nesting attempts and hatchling misorientation. Misorientation often leads to hatchlings succumbing to exhaustion and increased predation rate. Additionally, hatchlings may actually enter fires as we saw in the incident in 2008. Because we are not able to be on the beach at night, we are unsure of the magnitude of this problem, but are confident that incidents occur more often than reported. As the north-west Atlantic population of Loggerheads is likely to be re-classified as endangered within the next year, I think the Park must stay ahead of the curve in sea turtle protection measures, which will likely include a Park-wide comprehensive lighting plan.
3. I don't really have a strong opinion on this, except in the variation of Option C stated above (in #1), but it may up the compliance from a LE perspective. Overall though I am not sure if the benefits would outweigh the operational costs.

Thank you for this opportunity to present you with our opinions on the subject.

Michelle Bogardus  
Lead Sea Turtle  
Cape Hatteras National Seashore  
P.O. Box 190  
Buxton, NC 27920  
(252) 216-6892

-----Mike Murray/CAHA/NPS wrote: -----

To:  
From: Mike Murray/CAHA/NPS  
Date: 03/05/2009 05:20PM  
Subject: Your input requested

CONFIDENTIAL DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION

If you have received this message, I am requesting your individual professional opinion about the park policy on beach fires. During the RegNeg process, we decided it was not an issue under the purview of the Committee. During natural resource subcommittee discussions, the issue of beach fires did come up occasionally, with regard to sea turtle protection, and there was some interest in NPS regulating beach fires more restrictively than we have done in the past (until 2008, there were no restrictions). In any case, though it is not related directly to ORV management, it is an issue that I want to include in our plan (alternatives matrix) since it will help establish a long-term policy on light management and other sources of recreational impacts to nesting sea turtles. My objective is to provide reasonable opportunities for visitor enjoyment of the beach experience, of which beach fires have a long tradition, both good (family oriented fires) and bad (late night partying fires), while trying to minimize law enforcement problems and potential impacts to sea turtles (nesting and hatchlings).

I would appreciate your feedback on three questions:

**1. Which of the following beach fire policy options would you choose? (pick one)** If you think a variation of any of the three options would be better, please suggest it, BUT submit only ONE variation and keep it simple. (I don't want to brainstorm more options. I want to home in on a preferred option.)

Options:

- a. *Status quo* : Beach fires prohibited from 12 a.m. (midnight) to 6 a.m. year-round.
- b. Beach fires prohibited year-round, except at the following locations: Coquina Beach, Village Beaches on Hatteras Island, and Ocracoke Day Use Area. At these locations, beach fires prohibited from 12 a.m. (midnight) to 6 a.m. year-round.
- c. Beach fires prohibited (everywhere) from May 1 to November 15 (turtle season). Beach fires allowed, but prohibited from 12 a.m. (midnight) to 6 a.m. between November 16 - April 30

**2) Why did you choose the option you chose and reject the other two?**

**3) Should we require an educational permit for beach fires?** (Let's assume we can figure out the workload issue; the question really is as follows: Are the potential educational and compliance benefits of requiring fire permits worth the operational and visitor inconvenience of doing so? I don't have a strong opinion on this, but think if the benefit doesn't considerably outweigh the inconvenience, then let's don't do it.

**Please respond NLT 0900 on Monday, March 9, if you want your input to be considered.**

Thank you,

Mike Murray  
Superintendent  
Cape Hatteras NS/ Wright Brothers NMem/ Ft. Raleigh NHS  
(w) 252-473-2111, ext. 148  
(c) 252-216-5520  
fax 252-473-2595

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