



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 Fort Raleigh National Historical Site Wright Brothers National Memorial
 Cape Hatteras National Seashore
 1401 National Park Drive
 Manteo, NC 27954
 252-473-2111



IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7615 (CAHA)

February 17, 2010

Mr. Pete Benjamin
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Raleigh Field Office
 P.O. Box 33726
 Raleigh, NC 27636-3726

Dear Mr. Benjamin:

The purpose of this letter is to request formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on Alternative F of the draft Cape Hatteras National Seashore Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). We are requesting consultation for the following listed species: piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) of the Atlantic Coast, Great Lakes and Great Plains populations; seabeach amaranth (*Amaranthus pumilus*); and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), and leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) sea turtles. Based on the information in the DEIS we have determined that actions that would be implemented under the NPS preferred Alternative F, may affect/are likely to adversely affect piping plover; may affect/are likely to adversely affect sea turtles, and may affect/are likely to adversely affect seabeach amaranth. We have also determined that the implementation of Alternative F may affect/is not likely to adversely affect designated critical habitat for wintering piping plover.

For this project the DEIS has been developed to also serve as the biological assessment (BA). The following BA information is contained on the pages of the DEIS as indicated below:

1. Project Description

- a) Desired future conditions for federally listed species, pp. 7-9
- b) Description of elements common to all alternatives, pp. 56 – 59
- c) Description of elements common to all action alternatives, pp. 61 – 74
- d) Text description of Alternative F, pp. 80-82
- e) Table 7 Off-Road Vehicle Routes and Areas, far right column describes routes and areas for Alternative F, pp. 97-101

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- f) Table 8 Summary of Alternative Elements, far right column describes elements of Alternative F, pp. 102-115
 - g) Table 10 Species Management Strategies for Action Alternatives, pp. 121-126
 - h) Table 11 Shorebird/Waterbird Buffer Summary for Action Alternatives, p.127
 - i) Table 12 Analysis of How Alternatives Meet Objectives, far right column for alternative F, p. 129 Endangered and Other Protected Species.
 - j) Figure 2 Maps of the Alternatives, 7 maps for Alternative F, pp. 175 – 181
2. General Impact Analysis (for all topics)
- a) General methodology for establishing impact thresholds and measuring effects by resource, pp. 292 – 293, General methodology for analyzing cumulative impacts, pp. 293 – 296
3. General Impact Analysis (for listed species)
- a) Guiding regulations and policies, assumptions, methodologies and threshold definitions for ESA effects determinations, pp. 318 – 320
 - b) Table 13 Environmental Impact Summary by Alternative, the far right column summarizes impacts of Alternative F on the federally listed species, pp. 133-134
4. Piping Plover
- a) Description of species biology and current conditions, pp. 184 - 212
 - b) Cumulative effects of state and private actions in the project area, pp 358 - 359
 - c) Critical habitat, description pp. 189 – 191; effect p. 361
 - d) Effects of proposed action (Alternative F) on piping plover and critical habitat and potential for incidental take of listed species, pp. 320 – 322 describes species specific methodology and assumptions used for impact analysis; pp. 356 - 361 analyzes impacts; pp. 362 – 367 Table 52 Summary of Impacts to Piping Plover under the Alternatives, far right column summarizes impacts to piping plover of Alternative F
 - e) ESA effects determination, pp. 360 – 361
5. Sea turtles
- a) Description of species biology and current conditions, pp. 212 - 221
 - b) Cumulative effects of state and private actions in the project area, pp. 393 - 394
 - c) Critical habitat has not been designated for sea turtles and is therefore not discussed
 - d) Effects of proposed action (Alternative F) on sea turtles and critical habitat and potential for incidental take of listed species, pp. 368 – 370 describes species specific methodology and assumptions used for sea turtle impact analysis; pp. 392 -396 analyzes impacts of Alternative F on sea turtles; p. 396 Table 53 Summary of Impacts to Sea Turtles under the Alternatives, far right column, summarizes impacts to sea turtles of Alternative F
 - e) ESA effects determination, pp. 395 – 396
6. Seabeach amaranth
- a) Description of species biology and current conditions, pp. 221 - 223
 - b) Cumulative effects of state and private actions in the project area, pp. 416
 - c) Critical habitat has not been designated for seabeach amaranth and is therefore not discussed

- d) Effects of proposed action (Alternative F) on seabeach amaranth and critical habitat and potential for incidental take of listed species pp. 397 – 399 describes species specific methodology and assumptions used for impact analysis; pp. 415 – 418 analyzes impacts; p. 418 Table 54 Summary of Impacts to Seabeach Amaranth under the Alternatives, far right column, summarizes impacts to seabeach amaranth of Alternative F
- e) ESA effects determination, pp. 417 – 418

7. Conservation measures

NPS proposes to seek funding to conduct the following conservation measures described in Table 10 Species Management Strategies for Action Alternatives: p. 124 piping plover chick fledge rate study; p. 126 sea turtle study to determine ways to increase the number of hatchlings that emerge and reach the water; p. 126 seabeach amaranth study to assess the feasibility of seabeach amaranth restoration at up to four suitable sites.

8. Literature cited

pp. 657 – 685

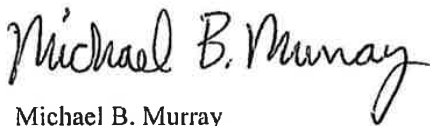
9. Preparers

pp. 641 – 642

Three compact discs (CDs), each containing an advance copy of the DEIS, are enclosed for your use. Please be aware that the Notice of Availability for the DEIS, and consequent approval to release the DEIS for public review, has not yet completed the sign-off circuit in the Washington Office. We ask you and your staff to keep the DEIS confidential until it is publicly released for review.

We look forward to receiving your Biological Opinion on Alternative F. We are available for a conference call or to meet with you as needed during the Section 7 consultation process. Please contact Cyndy Holda at 252-473-2111 ext. 148 to arrange a call or meeting.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Murray
Superintendent

Enclosures