

0025228

From: [Mike Murray](#)
To: [alan.sutton](#)
Cc: [Cyndy Holda](#); [Kenny](#); [Darrell Echols](#); [Paul Stevens](#); [Michelle Baker](#); [Adam Collins](#); [Dennis McGinnis](#)
Subject: Re: 2009 Southpoint fall access
Date: 12/18/2009 01:58 PM

Alan,

I appreciate hearing your concerns and how the access situation this fall affected you. I (and the rest of the staff copied on this message) do understand the importance of access to South Point, which is further reinforced by your message and by Kenny every chance he gets. On a personal level, I regret the difficulties the situation caused you.

This fall seems to have been a "perfect storm" of bad fall weather and a small, but unprecedented, number of late turtle nests. The Veterans Day storm flooded and closed a number of ramps and revealed the limitations of our capacity to maintain and repair flooded access ramps and interdunal roads. Turtle nests laid in September or later are a relatively rare occurrence at the Seashore. This year a few occurred in "inconvenient" locations that impacted access, such as the nest between Ramps 70 and 72. No special measure (or reduced level of protection) was provided for late nests in the Interim Strategy. I believe it was not included because late nests are such an uncommon occurrence. Staff typically expand the buffer to prescribed parameters when a turtle nest reaches its "hatch window" at 50-55 days, regardless of when it was laid. Staff check the nest daily for signs of hatching, then excavate it at least 72 hours after it hatches. For nests that are delayed in hatching, the procedure is to allow the nest to incubate for at least 90 days before excavating it if there is still no sign of hatching. The consent decree adopted the Interim Strategy procedures, added some other measures such as the night driving restriction, and made them requirements, which in the near term limits our flexibility.

Key staff who were involved in the situation are on furlough or leave at the moment. I will share your message with them, so that after the holidays we can fully consider your concerns to see if there is a practical way to provide more reliable access to South Point if we face similar circumstances again.

Alan, I appreciate your sense of restraint in limiting the number of calls about the situation this fall; however, please do not hesitate to call Cyndy or Kenny if you think a situation is not getting the attention it needs. I'd rather know about an unresolved problem, so we can follow up on it, if necessary. We know how important access is to South Point is to Ocracoke visitors and to the community, and I do really want staff to be responsive to legitimate concerns, such as those you have expressed. If we can fix something, we will try our best to do so!

In closing, best wishes to you and Melinda for a Happy Holiday season.

Mike Murray
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-----alan sutton <alan.tradewinds@embarqmail.com> wrote: -----

To: mike <mike_murray@nps.gov>
From: alan sutton <alan.tradewinds@embarqmail.com>
Date: 12/15/2009 12:03PM
cc: cindy <cindy_holda@nps.gov>, Kenny <Kenny_Ballance@nps.gov>
Subject: 2009 Southpoint fall access

Mike,

I only made one phone call to Cindy this fall to express my concern and the economic pain caused by the lack of late fall ORV access to Southpoint. I would have called more, but we do not want to distract you from the permanent ORV plan. While I do not want to take time away from your tasks associated with a permanent ORV plan, I do want to share some of the results of the Southpoint closure. As you know, Southpoint road was impassable for much of November. The complete beach closure at the turtle nest to the north of Southpoint road and the lack of maintenance to the road itself eliminated access.

This year, November sales at Tradewinds Tackle were off 28% from November 2007. In fact, November sales were even off 21% from November 2008, when devastating economic news was crushing retail sales. These numbers include good sales during Thanksgiving and would look even worse if we just compared the weeks with the closures at Southpoint.

Obviously, the bad weather and road problems created by "Nor'Ida" caused a decline in tourism and sales. But normally we get more visitors to Ocracoke during bad weather situations to our north, as people that have already planned their vacations look for a place to fish and access the beaches to the south. Without access to Southpoint, they do not visit Ocracoke.

0025230

Access to Southpoint is critical for our economic survival, particularly during the spring and fall fishing months. I can not understand the complete beach closure for a turtle nest that late in the season. Water temperatures would not have allowed survival for any hatchlings. And the delays in repairing and maintaining Southpoint Road indicate a disregard for access by NPS. It was a frustrating fall.

Please understand the importance of ORV access to Southpoint.

Sincerely,

Alan & Melinda Sutton

Tradewinds Tackle

Ocracoke, NC

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