

DAVID E. PRICE
4TH DISTRICT, NORTH CAROLINA

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3304

January 22, 2010

The Honorable Secretary Ken Salazar
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

We write to bring to your attention the issue of public access at the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CAHA).

As you know, the National Park Service (NPS) is currently managing CAHA under a court-approved consent decree while working to develop a long-term ORV management plan and special regulations. The consent decree results in more temporary resource closures to protect nesting shorebirds and sea turtles between mid-March and mid-to-late-August than resulted under prior management plans. These closures frequently occur at popular beach sites and have caused significant concern at the local level because they limit both pedestrian and ORV access to certain areas.

Even in peak closure periods under the consent decree, many miles of beach remain open to ORV and pedestrian access, and the NPS provides the public with timely and accurate information to determine where they are allowed to go. However, some of these unrestricted areas remain largely inaccessible because of high dunes, roads, private property, and limited parking. There are more than 2 million visitors to CAHA each year, but there are just over 1000 parking spaces and only 17 oceanside beach access ramps along the entire stretch of seashore, which spans nearly 70 miles. That means that even some of the lowest impact, least disruptive users cannot access CAHA.

We believe that improving public access along the seashore is essential to its enjoyment and long-term protection. We urge the NPS to consider enhancing the existing infrastructure and increasing public access points through all practical means, including adding parking lots and other public facilities and increasing the number of beach access ramps available for pedestrians and persons with disabilities. We hope you will consider providing CAHA staff with additional resources and funding to study and implement such a plan.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you in the future on this important issue.

Sincerely,


Rep. David Price
Member of Congress

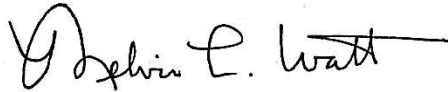

Rep. G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

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Cc: Daniel Wenk, Deputy Director, National Park Service
Cc: Mike Murray, Superintendent, National Park Service, Outer Banks Group
Cc: Jonathan Jarvis, Director, National Park Service