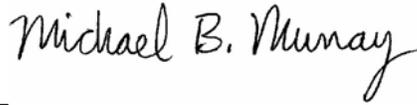


**Superintendent's Order #07:  
ORV Management**



**Approved:**

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**Michael B. Murray, Superintendent**

**Effective Date:** May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006

**Sunset Date:** When revised or amended by the Superintendent.

Introduction:

Off-road vehicles (ORVs) are considered a traditional and appropriate use at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. In accordance with the 1984 General Management Plan, selected beaches will continue to be open for ORV recreational driving. The Seashore is in the process of initiating a long term ORV management plan and regulation. Until the plan and regulation are established, this superintendent's order provides interim park policy on the management of ORV use and serves as a complement to the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy, which provides additional guidance on the use of ORVs in the vicinity of resource protection closures. All aspects of this policy are subject to change during the development of the long term plan and regulation.

Objectives:

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

To provide reasonable opportunities for motorized as well as non-motorized beach access and use.

To provide for resource protection as well as for safe and consistent management of ORV access and use on seashore beaches.

To provide for adaptive management and efficiency of implementation in response to a frequently changing coastal environment.

Protected Species Management:

Protected species management activities, including resource closures and ORV requirements related to resource closures, are addressed separately in the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy.

Responsibilities:

The Superintendent is responsible for review and approval of this policy.

The Chief Ranger is responsible for managing operational implementation of this policy.

Field law enforcement rangers are responsible for implementing this policy and are delegated the authority to place and move corridor signs and markers in accordance with this policy.

#### Identification and Marking of ORV Use Areas (Corridor):

ORV use areas (or ORV “corridor”) will be identified in certain sections of Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CAHA). The use areas are currently being set in response to beach and dune changes which result in the opening of sensitive habitat and to provide for more consistent identification of areas open to ORV use. Additional ORV use areas may be established, in the future, as additional storms alter dune lines, eliminating the dunes as a physical barrier to ORV use.

The ORV corridor will be similar in size and shape to the historical shoreline use patterns. Identification of ORV use areas will not impact the number of ramps open to allow ORV access to seashore beaches.

The ORV corridor will be marked by posts placed approximately 150 feet landward from the average, normal high tide line, or if less than 150 feet of space is available, at the vegetation or the toe of the remnant dune line; except as noted in the Interim Protected Species Management Strategy. The corridor width will fluctuate over time due to the dynamic nature of beach and surf. Beach areas landward of the post line, although not open to ORV use, will be open to pedestrian use unless otherwise posted. The location of the posts will be evaluated at least monthly for proper distance placement in relation to changing shorelines.

The park will transition from white carsonite posts to a standard use of brown carsonite posts to mark the ORV corridor and to post short-term traffic control signs. In most locations, posts will be evenly spaced and placed at a uniform distance of approximately 100 feet apart. However, more frequent posts may be placed in specific locations as needed where terrain, non-compliance with the corridor boundaries, and/or proximity to resource closures warrant it. Wooden posts will be used to post long-term signs or mile markers at fixed locations.

To alleviate confusion regarding public access, if resource closures extend up to or into ORV use areas, the posts marking the corridor will be removed, and the area will be posted with resource closure signing only. When the resource closure is removed, the posts marking the ORV corridor will be moved back to their original position or to the current corridor line.

An access corridor will be established to provide access from the ORV use area along the ocean beach to the northeast corner of the pond on Oregon Inlet Spit.

#### Speed Limits:

The speed limit in the ORV corridor will be 25 mph unless otherwise posted. The speed limit in narrow or congested areas will be posted as 10 mph. During off season, areas in front of villages that are open to ORV use will be posted with a 10 mph speed limit.

#### Seasonal Closures:

Seasonal ORV closures will be established annually in beach areas which by reason of heavy pedestrian, swimming, wildlife or other use are deemed seasonally unsuitable for ORV use from May 15 through September 15.

Seasonally closed areas shall consist of but are not be limited to the following areas:

- Bodie Island, Ramp 1 to 0.6 miles South of Ramp 2 (i.e., Coquina Beach);
- Hatteras Island, beach areas fronting the villages of Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo and Avon;
- Hatteras Island, beach from the north boundary of Buxton to Ramp 43;
- Hatteras Island, beach fronting the villages of Frisco and Hatteras;
- Ocracoke Island from 0.5 miles South of Ramp 67 to 0.25 miles North of Ramp 70.

Seasonally closed areas shall be identified by signs at both ends of the area, at all other vehicle access points to the area and shall be indicated on maps available for viewing at the offices of the Superintendent, each District Ranger, at each Visitor Center and at all other public contact stations.

#### Safety Closures:

There may be situations that, for various reasons, the beach is not safe for vehicles to use. This has happened in the past and the park will continue to post cautionary signs near access ramps when possible.

Providing for public safety is the responsibility of all CAHA employees. As such, CAHA law enforcement (LE) rangers have the authority to establish a safety closure for any condition which provides a clear and imminent threat of significant bodily injury or death to the public or significant damage to personal property. Non-emergency service staff, when encountering such safety hazards, should establish initial safety precautions and contact the LE ranger staff to evaluate the situation and establish any necessary closures.

A narrow beach, by itself, would not provide such a hazard. Tides which block access through portions of beaches occur periodically and predictably and are an obvious, easily avoidable hazard, and would not warrant a closure. Examples of hazards that would justify a closure include, but are not limited to, deep beach cuts which block the beach from dune to surf with no obvious way around; or obstacles, such as exposed stumps or debris that blocks the entire width of the beach and can not be removed with out assistance or heavy equipment. Where hazards block only a portion of a beach, and safe access is available around the hazard, staff will mark and post the hazard to direct ORV traffic around the hazard.

#### Emergency/Safety Closure Notification:

Any employee initiating an emergency safety closure will notify their supervisor immediately. The Superintendent and Division Chief will be notified as soon as possible of any emergency closures. As soon as possible after the emergency closure has been established, the employee will complete a "Closure Request Form" (attached) and submit the form for final approval through the chain of command. Completion of a "Closure Request Form" will only be required when a complete beach closure is established and does not apply to any modification of the ORV corridor width that does not preclude access.

Safety closures will be monitored at least once monthly and reopened when the safety issue has sufficiently diminished to warrant reopening the section to ORV access. The same notification procedures as occurred when the closure was created will be followed when the closure is reopened.

References:

1984: January. General Management Plan, Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

2006: Interim Protected Species Management Strategy and Environmental Assessment, Cape Hatteras National Seashore