

To the National Park Service Negotiated Rulemaking Committee.
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My name is Michael Gery and I live on Roanoke Island. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the committee today. I speak for myself alone, but I do know there are many others who feel as I do about trying to keep as much of our national seashore as natural as possible so that people can see an ocean beach in its natural state. Experiencing a natural ocean beach is not so easy to do these days. But that's why this national seashore was established: to protect and maintain a beach for people to enjoy far into the future.

I also appreciate the commitment that committee members have made to this process of devising a plan to manage motorized vehicles on these beaches. You all have added important information to the discussion. Regardless of whether you can reach consensus, you have helped the National Park Service come up with a fair plan.

Now it's time for the Park Service to institute a plan that should have been instituted 30 years ago. I congratulate Mike Murray and this Park Service administration for taking on this difficult issue. Because previous administrations could not design a plan – or otherwise were prevented from designing one -- the massive popularity of 4-wheel-drive vehicles during the past 30 years has turned some very important and treasured sections of the National Seashore into parking lots and joy-riding race tracks. These are areas where it is no longer possible for families to appreciate the natural beauty and activities of a seashore beach, which is what the National Seashore was meant to provide.

All we're asking is to return more of this beach to the peace and quiet it's supposed to have, and that means closing more stretches year-round to motorized vehicles, except those that carry law enforcement and rescue personnel, or physically disabled persons.

This National Seashore belongs to the nation. It does not belong to Dare County alone, and protecting it is not a public relations problem for Dare County, as our elected commissioners evidently believe. The Park Service has an obligation to preserve these beaches in their natural state, to preserve the ecology, the wildlife, and the history of this seashore. Allowing motorized vehicles free reign over large sections of the National Seashore is like allowing anyone to blast loud radios anywhere in the National Cathedral, or to open the Gettysburg National Battlefield to volleyball and golf. That's why no administration in 36 years has rescinded the order to regulate motorized vehicles in National Parks. These parks are meant to be preserved as parks for everyone, not allowed to become parking lots for a privileged few.

I am encouraged that the recent shift in American government and policy has revived the real American character, the character that respects our neighbors and our communities, our history, our beliefs, our environment and our system of government. I look forward to a new administration that will restore dignity to the Department of the Interior and will

allow the National Park Service to do what it does best: to once again manage and protect this national treasure we have in our backyard.