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CAHA ORV

Public comment offered for DEIS

By MARY HELEN GOODLOE-MURPHY

More than 550 people showed up at three Outer Banks public hearings to offer comments on the National Park Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) detailing alternatives for managing the Cape Hatteras National Seashore beaches.

Most speakers stayed on point and detailed specific objections to items in the massive 810-page document. All speakers were allotted three minutes. In Ocracoke Monday morning, 30 speakers addressed Cape Hatteras seashore superintendent Mike Murray. In Buxton Monday night, 59 people offered comments and Tuesday night in Kill Devil Hills, speakers numbered 44.

A concerted and coordinated effort by Preserve Beach Access and the Coalition for Beach Access hammered on statement specifics in the park service's preferred Alternative F. At the Kill Devil Hills hearing, representatives from Southern Environmental Law Center supported the environmentally preferred alternative, Alternative D, but called for additional pedestrian access.

Key issues addressed included setting up permanently closed areas, corridor access to special areas, the size of buffer distances and using best available science, managing vegetation and predators, loss of turtle nests, closure impacts on island economies, access for disabled visitors and counting all the birds in the eco-

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Coastland Times
Manteo, NC

Date: 4-29-10

Page: 1A-9A

Supt. W.M.

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AO. ET PIO CAWT

Interp. MD

Return to Supt.

Room full of advocacy



THE PUBLIC convened to comment on the National Park Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement during a string of public hearings held on the Outer Banks this week. Carol Dawson of Buxton took the podium at the Wright Brothers Pavilion in Kill Devil Hills Tuesday night to voice opposition on proposed access restrictions in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The last public hearing is set today (Thursday, April 29) at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center in Hampton Va. Comments are being accepted electronically and via the U.S. Postal Service until May 11. (M.S. Shaw photo)

COMMENT*(continued from Page 1A)*

system.

Corridors

Under Alternative F, shorelines bracketing the inlet on Hatteras and Ocracoke would be labeled Species Management Areas and closed year-round to all access. A similar designation would close Bodie Island, Cape Point and South Point Ocracoke, from March 15 through July 31, except vehicle access corridors subject to resource closure would be instituted at Cape Point and South Point Ocracoke and a pedestrian corridor would be implemented at Bodie Island.

In Buxton, Dare commissioner Allen Burrus asked for pass through corridors in all areas, stating that such corridors could be established below the high tide line. Commissioner Max Dutton in Kill Devil Hills asked for flexibility rather than rigidity in establishing corridors.

Commissioner Jack Shea commented that corridors are a practical way to enhance the visitor experience and "represent a win-win situation for we the people."

Buffers, birds and best available science. "Buffers are the crux of our problem," said Dare board chairman Warren Judge. Speaker after speaker reiterated the position that a 1,000 meter buffer for unfledged piping plover chicks is excessive.

Commenters challenged the scientific papers supporting the 1,000 meter buffer and called for a 200-meter buffer, which is an option in the Atlantic Coast Piping Plover Recovery Plan. The mall piping plover is the only shorebird visiting the seashore that is federally listed under the Endangered Species Act.

At Buxton and again at Kill Devil Hills, challenges were made to buffers set up for North Carolina listed species of concern. Speaking in Kill Devil Hills, Dare commissioner of Mike Johnson said the purpose of the state's listing is only to designate certain birds for future monitoring and tracking on a statewide level.

He said "the North Carolina should not be used against

"I want my beaches back," said Joe Monroe who has driven

Vegetation and predator management. Over and over again, speakers called for vegetation management around Cape Point's pond. From 1993 through 1995, an experimental project cleared vegetation from Cape Point and Hatteras Inlet. But for the past 15 years, the park service has allowed woody vegetation to grow up around Cape Point's pond. The effect, said speakers, is that suitable habitat for the piping plover is pushed toward the shoreline and that predators hide in the vegetation for nighttime raids on nests.

The draft statement at page 88 dismisses the suggestion stating that habitat creation projects tend to be short-lived and labor intensive. However, under adaptive management, the draft statement calls for finding funding for a pilot project to try out the technique.

At the Buxton hearing, the park service was heavily criticized for its predator trapping program to protect bird nests and chicks and turtle nests. The draft statement does not spell out a predator control program, instead referencing a "forthcoming" Environmental Assessment for a Predator Control Program for Protected Species.

A scoping meeting on the program was held in March 2007. Seashore resource manager Thayer Broili says "we're working on it." He expects the assessment to be published by the end of September 2010.

Access for disabled visitors. At the Buxton hearing, three men hobbled to the microphone. Larry Holstein, a veteran from Tennessee, said "now a freedom is being stolen. I need an ORV to get to fishing. This surf fishing is part of my heritage."

Holstein called the draft statement on disabled access "shallow, passé and certainly not in the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act."

The statement on page 58 states that beach access points and boardwalks compliant with the act would be provided at Coquina Beach, Frisco Boat-house (probably should be the Frisco Bathhouse), the Ocracoke Pony Pen and the Ocracoke Day

The paragraph states "the total impact of the proposed alternatives would depend in part on the response of the affected individuals and businesses to the changes brought about by the proposed rule." The sections states the effect depends on local businesses to provide alternate products and services and that the region may experience an increase in business as visitors seek substitute sites with a subsequent decline in village businesses.

"The cavalier and dismissive treatment . . . is absolutely appalling," said Westervelt.

Business owners stated revenue decline as beach closures descend on Hatteras and Ocracoke islands. "Beach closures have a huge economic impact," said Dean Johnson with Holiday Ice. On Ocracoke, in the three weekends prior to reopening South Point on Ocracoke in 2009, the average units his company sold numbered 173. The weekend South Point re-opened, units sold increased to 389, more than doubling the closure number.

Support for other alternatives

Environmental groups all averred that access is possible. In Kill Devil Hills, two representatives of the Southern Environmental Law Center supported the environmentally preferred alternative D, but called for improved access for pedestrians.

In Buxton, Chris Canfield, who heads North Carolina Audubon, said the park service's preferred alternative F does not address resource protection goals and is particularly weak on migrating and wintering birds. He also said that the environmentally preferred alternative D is "unnecessarily restrictive."

In a follow-up conversation, Canfield said the draft statement is not so simple as to check a box for an alternative. He's not saying "yes" to alternative F, but feels that D is too restrictive. North Carolina Audubon will submit a written statement more nuanced than the three minute time period allowed.

In Kill Devil Hills, several from the surfing community supported Alternative C, labeled Seasonal Management.

and two horses marched a short distance to the Cape Hatteras Secondary School, the site of the Buxton meeting. The quiet demonstrators lined NC 12 as folks came to the public hearing which lasted three hours. The Kill Devil Hills meeting lasted just under two hours, with two speakers allowed to speak again.

The public hearings were scheduled to continue in Raleigh Wednesday evening and Hampton, Va. today Thursday, April

"I want my beaches back," said Joe Monroe who has driven on seashore beaches for 47 years. "We can take care of them. We always have."

Several speakers challenged the park service to count all birds in the eco-system, rather than just those on seashore beaches. In the draft statement under desired future conditions, short- and long-term targets are set out for federally listed species and the state-listed American oystercatcher, three terns and black skimmers.

Dredge islands off Hatteras Inlet are nesting grounds for the species other than the piping plover. However, only Green Island in Oregon Inlet is included in monitoring and counting. The Cape Hatteras National Seashore does not have control over dredge islands such as Cora June off Hatteras.

Sea Turtles

Larry Hardman, president of the Cape Hatteras Anglers Club, is Hatteras Island's turtle expert. He has tracked nests laid and lost, false crawls, taken nest temperatures, and ridden Pea Island beaches in the early morning looking for sea turtle tracks and nests.

On Tuesday night, Hardham pleaded "please use science from here at Cape Hatteras and not from Florida." He said that the night driving restriction in place from May 1 to November 15 for possible sea turtle nesting does not rise to the level of a major adverse impact. He offered false crawl statistics to prove his point.

Time and again, the park service's reluctance to relocate sea turtle nests from narrow beaches and those threatened with repeated overwashing was challenged. North Carolina's Wildlife Resources Commission says relocation is a "last resort," and the park service relies on that standard. Between 2000 and 2009, 36.4 percent of seashore turtle nests were lost, nests that could have been moved upon discovery. Hardham called the lost "shameful."

Dare County manager Robert L. Outten said the number of nests that successfully hatch is the goal. The draft statement sets target numbers for the number of nests laid, as well as three other goals, none of which refer to the number of nests that hatch.

Frisco Bathhouse), the Ocracoke Pony Pen and the Ocracoke Day Use area. Special use permits would be issued to allow ORVs to transport disabled visitors to the beaches in front of the villages. And, beach wheelchairs could be checked out in each of the seashore's three districts on a first-come, first served basis.

Economic Impact

At Kill Devil Hills, Ernestine Westervelt from Ocracoke approached the microphone. She read a paragraph from page 561.

from the existing community supported Alternative C, labeled Seasonal Management.

In Buxton where 323 people signed in, several speakers slandered the National Park Service and the seashore's superintendent or shouted angrily in the microphone. One speaker directly threatened superintendent Murray. The audience clapped enthusiastically at speakers who played to the audience and booed and hissed at speakers taking opposing views.

Some 44 sign-carrying people

scheduled to continue in Ra Wednesday evening and Hinton, Va. today Thursday, 29.

The last public hearing is for today (Thursday, April 2) at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center in Hampton, Va.

Comments are being accepted electronically and via the Postal Service until May 11. Submit a comment, log on to www.parkplanning.nps.gov/ or mail to Mike Murray, Superintendent, 1401 National Drive, Manteo, 27954.

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Peckman, Lia

From: Fox, Lori
Sent: Friday, July 02, 2010 10:20 AM
To: Peckman, Lia
Subject: FW: Coastland Times Article with issues raised identified
Attachments: 20100429_CoastlandTimes_ORV_DEIS.pdf

For caha admin

Lori Fox
Deputy Director, Denver Operations/Senior Planner

Direct 303-985-6602
Main 303-985-6600
Mobile 301-461-8772

Fax 303-984-4942

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-----Original Message-----

From: Sandra_Hamilton@nps.gov [mailto:Sandra_Hamilton@nps.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 8:45 AM
To: Fox, Lori
Cc: Doug_Wetmore@nps.gov
Subject: Fw: Coastland Times Article with issues raised identified

Lori,

FYI.

Sandy

Sandy Hamilton
Environmental Protection Specialist
National Park Service - Environmental Quality Division Academy Place P.O. Box 25287 Denver CO 80225

PH: (303) 969-2068

FAX: (303) 987-6782

----- Forwarded by Sandra Hamilton/DENVER/NPS on 05/11/2010 08:44 AM -----

Thayer
Broili/CAHA/NPS

To
05/11/2010 06:27 AM Doug Wetmore/DENVER/NPS@NPS, Sandra
Hamilton/DENVER/NPS@NPS
cc

Subject
Coastland Times Article with issues
raised identified

Mary Helen G-M wrote this after the 3 hearings on OBX. She did a good job of capturing the issues and I'm providing it as a potential cross checking tool for you issue/question identification.

(See attached file: 20100429_CoastlandTimes_ORV_DEIS.pdf)

Thayer Broili
Chief of Resource Management
Cape Hatteras National Seashore
Phone 252-473-2111 ext.137
Fax 252-473-2595