



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site Wright Brothers National Memorial

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

1401 National Park Drive

Manteo, NC 27954

252-473-2111



IN REPLY REFER TO:

L76 (CAHA)

January 18, 2006

Dear Interested Party:

Thank you for your interest regarding protected species management at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Enclosed is the *Interim Protected Species Management Strategy/Environmental Assessment* for your review. This document presents the evaluation of four alternatives for managing protected species at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in the interim period until a Long-term Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management Plan and associated regulations are developed. Some highlights of each alternative are listed below. To review each complete alternative, please refer to Chapter 2 of the Environmental Assessment.

*Alternative A – Continuation of 2004 Management* (baseline or no action)

The no-action alternative would continue management as expressed in Superintendent's Order # 07, which was issued in 2004. Under alternative A, the seashore would implement protective measures for recent piping plover breeding areas (areas used at some time during the past 3 breeding seasons); American oystercatchers and colonial waterbirds, if a territory or colony or nest is established; sea turtle nests; and seabeach amaranth plants or seedlings. Measures vary for special status bird species according to the activity. Any species management closures would require the Superintendent's approval. Management would continue for predator removal, recreation use restrictions, and public outreach.

*Alternative B – Undisturbed Area Focus*

This alternative would provide for year-round species management closures to be erected around those areas where piping plover breeding and/or nesting has occurred in the past 10 years (historic breeding areas). ORV access would be prohibited from these identified areas, specifically the spits. Seasonal closures for recent American oystercatcher and Wilson's plover; and historic colonial waterbird areas would be implemented. Pedestrian access would be restricted to a 150-foot corridor along the oceanside shoreline around bird closure areas. Alternative B would provide seasonal buffer zones around other protected bird species, turtle nests, and seabeach amaranth and would protect important habitat types. Management would continue for predator removal, and would provide for additional recreation use restrictions and public outreach.

*Alternative C – Tailored Management Focus*

Under alternative C, the seashore would implement protective measures for historic piping plover and colonial waterbird breeding areas (areas used some time during the past 10 breeding seasons) and for recent American oystercatcher and Wilson's plover breeding areas. Sea turtle protections would be the same as alternative A with some variation in management. Like alternative B, closures would be established around all historic and existing populations of seabeach amaranth. ORV and pedestrian access would be maintained around these areas, specifically the spits, within a 150-foot access corridor along the oceanside beaches of each area. Alternative C would provide for adaptive management in that an alternative ORV route, such as another access ramp, an existing interdunal road, and/or North Carolina Highway 12 (NC-12), would be identified if a closure blocked access to the spits or Cape Point. In the case of turtle nests, potential bypass routes could be established around closure areas to maintain ORV access. Management would include predator removal, and would provide for additional recreation use restrictions and public outreach. Alternative C would restrict pets and recreational activities (such as Frisbee playing or kite flying) that might cross into protected zones. This alternative would allow for some variability in protected species management based on the individual species behavior and would adapt management strategies to afford access where feasible while protecting species.

Alternative D – Access/Research Component Focus (preferred alternative)

Under alternative D, the seashore would survey habitat used by each bird species during the last 10 years and implement seasonal protective closures around areas used during the past 3 years. ORV and pedestrian access would be maintained around closures, specifically the spits, within a 100-foot wide corridor along the ocean and soundside beaches of each area. Alternative D would provide a buffer zone around other protected bird species, turtle nests, and seabeach amaranth plants, and would protect important habitat types. Alternative D would provide for adaptive management in that an alternative ORV route, such as another access ramp, an existing interdunal road, and/or North Carolina Highway 12 (NC-12) and bypasses could be established around both bird and turtle closure areas to maintain ORV access. Management would continue for predator removal, and would provide for protecting the wrack line, additional recreation use restrictions, and public outreach. Alternative D would restrict pets and recreational activities (such as Frisbee playing or kite flying) that might cross into protected zones. This alternative would allow for some variability in species management based on the individual species behavior and would adapt management strategies to afford access where feasible while protecting species.

The potential environmental consequences of the actions were evaluated for each alternative. This included impacts on natural and cultural resources, visitor experience, socioeconomics, and park management and operations. Based on the environmental analysis prepared for this strategy, alternative B is considered the environmentally preferred alternative which is defined as the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources. Alternative D is the seashore's preferred alternative because it best meets the purpose, need, and objectives for the strategy.

Public comments for the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy may be submitted directly on-line on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) web site at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/CAHA>. Select the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy project, and use the *Submit Your Comments for the Environmental Assessment* link found in the "Documents and Links" section.

If you can not use the internet, you may mail written comments to: IPSMS EA, Superintendent, Outer Banks Group, 1401 National Park Drive, Manteo, NC 27952

Comments must be received by midnight, March 1, 2006. Following the comment period a decision on the action to be implemented will be determined.

Thank you for your interest and concern for the future of Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Murray  
Superintendent  
Outer Banks Group