

PEER REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to serve on a peer review panel as part of the planning and rulemaking process at Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CAHA). As the responsible official, I am managing the peer review and will compile your comments and forward them to the National Park Service (NPS) project manager for the CAHA Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. In turn, the project manager will share the results with the negotiated rulemaking committee that has been formed to assist in developing the park's ORV plan. This committee is composed of NPS staff and representatives of stakeholder groups.

You are being asked to provide written comments on two documents:

- Vogelsong, H. (2003). Cape Hatteras National Seashore visitor use study;
- Neal, W. (2005). The Lower Outer Banks of North Carolina: Results of a survey of residents, nonresident property owners, and visitors.

The Vogelsong report describes findings from a survey of visitors to CAHA conducted in 2001-2002. This survey was sponsored by the NPS. The Neal report describes findings from a survey of various groups, including visitors, conducted in 2002-2003. This survey was sponsored by the Outer Banks Preservation Association.

Context

The NPS plans to consider the Vogelsong and Neal studies, along with other research (e.g., studies from the Outer Banks Visitor's Bureau and the NPS Visitor Services Project survey conducted in 2000), to develop ranges of numbers for use in an economic impact analysis of alternatives for managing ORVs at CAHA. The alternatives could affect the number of ORVs on beaches at CAHA, with consequent changes in economic impacts from visitor spending. The NPS and the negotiated rulemaking committee are considering additional visitor use and economic data collection that could be obtained to add to the available information. Therefore, the two documents that you will review likely will not be the only sources of data that will be used in arriving at a final decision.

Instructions to Reviewers

Peer reviewers are expected to respond to ten questions, and are encouraged to include other comments that they feel are germane to the purpose of the review as identified in the following overarching question. This could include possible follow-up questions asked of the two principal investigators.

The overarching question guiding the review is:

1. Do either the Vogelsong or Neal surveys provide a sound scientific basis for estimating the total amount of ORV use at CAHA during the study period and the total visitor spending resulting from this activity? In other words, how suitable is the science of the studies for use in the planned role in decision-making?

To answer this question the following related points should be addressed:

2. The ability to generalize the results of the data collections to the universe of CAHA visitors and other populations (i.e., residents and property owners);
3. The design of the survey instruments and observation protocols;
4. The rigor of the data-collection methods in the field;
5. The appropriateness of the data analysis, including the characterization of uncertainty;
6. The use of other data sources included in the reports as cross-checks on key estimates of ORV use, including ferry counts and traffic counts;
7. The potential for non-response bias in the survey results;
8. The reasonableness of conclusions based on survey data and other evidence.

The original Vogelsong and Neal data files are available in SPSS and Excel formats. It is not the purpose of this review to re-analyze these data, but please respond to the following two questions:

9. Based on answers to the previous items, would there be value in re-analyzing the Vogelsong or Neal data? Why or why not? If yes, what key points should be examined as part of the re-analysis?
10. Would conducting additional social science research improve the ability to estimate the amount of ORV use at CAHA and the impact of this use on visitor spending? If so, what type(s) of research would be needed?

In some cases, reviewers may find that insufficient information is provided in the two technical reports to respond to some of the points listed above. If this occurs, reviewers should specify the additional information that is needed to make a determination.

Review Process and Dates

The review will follow a seven-step process, with the following milestones:

- **(March 28)**—Individual written assessments of the Vogelsong and Neal reports focusing on the ten points completed by peer reviewers and transmitted to the responsible official;
- **(April 4)**—Consolidation by the responsible official of the written assessments for presentation to the review panel;
- **(April 11)**—Conference call to allow peer reviewers to compare comments, share thoughts, and refine individual evaluations;
- **(April 16)**—Submission to responsible official of revised individual comments arising from the conference call;
- **(April 21)**—Compilation and synthesis of revised comments by the responsible official;
- **(April 25)**—Review of the compilation and synthesis by peer reviewers;
- **(April 30)**—Final compilation and synthesis, including individual comments, transmitted by the responsible official to the CAHA project manager.

Disclosure

These instructions have been reviewed and approved by appropriate NPS officials. Although this review has been determined to be of “informative” scientific information,¹ rather than “influential” scientific information, the process follows guidelines in Section II(3) of the “OMB Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review;” the “NPS Interim Guidance Document Governing Code of Conduct, Peer Review, and Information Quality Correction for NPS Cultural and Natural Resource Disciplines;” and the requirements of the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. §522a as amended. Specifically, the NPS will appropriately maintain records documenting the peer review, including:

- The name and position of the responsible peer review manager;
- The name, affiliation, and pertinent qualifications of each reviewer;
- Determinations of disclosures regarding conflict of interest;
- Identification of any conflicts that could affect the independence of individual reviews;²
- Objectives and structure of the review;
- Copies of reviewers’ comments and the compilation and synthesis of comments;
- Records of payment for reviewers’ services.

The NPS will disclose the names, affiliations, and qualifications of reviewers to members of the negotiated rulemaking committee and to the authors of the two technical reports. Reviewers’ comments will also be disclosed, but will not be specifically attributed. The compiled peer-review report by the responsible official will be disclosed to the negotiated rulemaking committee and to the authors.

The Department of the Interior does not have the statutory authority to protect confidentiality or to exempt reviewers’ comments, identities, or credentials from a request under the Freedom of Information Act. Materials that NPS provides to the negotiated rulemaking committee are part of the public record for the committee.

Contact Information for Responsible Official

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¹ Informative scientific information is defined by NPS as scientific or scholarly information that “serves to inform scientific, scholarly, and management awareness and decision-making generally, but that does not provide the sole or major component of information used in decision-making and does not, by itself, lead to a change in the direction of decision-making or to a decision that creates a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or private-sector decisions.”

² Peer reviewers are considered to be independent if they: 1) have no direct involvement in the development of the material under review; 2) have no indirect involvement by significant consultation during development or by supervising the personnel who produced the material under review; or 3) have no significant personal relationship to persons directly involved in development of the material under review.