



Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement

Public Meetings on the Draft Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/
Environmental Impact Statement | March 2010

You're Invited!

Please join us at a public meeting on the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Draft Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/EIS (Plan/EIS). The purpose of this brochure to share with you information and dates for the hearing-style public meetings for the Plan/EIS and for how to comment on the Plan/EIS.

Public Meetings—Purpose and Process

The purpose of the hearing-style public meetings is to provide additional opportunities for public comment on the Plan/EIS. Upon entering the meeting you will be asked to sign in and to indicate if you request time to make a public comment at the meeting. The meeting will begin with a brief presentation on the process to date and an explanation of the format for the meeting. Once the presentation has concluded, the public comment portion of the meeting will begin. Participants who have indicated that they would like to speak will be called to come forward to speak. A court reporter will be on hand to record the comments. To ensure that all who would like to speak are provided the opportunity, the time available will be divided among the number of speakers signed up, but all speakers will be allotted at least 3 minutes to provide their comments. Written comments will also be accepted at the public meetings, on-line through the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment website, or through the mail, as described in this newsletter.



Beach Driving at the Seashore | Credit: NPS

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to develop regulations and procedures that carefully manage ORV use/access to the Seashore, to protect and preserve natural and cultural resources and natural processes, to provide a variety of visitor use experiences while minimizing conflicts among various users, and to promote the safety of all visitors.

Need for Action

To ensure that ORV use is consistent with applicable laws and policies, the Seashore has determined that an ORV Management Plan is necessary as part of this process. Therefore, the ORV Plan and special regulation will

- Bring the Seashore in compliance with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 respecting ORV use, and with NPS laws, regulations (36 CFR 4.10), and policies to minimize impacts to Seashore resources and values.
- Address the lack of an approved Plan, which has led over time to inconsistent management of ORV use, user conflicts, and safety concerns.
- Provide for protected species management in relation to ORV use upon expiration of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Interim Protected Species Management Strategy/Environmental Assessment (Interim Strategy) and associated Biological Opinion and amendments, as modified by the consent decree.

Preferred Alternative

Alternative F: Management Based on Advisory

Committee Input. The Plan/EIS considered a range of reasonable alternatives to accomplish the purpose of and need for action and that would meet the objectives. After taking into consideration the analysis of impacts and input gathered from previous public outreach efforts, alternative F: Management Based on Advisory Committee Input, was identified as the preferred alternative. Alternative F is designed to provide Seashore visitors with a wide variety of ORV and non-ORV opportunities, including access to the spits and points, but often with controls or restrictions in place to limit impacts on sensitive resources. Some areas may be kept open to ORV use for longer periods of time by reopening some ORV corridors at the spits and points soon after shorebird breeding activity is completed, and interdunal road and ORV ramp access would be improved. Pedestrian access would be enhanced by providing increased parking capacity at various points of access to vehicle-free areas. Vehicle-free areas would be provided during all seasons so non-ORV users can experience portions of the Seashore without the presence of vehicles. Areas of high resource sensitivity would be designated as Species Management Areas (SMAs) and would be closed to ORV use from March 15 through July 31, and two weeks after shorebird breeding ceases or two weeks after all chicks have fledged, whichever is later. In these SMAs during the shorebird breeding season, a shoreline pedestrian access corridor would be established at Bodie Island Spit, and ORV access corridors would be established at Cape Point and South Point. Interdunal pedestrian trails on Bodie Island and on Ocracoke Island would be developed. In addition to the breeding-season measures, resource closures and/or vehicle-free areas would be established to provide areas of nonbreeding shorebird habitat with reduced human disturbance. From May 1 through September 15, all potential sea turtle nesting habitat (ocean intertidal zone, ocean backshore, and dunes) would be closed to non-essential ORV use from one hour after sunset until the NPS turtle patrol has checked the beach in the morning (approximately one-half hour after sunrise) to provide for sea turtle protection and allow enforcement staff to concentrate their resources during the daytime hours. From September 16 through November 15, selected ORV

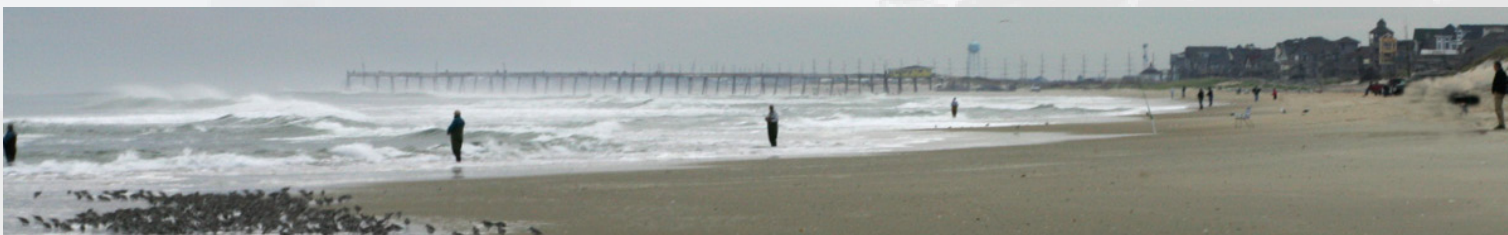
routes with no or a low density of turtle nests remaining (as determined by the NPS) would reopen to night driving, subject to the terms and conditions of a required permit. The preferred alternative would include a carrying-capacity requirement (peak-use limit) for all areas based on a physical space requirement of one vehicle per 20 linear feet for Bodie Island, Hatteras Island, and Ocracoke Island districts, except that 400 vehicles would be allowed within a 1-mile area centered on Cape Point. The carrying-capacity requirement would prevent safety concerns associated with overcrowding, such as at peak-use periods during major summer holidays and weekends. The preferred alternative would include an ORV permit system, with no limit on the number of permits issued and a permit fee based on cost-recovery. Every five years the NPS would conduct a systematic review of those ORV and species management measures identified in this alternative as being subject to periodic review. This could result in changes to those management actions in order to improve effectiveness.



Other Alternatives Evaluated

Alternative A: No Action—Continuation of Management under the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy.

Under this no-action alternative, management of ORV use and access at the Seashore would be a continuation of management based on the 2007 Cape Hatteras National Seashore Interim Protected Species Management Strategy/EA





Piping Plover Chicks | Credit: Mary Hake / NPS



Green Turtle | Credit: Michael Lusk / USFWS

and the Superintendent's Compendium 2007, as well as elements from the 1978 draft interim ORV Management Plan that were incorporated in Superintendent's Order 07.

Alternative B: No Action—Continuation of Terms of Consent Decree Signed April 30, 2008, and amended June 4, 2009. Under alternative B, management of ORV use would follow the terms described under alternative A, except as modified by the provisions of the consent decree, as amended. Modifications in the consent decree include changes to resource protection buffers and closures for various species at the Seashore and added restrictions related to night driving.

Alternative C: Seasonal Management. Alternative C would provide visitors to the Seashore with a degree of predictability regarding areas available for ORV use, as well as vehicle-free areas, based largely on the seasonal resource and visitor use characteristics of various areas in the Seashore.

Alternative D: Increased Predictability and Simplified Management. Under alternative D, visitors to the Seashore would have the maximum amount of predictability

regarding areas available for ORV use and vehicle-free areas for pedestrian use. Restrictions would be applied to larger areas over longer periods of time to minimize changes in designated ORV and non-ORV areas over the course of the year. NPS has identified alternative D as the environmentally preferable alternative.

Alternative E: Variable Access and Maximum Management.

Alternative E would provide use areas for all types of visitors to the Seashore with a wide variety of access for both ORV and pedestrian users, but often with controls or restrictions in place to limit the impacts on sensitive resources. Interdunal road and ramp access would be improved, and more pedestrian access would be provided through substantial additions to parking capacity at various key locations that lend themselves to walking on the beach.

How to Comment

If you wish to comment electronically, you may submit your comments online in the PEPC Web site by visiting <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>, clicking on ***Open For Comment**, clicking on the **Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/EIS**, and then clicking on **Comment on Document**. If you wish to submit your written comments in hard copy (e.g. in a letter), you may send them by U.S. Postal Service or other mail delivery service or hand deliver them to: Mike Murray, Superintendent, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, 1401 National Park Drive, Manteo, North Carolina 27954. Oral statements and written comments will also be accepted during the hearing style public meetings. Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or in any other way than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The 60-day public comment period begins on March 12, 2010, and the comment period will end on May 11, 2010. Comments must be received by NPS by midnight (MDT) on May 11, 2010.

Completion of the Final Plan/EIS

The final Plan/EIS will be prepared following consideration of all comments. Distribution of the final Plan/EIS and NPS Record of Decision is anticipated for Winter 2010. The timeframe for completion of the final document could vary from these estimates depending on the volume and content of public comments received during the review period for the draft Plan/EIS.

Obtaining a Copy of the Draft Plan/EIS

If you did not receive a copy of the draft Plan/EIS, you can visit the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha>) and download it. This is the same website you will visit for making electronic comments as described in this newsletter. CDs, and a limited number of hard copies of the Executive Summary/ Maps and the Plan/EIS are available at the Seashore Headquarters, 1401 National Park Drive, Manteo, NC 27954. Or a copy may be requested by mail, as long as supplies last, from Mike Murray, Superintendent, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, 1401 National Park Drive, Manteo, NC 27954. Copies of the Plan/EIS will also be provided to local libraries in Manteo, Kill Devil Hills, Hatteras Village and Ocracoke, NC.

Public Meeting Dates, Times and Locations:

Monday, April 26	Ocracoke School 1 Schoolhouse Road, Ocracoke, NC 27960 9:00 am to 11:00 am (<i>Doors open at 8:30 am for sign-in, the meeting will begin at 9:00 am with a short presentation, followed by an opportunity for public comment</i>)
Monday, April 26	Cape Hatteras Secondary School 48576 Hwy. 12, Buxton, NC 27920 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm (<i>Doors open at 4:30 pm for sign-in, the meeting will begin at 5:00 pm with a short presentation, followed by an opportunity for public comment</i>)
Tuesday, April 27	Wright Brothers Pavilion 1000 Croatan Hwy, M.P. 7.5, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm (<i>Doors open at 5:30 pm for sign-in, the meeting will begin at 6:00 pm with a short presentation, followed by an opportunity for public comment</i>)
Wednesday, April 28	McKimmon Conference & Training Center on North Carolina State University Campus in Raleigh, NC 27695 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm (<i>Doors open at 5:30 pm for sign-in, the meeting will begin at 6:00 pm with a short presentation, followed by an opportunity for public comment</i>)
Thursday, April 29	Holiday Inn & Conference Center, 1815 West Mercury Boulevard in Hampton, VA 23666 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm (<i>Doors open at 5:30 pm for sign-in, the meeting will begin at 6:00 pm with a short presentation, followed by an opportunity for public comment</i>)

Schedule

March 2010	Draft Plan/EIS Released
April 2010	Public Meetings on the Draft Plan/EIS
May 2010	60-day Comment Period Ends
Spring/Summer 2010	Comment Analysis
Fall 2010	Final Plan/EIS Released
Late Fall 2010	30-day Waiting Period
Winter 2010	NPS Decision