

BRIEF SUMMARY: Seasonal Closures

Work Group Call, Thursday, 3/13/08

The participants discussed possible definition/purpose/intent of what are currently referred to as seasonal closures. They talked about possible criteria for placing and re-opening seasonal closures, and they identified other questions to be decided on this topic in the future as well as related issues that will need to be addressed.

Areas of general agreement:

There should be ORV closures in front of all villages during the high season, at a minimum from sometime in the spring to sometime in the fall. The purpose of this type of closure is to reduce user conflicts and promote pedestrian safety in densely populated areas. This type of closure should be applied uniformly to all villages. Commercial fishermen should be permitted to drive within seasonal closures as they have historically done. Safety closures should be applied (separately from seasonal/village closures, as appropriate) in front of villages with narrow beaches.

Seasonal closure issues and questions remaining to be addressed:

- *Closure name* - Options suggested include: seasonal closures (as is), summer closures, village closures, or some combination of these three.
- *Other high use times* - Should seasonal closures in front of villages be applied during holiday (for example Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter) weeks or other non-high season times of dense use? Or might this happen under safety closures? If so, how determine when? How determine if those visiting are planning to use ORVs or not?
- *Year round village closures* - Should closures in front of villages apply year round?
- *Village closure boundaries* - How will the village boundaries to which these closures are applied be determined?
- *Definition* – How will seasonal closures fit within the menu of all closures?
- *Criteria* - What criteria should be used for determining when these areas are closed and re-opened? Which would be practical and enforceable? Options suggested:
 - Dates that NC DOT changes the highway speed limits
 - Fixed dates, for example May 15-Sept 15
 - Closures in front of villages year round
 - Density of use, as determined by occupancy rates or other
- *Parking and Pedestrian Access* - How address parking and pedestrian access needs during these closures?

Related issues to be addressed:

- Public parking and pedestrian access to beach areas closed to ORVs.
- The need for prominent signage of pedestrian access and parking areas.
- Passive (use) areas / the desire for areas of the beach closed to ORVs that are not in front of villages.
- Bypass roads and ORV access to sections of the beach that lie between closures.

Discussion:

Overlap between seasonal/village and safety closures – Participants noted a range of reasons for year-round closures in front of particular villages. There was discussion of the fact that safety closures might mean that particular stretches of beach (near to or remote from villages) are closed year round.

It was noted that it is still possible to fish in front of the villages during seasonal closures, people are only prohibited from driving onto the beach at those times and places.

There is a lack of user data that makes it difficult to know how extending the seasonal closures would affect people visiting the seashore.

It was noted that beaches should be available for multiple use to the extent possible and that there is a difference between closing particular areas for pedestrian safety and closing them because certain pedestrians want to be able to access beach areas without vehicles.

When determining the start/end dates of seasonal closures, consider: pedestrian safety, enforcement and practicality, aesthetic preferences, user conflicts, and access for fishermen.