



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Outer Banks Group:

· Cape Hatteras National
Seashore
· Fort Raleigh National
Historic Site
· Wright Brothers National
Memorial

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National Park Service New Release

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Plan Approved to Modify Wildlife Protection Buffers Cape Hatteras National Seashore

The National Park Service has approved a plan to modify wildlife protection buffers at Cape Hatteras National Seashore (Seashore) as required by Section 3057 of the Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2015, Public Law 113-291.

The selected plan includes modified protection buffers and provides corridors around buffers for many species, including American oystercatchers, Wilson's plovers, piping plovers, colonial nesting waterbirds, and sea turtles. The plan maintains protections for wildlife along the seashore by augmenting the seashore's monitoring and on-the-ground management program. Additionally, the Seashore will be hosting workshops in the future to refine scientific monitoring and research towards improving adaptive management.

While it is expected that these changes will provide additional public access during wildlife nesting seasons, access to all areas of the Seashore at all times may not be possible, even with the decision to modify wildlife buffers; multiple species may nest in close proximity to each other and there are times where ORV corridors cannot be provided due to local geography. Parts of the selected alternative may be implemented during the summer of 2015, while the entire plan will be implemented in 2016, once additional staff are available to help intensively monitor and manage wildlife protection buffers and corridors.

The plan was approved by Stan Austin, the Director of the Southeast Region of the National Park Service, completing the National Environmental Policy Act and Environmental Assessment (EA) process which began earlier this year. The EA and FONSI were prepared in close coordination and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and in consideration of public input that was received during the public review period.

Superintendent David Hallac stated, "Wildlife protection buffers described under the plan's selected action will continue to protect wildlife species while providing additional flexibility to allow access to pedestrians and off road vehicles."

Later this summer, the Seashore will commence a public process to consider modifications to the final rule on off road vehicle management (2012). Specifically, the Seashore will consider changes to the final rule related to: morning openings of beaches, the time periods open for use of seasonal off road vehicle routes, and the size and location of vehicle free areas.

Copies of the Environmental Assessment and a description of the selected plan can be found on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>

Additional information can be found here:

<http://www.nps.gov/caha/learn/management/2015ndaa>

For general information on the Outer Banks Group national park sites, visit www.nps.gov/caha, www.nps.gov/wrbr, www.nps.gov/fora; Twitter: @CapeHatterasNPS, @WrightBrosNPS, @FortRaleighNPS; www.facebook.com/CapeHatterasNS, www.facebook.com/WrightBrothersNMem, www.facebook.com/FortRaleighNHS.

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