

Questions for Britta and Thayer - 10/15/09

Also on conference call: Sandy Hamilton, Lori Fox, and Doug Wetmore

CHAPTER 1

Page 21, Line 10 - Jami Hammond: An analysis of impacts to mammals should also include indirect impacts due to garbage and fish-cleaning by-products associated with ORV/recreational access. The increased availability of this type of food may lead to increased populations or altered distributions of mammals, like raccoons, that may prey on listed species along the beach.

- BM – don't have analysis or data to support impacts to predators from human trash.
- TB – sentence to dismiss from further analysis. Will be in predator management EA.
- LF – park recognizes

CHAPTER 2 TEXT

General – Tim Pinion: it would be useful to provide more information in the text of Chapter 2 on the rationale and purpose for establishing SMAs.

- BM – it's already in the tables.
- LF – can add text from tables and bring to group

Page 18, Line 21 - Tim Pinion: "Areas that would be seasonally designated vehicle-free would include the areas in front of villages, except Frisco and Hatteras, and most of the Species Management Areas." I thought that all SMAs would be seasonally designated vehicle-free.

-Doug W: Note – Does this need more clarification for the reader?

- TB – depends on the alternative.
- LBG will clarify in text of chapter 2.

Page 22, Line 19 - Tim Pinion: What are "floating" nonbreeding shorebird habitat areas? How will they be established?

- TB – idea was to have a limited area for these. Pick out prime areas. BM- Audubon suggested wintering closures for non-breeding shorebirds. No hard data to base specific wintering closure locations.

- TB – Mike to answer.

Page 32, Line 8 - Thayer: some explanation should be given to the term "farmed". Is it farmed for commercial purposes or just to have plants to use in repopulation efforts?

- BM – animals are different than plants as far as protection goes. ESA may allow moving protected plants that were part of a repopulation effort. How do you know that the plants aren't naturally occurring.

CHAPTER 3

Wintering data for bird species – It seems that when the SECN did the wintering study in 2006-2007, they surveyed the entire Seashore and when the NPS took over (in 2007?), they only surveyed the points and spits, which would be a big difference for species such as the REKN who don't primarily use these areas. Does the park have any recommendations on how they would like the wintering data presented? Is it worth including the SECN 2006-2007 data at all?

*when did CAHA take over? (2007-2008 winter season)

- PIPL – data is comparable between both studies, but would have to sift through data (get sampling points, make sure that no areas outside of points and spits were included). Sandy to look at data and see if data points are available.
- REKN data couldn't compare data. One year of data doesn't mean anything. Just cite report. Don't include in document. Sandy - Data will be available in admin record. Park has not yet begun surveying entire Seashore.

Wintering habitat data – How would the park like this shown? Combined for all wintering data from 2006 to present? Are numbers (bar chart) helpful or do pie charts provide a better indication of which wintering habitats are preferred?

- *Is habitat data that Sandy downloaded for winter only?
- Can combine wintering data in one chart – PIPL, not REKN, not

Page 5, Table 1 – Britta: contact Anne Hecht to see if 2009 data is available. (Note – need contact info)

- Britta to provide contact info. 978-443-4325 (FWS – Mass) anne_hecht@fws.gov

Page 26, Line 14 - Tim Pinion: There is no mention here of whether these birds remained unpaired for the entire breeding season. What evidence suggests that disturbance preventing these unpaired birds

from finding mates? Or, do we mean to say that because population sizes are small and there is a risk of the Allee effect, it is especially important to minimize other factors, such as disturbance?

Britta to provide opinion/input

- Britta – closures have been large enough that there aren't mates for them. Unpaired, don't know reason why. PIPL closures are of adequate size to provide mate. SH – closures may not have been adequate to prevent disturbance and increase population size. BM/SH - probably not discuss allee
- Page 27, Line 33 - T. Borgardus: They must be referencing the USFWS PIPL recovery plan. However I don't know if we want to say this. In my opinion I don't know if there is enough data here at CAHA to make this statement. This seems like a statement targeting ORV's and might raise some red flags to readers. Our predation data from the last couple of years will probably not support this statement.

Page 36, Line 22 - T. Borgardus: We have not documented raccoon predation on turtle nests at CAHA. We have documented feral cats taking hatchlings. Should we include known numbers of nests taken by red fox at CAHA like it was done for PIPL?

- BM – Can't say how many were lost due to red fox. In recent years, CWB colonies have been impacted by foxes
- TB – using research outside the park, OK to leave in if can compare to CAHA. BM – can extrapolate for predation at other places.

Page 48 – AMOY data: Need footnote explaining why park data used sometimes and why Simon and Schulte data used at other times. Note – does park have data for all years so that one source could be used?

- BM – sent corrected data to S&S to confirm, but have not heard back. S&S wouldn't incorporate changes that NPS sent. NPS data isn't published yet, but Britta is confident that it's right. SH – need to explain the difference in data. Use footnote. Won't make a difference in conclusions. TB – send email to Simons to document that corrected data was sent (Britta to do). How to cite CAHA data – (pers comm. britta muz).

P62 line 5 – Tyler B – list CWB predation events like done for PIPL.

- TB – leave as is for now. Don't have numbers.

CHAPTER 4

We need to discuss impairment conclusion language especially for those with moderate to major adverse impacts. Not sure how this should be stated – have seen several different ways.

- SH – instead of saying “not major”, need to say why it’s not impaired. How does situation link up to actual threshold. Sandy working on language for this. TB – Tim may be up to speed more on the terminology than Britta. SH – doesn’t think likelihood of impairment under B-F. TB – trapping program is separate issue, but has been done every year to some degree or another. BM – Alt A, if numbers continue to decline, and basing closures on breeding previous year, numbers would continue to decline and could result in extirpation. SH – there is a potential for impairment. TB – risk impairment under every alternative except D. SH – solicitor’s are advising to not discuss unacceptable impacts in document, but keep in admin record. Need to say what Britta said about potential for extirpation. TB – only difference between A and B is in CWB.

SPECIES MANAGEMENT TABLE

Doug McGee - (Referring to "territorial behavior" under the definition of "Breeding Behavior")
I would omit this or change it to 2 consecutive monitoring occasions (~3 days). AMOYs and PIPLs both can be "territorial" over foraging habitat that isn't associated with breeding territory or even breeding. PIPLs in particular can be territorial with other species, eg semi-palmated plovers and sanderlings. Early in the season birds can be aggressive towards each as returning birds and migrants come in contact with each other as they are traveling through. Several times in the 2008 & 2009 seasons we closed sections of beach for a single instance of "territorial behavior" to never to see the birds again. To leave it as is, may put staff in the position of "chasing birds with signs".

- BM – goes back to the confusion that this was the definition in CD. BM – AMOY were biting/fighting caused closure. Some people argue that territorial behavior is breeding behavior. SH – could add paren that says (except that not known to be breeding behavior). TB – could delete territorial behavior, but would change if anyone objected. Don’t want to chase birds with signs if they aren’t breeding and just territorial (not necessarily mean that they will breed in that area). TB-BM – delete “territorial”. SH – might not want to delete completely if can’t adequately protect birds from entering the next phase of breeding. BM – prenesting closures under action alternatives will cover most of this activity. Prenesting closures for AMOY are new this year. Remove “territorial behavior” from SM table.

Tim Pinion: Breeding Shorebird SMA: The description includes "concentrations of seabeach amaranth specimens." Perhaps we should remove amaranth from the description, or change the name to "Breeding Shorebird and Seabeach Amaranth SMA."

- BM – amaranth should be removed from BS SMA. State that it’s covered elsewhere.

Tim Pinion: Pre-nesting Closures, All species: "Pre-nesting closures will be adjusted to the configuration of the Nonbreeding Shorebird SMAs for the respective sites if no breeding activity is seen in the area by July 31, or 2 weeks after all chicks have fledged. . . ." But the text on page 14 of Chapter 2 (lines 1- 2), says that "The spits and points would be closed to ORVs from March 15 to October 14 to provide resource protection." I may misunderstand, but the text and table do not appear consistent. Similarly, the text describing Alternative D on page 16 calls for year-round vehicle-free areas at the SMAs.

- DW – not intended to be consistent. BM – date just applies to when pre-nesting closures need to be removed. If bird shows up after removed, still need to provide protection. Currently using 2 weeks for AMOY and not PIPL or LETE. AMOY may stay in the area to become proficient in flying.
- Need to indicate that where July 31+two weeks occurs, reader should refer to alternative to see when ORVs are allowed (alt C – Oct 14, alt-D closed))
- BM – late nests generally don't fledge. Appears that LETE first, then BLSK show up later.

Tim Pinion: Courtship/Mating Surveys: "Outside of pre-nesting closures, suitable habitat will be surveyed three times per week once breeding pairs are present." Why is the suitable habitat not part of the pre-nesting closure?

- BM – may have been thinking about how pre-nesting closures are currently established. Under action scenario, WILL have pre-nesting closures for AMOY, etc. Much smaller suitable habitat areas outside of pre-nesting closures than under no-action. All shoreline is potential AMOY breeding habitat.
- New - Courtship mating buffers – Under ALL – Suggest delete "outside of prenesting area". Wording in text is referring to how it was done in past (in current prenesting management).

Tim Pinion: Unfledged Chicks Surveys, Piping plover: It looks like SM1 and SM2 are switched.

- BM – it's correct. Leave as is

Tim Pinion: Generally, I have difficulty understanding the relationship between the processes for establishing SMAs and conducting pre-nesting closures, breeding and non-breeding surveys, etc. Surveys and closures and buffers described in the table seem to have no dependence on SMAs.

- TB : aren't dependent on location of SMA. SMA is strictly locational. BM – SMA based on previous breeding activity. Survey effort (SM1 vs SM2) depends on staffing availability – larger buffer doesn't require frequent monitoring.
- SH – is the confusion from the use of SM vs SMA? TB – can leave SM and SMA but need to explain if someone asks.
- Ask Mike at meeting if changing labels would solve the problem.

Page 5 – Mike Murray: Unfledged chick surveys for AMOY and WIPL under SM2– "Is it realistic to survey the brood once daily for at least ½ hour given the number of birds"?

- For AMOY/WIPL, SM2 - Brood will be observed at least once daily. Under all, if can't locate chicks, at least ½ spent trying to locate them.
- BM – if there was an explosion of PIPL, it would be difficult do with that many birds especially if they are spread out. May not be realistic. TB – adaptive management and periodic view could change this over time. BM – time spent to observe foraging habitat is important. One hour seems reasonable with current number of chicks.

Why are SM1 and SM2 buffers for PIPL the same? Is this inconsistent with the premise of the species management strategies?

- BM – 75m is from discussions with FWS (Pete Benjamin). 75m is above and beyond what others are doing, so no need to make difference between

Why are PIPL buffers smaller than every other bird species?

- Because PIPL appear to be more tolerant during that phase of their breeding cycle. Chick buffers are larger.

Why are AMOY buffers smaller than “other CWB”?

- BM – based on observations, maybe. Seemed to be adequate in CD. LETE on the rise with that sized buffer (larger than IPSMS buffer).
- SH – check literature

Do we need SM tables for no-action alternatives?

- SH – part of the no action is that it has never been put down in a tabular form. Apples-Oranges table if try to put old numbers in the new SM table. Not in appendix
- TB – available other places, but could put them in if needed
- SH – could put buffers and surveying in a combined table
- Undecided. Needs more discussion.

ALTERNATIVE ELEMENTS SUMMARY MATRIX

Page 1 - Tim Pinion: Alternative C, ORV Routes, ORV corridors: Why is driving allowed up to the tow of the dune rather than providing an ocean backshore closure?

- BM - Might have to do with encouraging vehicle to stop vegetation growth = better habitat and less predator hiding places.

Page 3 -Tim Pinion: Alternative C, Hours of Allowable ORV Operation: Why are hours of night driving established in the Superintendent's Compendium rather than in this EIS

- TB and BM - Don't know.

Add simplified SMA table that Doug W. developed for analysis?

- TB – big on trying to summarize.
- Doug to send before meeting and weigh in. Send to Britta today.

ALTERNATIVES MAPS

Add SMAs?

- BM – will be hard to put on to a map. Would take time to do. Need by Wednesday. BM – might not be able to do it. Doug McGee may need to help with this.
- TB – bring maps and info to Doug McGee on Wednesday and see if he can draw it on maps. Chase may need to be involved. Doug W. to contact Chase Gatlin

MISCELLANEOUS

Level of survey/management detail- how much is needed – e.g. special status species- keep or pare down?

- Ask Nancy Van Dyke about this question.