

March 16, 2009

Attention: Michael Murray, National Park Service
From: Matt Walker, Senior Editor, Surfing Magazine
RE: Maintaining access on Cape Hatteras

Dear Mr. Murray:

Although I already spoke publicly on the access issue currently involving Cape Hatteras, I feel it is important to offer a written account of my views in hopes they can help in your decision-making.

As a lifelong East Coast surfer, Outer Banks resident — and as Senior Editor of *Surfing* magazine — I cannot overemphasize the value of Cape Hatteras to surfers, as well as waveriders of every kind. Not only is this area responsible for grooming some of the sport's greatest athletes (please see the letters below), it serves as a "Mecca" for whole families of surfers who enjoy the power and quality of the waves and the pristine coastline. There are literally millions of surfers to whom just the name 'Hatteras' is a word of magical reverence; both their first 'surf trip' and most beloved returning point. And for the small band of lifelong residents like myself — teachers and principals, business owners and church leaders — these waves are the sole reason we moved here, and the sole reason we will continue to stay. Furthermore, of any piece of the Atlantic Seaboard, Hatteras alone can claim an international reputation for being a surfing epicenter. It is not just important; it is irreplaceable. Or as Kelly Slater says below, it is "sacred." Please, when you make your decisions, do not underestimate the area's impact on surfing culture at large.

Likewise, do not underestimate surfers' impact on Hatteras. While I regret I can't offer more specific information about surfers' use of the park itself, national studies show surfers spend more time in the ocean than any other recreational user; as a result, we care more about the health of the ocean and its beaches. It's surfers who pick up litter and fishing lures. It's surfers who speak out against polluters. And though surfers spend hard dollars to surf their favorite waves, we also put the value of a robust coastal ecology above any monetary revenue. (Again, I believe the letters I've pasted below are evidence of that, as both professionals replied within a matter of hours, despite being in Australia for the opening day of their competitive season.)

That being said, we are not alone. Fishermen, shell hunters, surfers, kayakers, sunbathers — we are all beach lovers by nature. And, when it comes to protecting Cape Hatteras Seashore, we are its greatest defenders and stewards. We will not change our tune because it's "better for business." We will not reverse stances because of a corporate donation. For this reason alone, I beg you to remember the role of humans as the most important line of defense in keeping developers and polluters from having their way with Cape Hatteras. As a diehard environmentalist, I'm ashamed of this lawsuit, which has done little more than make an enemy of the environmental movement, turning away valuable allies for fights that will one day affect us all. If we want to make sure that

there's coastline to enjoy 30 years from now, we need to be sure humans can fully enjoy the activities that make the ocean and beaches dear to them right now. Otherwise, when an issue comes along that threatens our coastal environments, there will be nobody around who remembers or cares enough to try to defend them.

Please consider these important elements when making your decision; please think long-term and consider what will serve the greatest good of the park for centuries to come. Humans and ecology can thrive together when they try.

Thank you,

Matt Walker
Senior Editor, *SURFING*
Resident, Kill Devil Hills

LETTER FROM CJ HOBGOOD

The 2001 ASP World Champion, CJ Hobgood and his brother, Damien, are considered two of the greatest surfers in the world. They developed their skills, in part, by surfing the beaches of Cape Hatteras:

The first thing my brother and I did when we signed our first pro contract ten years ago was buy a house in Avon. And we did it for one reason: the waves. Their power. Their quality. Their variety. And the freedom to enjoy them all. That freedom and access is the whole reason people come to the Outer Banks. Please consider all of those elements when you're making your decisions. And keep the Outer Banks special.

*Sincerely,
CJ Hobgood
2001 World Champion*

LETTER FROM KELLY SLATER

What I just said about CJ, you can multiply by nine for Kelly Slater – literally. A holder of nine world titles — five more than any other surfer — and every Association of Surfing Professionals record, Mr. Slater is the sport's most accomplished competitor and the greatest modern surfer since Duke Kahanamoku introduced the sport around the globe in 1914. I don't expect you to understand the nuances of surfing, but if Tiger Woods said one of his all-time favorite and most influential golf courses was in Cape Hatteras, you would take him at his word. I'm asking you now to do the same. (On a more personal note, Kelly is so busy I sometimes email him regarding an article requiring his immediate input and don't hear back for two weeks; yet, when he heard surfers might lose access to one of his favorite breaks on the planet, he replied within hours. And he will do it again whenever Hatteras is threatened):

I'd have to say it'd be absurd not to think of beaches and waves as natural resources right alongside oil, minerals, fish, and birds. The resource is used as a pleasure, necessity or business for everyone on earth. Surfing is used as all three things. Not only that, we

surfers bring to light many of the issues that arise with regards to pollution and erosion concerns. There are no better people for the job as it is inherently connected to our everyday lifestyle.

The good fortune we've all had of being able to have access to surfing all the beaches along the shores of the Outer Banks has created many life long memories for tens of thousands of surfers and families who enjoy the area for all of its different resources.

Many of the surfers I've been there with over the years are avid birdwatchers (which I find funny) and almost all of them are fishermen. Any day without surf is quickly filled with fishing and a freshly caught dinner.

I truly hope that surfing and waves and their beach access is equally considered in the decisions regarding the Outer Banks future. The Lighthouse has stood as a symbol of East Coast, and US, surfing since I can remember and is Mecca for easterners and all US surfers alike. Please consider this fact when determining the future of our sacred destination.

Sincerest Thanks.

Kelly Slater

9X World Surfing Champion, FL Native and long-time Hatteras visitor