

Visitor Use Summary at Cape Hatteras National Seashore Summer 2002

The visitor study was conducted by Jason Reed, Yen Le and Margaret Littlejohn as part of the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Services Project (VSP) from July 12-18, 2002. Questionnaires were handed out to 356 visitors, and 263 of them were returned for a 73.8% response rate. Following is a summary of the results of the portion of the survey regarding visitor use:

Demographics

- * Visitor Group Size
 - 28% of groups consisted of two people, while another 38% consisted of five or more people.
- * Average age of visitors
 - 55% were between the ages of 31-60, and another 25% of visitors were aged 15 years or younger.
- * Number of visits to the park
 - 1st visit: 32%
 - 2-4 visits: 27%
 - five or more: 45%

Reasons for Visiting CAHA

- * The most important reason for visiting CAHA (237 total comments)
 - Lighthouse (54)
 - Beach/beachcombing/seashells (33)
 - Fishing/charters fishing (18)
 - Historical Significance (17)
- * The second most important reason for visiting CAHA (181 total comments)
 - Swimming (20)
 - Lighthouse (11)
 - Uncrowded/solitude/low population (11)
 - Historical significance (10)
- * The third most important reason for visiting CAHA (129 comments)
 - Uncrowded/solitude/low population (13)
 - Swimming (10)

Activities while at CAHA

- * Visitor activities on this visit (will add up to more than 100 because visitors could have participated in more than one activity)
 - Swimming/sunbathing- 78%
 - Visiting historic sites- 70%
 - Walking- 65%

- Enjoying solitude- 56%
- Photography- 53%
- Beach driving- 36%
- ★ Visitor activities on past visits (will add up to more than 100 because visitors could have participated in more than one activity)
 - Swimming/sunbathing- 84%
 - Visiting historic sites- 83%
 - Enjoying solitude- 63%
 - Photography- 62%
 - Walking- 62%
 - Beach driving- 52%
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Importance of attributes in planning for the preservation of CAHA for future generations

- ★ Attributes that received the highest proportion of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings were:
 - Preserving scenic views- 84%
 - Natural open space- 84%
 - Availability of beach access- 82%
- ★ Selected factors having highest proportion of “no effect” ratings
 - Airplane overflights- 50%
 - Dogs off leash- 35%
 - Vehicles on beach- 34%
- ★ Selected factors having highest proportion of “added to” ratings
 - Vehicles on beach- 20%
 - Fires on beach- 16%
- ★ Factors received the highest proportion of “detracted from” ratings
 - Litter- 40%
 - Vehicles on beach- 18%
 - Dogs off leash- 17%

Visitor use regarding items that specifically mentioned beach driving and ORV use at CAHA are summarized below:

Reasons for Visiting CAHA

- ★ When visitors were asked to specify the most important reason for visiting CAHA, beach driving was not mentioned more than once. It fell into the “Other comments” category with 15 other uncategorized responses (out of 237 comments).

- * When visitors were asked to specify the second most important reason for visiting CAHA, beach driving was mentioned by 8 out of the 237 respondents.
- * When visitors were asked to specify the third most important reason for visiting CAHA, beach driving was cited 3 times out of 129 replies.

Activities while at CAHA

- * 36% (254 total respondents) of visitors participated in beach driving during their current visit
- * 52% (165 respondents) of visitors reported that they had driven on the beach during past visits

Importance of attributes in planning for the preservation of CAHA for future generations

- * Beach driving was rated by 249 visitor groups, with 37% reporting that it was an extremely important attribute to preserve in CAHA into the future, 7% said it was very important, 14% said it was moderately important, 10% said it was somewhat important, 24% said it was not important and 8% didn't know.
- * Vehicles on the beach were also included in another question regarding whether the particular factor added to or detracted from their experience in the park. Of the 249 visitor groups, 20% reported that vehicles on the beach added to their experience, 34% said they had no effect on their experience, 18% said they detracted from and 29% did not experience any vehicles on the beach.

Visitor questions and comments

- * Visitors were also asked to respond to the question: "What did you like most about your visit to the Outer Bank Group parks?" Beach driving was mentioned under the policy section 25 times out of 60 comments within the section. The second most popular answer in the policy section was naturalness/lack of development with 21 comments.
- * However, when visitors were asked what they liked the least about their visit, vehicles on the beach was mentioned 7 times, with only crowding (16) and litter (8) being mentioned more often.
- * Visitor groups were also asked "If you were a manager planning for the future of CAHA, what would you propose?" Under the policy section, the number one response involved either limiting or completely eliminating the number of vehicles on the beach. This response had 12 comments out of a total 70 responses in the specific section.