



----- Forwarded by Mike Murray/CAHA/NPS on 04/29/2010 08:33 AM -----

Cape Hatteras
 Business Allies
 <cahabusinessallies@embarqmail.com>
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'Mike Murray' <Mike_Murray@nps.gov>
 To
 cc

04/28/2010 11:52 PM
 Subject: visitors comments

Mike,

In the Spring of 2008 Cape Hatteras Business Allies asked fellow Seashore business owners, (Rental Companies, motels and campgrounds especially) including several businesses in Nags Head and Manteo to assist with the distribution of a "visitor report and comment form" in order to ascertain how the actual visitors to the seashore were reacting to the new beach closures/ rules that were being enforced at the time (and are still in effect.) as well as the potential economic impact of these new rules, bestowed upon us as the result of Judge Boyle and the Consent Decree. New rules, also known as Alternative B in the Draft ORV/DEIS currently the open for public comment.

Over 1200 visitors responded to us, 4 via e-mail, 73 via US Postal Service and the rest were collected by or delivered to us, in person from the business owners. Those distributing the visitor comment forms were instructed NOT to cherry pick the visitors or actual forms, in an attempt to preserve the integrity of the comments. Plus as business owners, it is important to solicit opinion from all our customers, not just the ones who feel as we do when it comes to beach closures, night driving etc. Not all the visitors experienced problems or were unhappy, however they were not the majority, nor were they even half..... Not all actually responded with any signs of intelligence either, none the less, ALL responses were saved. ALL of the responses (except for the 4 e-mails) were hand written, and obviously not by the same persons. This form WAS NOT available via the internet, though we were asked by several business owners if it was ok to put it on line, they were firmly told absolutely not! This was meant for ACTUAL visitors to the Seashore to fill out, and was not meant to be filled out en mass by folks sitting at home that were not actually here! The 73 mailed to us, were taken home by the visitors and mailed back to us at their own expense.

There were 12 questions, in the following order: (No mention of birds, turtles, wildlife etc)
 Date:
 Name:
 Contact information- OPTIONAL (e-mail, phone, address)
 Residence (City & State) and distance traveled:
 Describe incident,/situation/general observation related to beach closures you experienced:
 First time visitor: Yes or No
 Repeat visitor since: (year)
 Before closures, on average how many trips per year___ and average duration of trip___
 Average dollars spent for this/or a typical trip:
 Given the extent of current closures, will you return? Circle one: Yes, No, Yes- but less frequently
 If less frequently, how many fewer trips annually:
 If "No" or "less frequently," please tell us/specify why:

While I understand that "bulk" public comments will not be accepted by NPS, I feel that NPS would be remiss to not accept handwritten comments made by over 1200 actual visitors to the Seashore. It is my understanding that visitor experience is considered important by NPS and I think it would be a great disservice on behalf of the NPS to over look the experiences of almost 1300 of its visitors to Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Those who bothered to put their contact information on the

forms could be contacted by NPS itself for verification if need be.

There is a lot of useful information in these forms, especially when it comes to where the majority of our respondents/visitors seem to reside. Visitors from 38 States responded. The majority of our respondents were from Virginia, followed by Pennsylvania, then North Carolina. Visitors from states with their own beaches (10 East Coast, 3 Gulf Coast and 2 West Coast states) chose to come here.... Visitors from Canada drove through numerous states with beaches yet chose to visit here.... The most useful information in my opinion however, were the descriptions of the visitors experiences that they were suddenly denied. Experiences that generations of families had enjoyed, the very reasons why they returned year after year, now off limits. Descriptions of ruined family vacations. Observations that the shop keepers/residents seemed stressed and unhappy.... In reality, while there is time for public comment, we both know that the folks from 38 states are not informed about this process or opportunity, however that does not mean that their experiences should be discounted or ignored.

Reactions from real people, real visitors to Cape Hatteras, the folks who actually use the park to recreate in! Their opinions should count, their voices need to be heard! These are not form letters from millions of _uninformed_, nameless faces, who contributed \$10 to join a group in order to receive a free stuffed animal, or tote bag or umbrella etc. and then feel good about themselves because they donated to a worthy (I use the word "worthy" VERY loosely) cause and in turn became part of a statistic quoted by National Environmental groups claiming to represent these millions of folks as their members, the majority of their members never have and probably never will step foot in this Park, thus they have no visitor experience to comment on. The very least that NPS can do for itself and for us, is to take the time to read what the actual visitors had to say about their very real experiences, in their National Park.

If this cannot be allowed under the miles of red tape wrapped around the NEPA process, then at the very least, will you as our Park Superintendent, please take the time to read them yourself, before a permanent ORV management plan is put in place? (Plus there are a few comments regarding your NPS staff that you might also find informative.)

Thank you,
Judy Swartwood
252-305-1524