

Without question the two most important actions required to establish a Cape Hatteras National Seashore ORV Management plan are

- The establishment of specific resource management measures, and
- The establishment of ORV routes

Yesterday afternoon we learned we are not close to finalizing either of these two actions. SEP - 9 2008

This is what I heard yesterday

Outer Banks Group

With regard to the Resource Management plan I heard that

- Resource management is the application or interpretation of the science and is the responsibility of the NPS, not the committee
- The NPS must articulate the specific resource protection measures
- Specific buffer distances are not a committee issue but an NPS issue
- The guidelines provided in yesterday's document were for discussion only and apply only to Cape Point.
- The NPS is not able to provide specifics actions for Cape Point to vet against the guidelines, and
- Neither guidelines or specifics are available for other areas of the seashore

With regard to the establishment of ORV routes I heard that

- Two groups have very specific, but significantly conflicting recommendations
- The Park Service expects to implement additional permanent closures in the final plan

I also heard yesterday that short of approval by the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, the work of this committee must be completed by January to be considered in the parallel NEPA process, and that the NPS expects that court involvement is likely in the future.

Given the significant work remaining, the tight timeline, and the expectation of future litigation, I have to assume the Park Service already, in fact, has a very thorough idea of what specifics will be in the NEPA recommendation for both the Resource Management Plan and specific ORV routes. While they may still be in the document preparation stage, they cannot afford to wait until this committee finishes its work. I think resolution is unlikely before the coming elections, successful conclusion of the pending congressional action is the best scenario that would allow the timeframe to be extended and this committee to contribute.

Since I doubt this committee will be able to finish its tasks, I direct my remaining comments to the park service as they complete their plan.

- Look earnestly and explicitly for opportunities to preserve ORV access and provide resource protection simultaneously. Do not assume they must be mutually exclusive.
- Do not dismiss ideas such as vegetation control, ephemeral pond creation, chick fencing, selective turtle nest relocation, drive only corridors, and additional ramps
- Do not dismiss the significance of non-ORV activities provided by the Pea Island refuge in the fulfillment of the seashore's directives, nor its relative lack of use.
- Do not dismiss the call to use peer reviewed science
- Do respond more effectively to the call for more timely, specific information to the committee and transparency to the public
- Do recognize that many of the unique qualities of the seashore can be appreciated or enjoyed by the visiting public only by ORV access.

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