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Update on Interim Protected Species Management Strategy February 2006



Adult piping plover (Charadrius melodus)



Meeting Purpose

- To explain purpose of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and provide an update on the public comment process.
- To describe Key Points of Proposed Alternative D.
- To provide update on status of related processes.
- To hear public comments and respond to questions.



What is the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy?

It will guide management practices for protection of species over the next 3-4 years until the long term off-road vehicle (ORV) management plan and regulations are in place.



Public Comment Period

- Interim Strategy/Environmental Assessment (EA) was released for public review on January 25, 2006.
- Copies of EA were mailed to interested parties. Also available at local libraries and NPS visitor centers. EA available on-line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>
- **Public comment period closes March 1, 2006.** Comments may be submitted on-line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>



EA Considers 4 Alternatives

- **Alternative A** – Continuation of 2004 Management (*No action alternative*)
- **Alternative B** – Undisturbed Area Focus (*Environmentally Preferred Alternative*)
- **Alternative C** – Tailored Management Focus
- **Alternative D** – Access/Research Component Focus (*Preferred Alternative*)

Key Points about Alternative D

- **Most flexible, least restrictive of alternative B, C and D.**
- **Relies on increased surveying and other measures to allow for fewer, later and shorter closures where possible.**
- **Provides for alternate routes or by-passes if/when resource closure would shut off access to spits and points.**



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Alternative D

- Survey for bird activity in breeding areas used in past 10 years
- Establish pre-nesting closures in recent breeding areas (used in past 3 years), generally spits.
- Designate 100 ft wide ORV corridor in recent breeding areas to provide access around pre-nesting closures
- Post corridor above wrack line where there is a well defined wrack line.
- Post reduced speed limit in locations where corridor is less than 100 ft wide.

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Alternative D

- As season progresses, adjust buffer zones based on parameters defined in interim strategy.
- Buffer zones for Piping Plover consistent with Recovery Plan guidance.
- Buffer distances for other bird species is less than that recommended as most protective by USGS.
- Uses alternate routes or by-passes around closures to maintain ORV access to spits and point to the extent possible. No escort system.

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Alternative D

Establishes parameters for re-opening areas (e.g., remove pre-nesting closures if no bird activity seen by July 15 or when area abandoned for a 2 week period, whichever comes later).



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Sea Turtles - Alternative D

- **Follow NCWRC handbook guidance.**
- **Survey daily for nests. Relocate nests subject to overwash.**
- **Use alternate routes or by-passes if nest would close access. As last resort, relocate nest to provide access, if permitted by NCWRC.**
- **No restriction on night driving. Seek funds to study level and effects of night driving.**
- **Use alternate routes or by-passes around closures to maintain ORV access to spits and point to the extent possible.**



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Seabeach Amaranth (SBA) Alt. D

- **Benefit from existing bird closures.**
- **If plant found outside existing closures, create 30 ft buffer zone around plant.**
- **Survey bird closures for SBA before reopening.**
- **Park-wide annual survey in August.**
- **Areas reopened by Sept 1 if no plants found.**



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Alternative D

- Smaller, more flexible closures are contingent upon achieving improved compliance with posted closures and restrictions.
- Will develop improved signing and information brochure and work closely with community to ensure wide distribution of information to visitors, vacation home renters, etc. Will have regular NPS LE patrol presence in key areas.
- Continue targeted predator control near nest sites using humane trapping techniques.
- Prohibit pets, kite flying, ball and frisbee tossing near nesting areas.
- Will provide dumpsters and porta-potties at major access ramps.

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Status of Related Documents and Processes

- **Biological Assessment (BA) sent to FWS in January. Available on NPS website.**
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>
- **Superintendent's Order # 7 (will be revised)**
- **Long-term ORV Management Plan (will begin public scoping this spring)**
- **Negotiated Rulemaking (NPS to decide by end of Feb about whether to proceed)**





Related Activities

- Spur Road at Hatteras Spit
- Flooding near Cape Point Campground

Errata

- There are some errors in the EA. NPS will issue an *Errata* sheet.
- Please submit comments on anything you think is an error.



Public Comment Period

- Public comment period closes

March 1, 2006

- Comments may be submitted on-line
at

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>

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Thank you for your time and attention.