



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Padre Island National Seashore

P.O. Box 181300

Corpus Christi, Texas 78480



IN REPLY REFER TO:

9.D.

February 17, 2015

Subject: Scoping Notice – Preparation of an Environmental Assessment for the Restoration of the portion of tidal flat damaged by off-road vehicles in the area of Yarborough Pass, Padre Island National Seashore, Texas

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service (NPS) will be preparing an environmental assessment (EA) which will analyze the effects of restoring an area of wind-tidal flats damaged by off-road vehicles. The project would restore the surface hydrology and promote the return of algal mat within the damaged area.

A fundamental policy of the NPS is to preserve park resources to the extent that the resources will be left unimpaired for future generations. Tire tracks left behind by vehicles alter the physical, biological, and aesthetic components of these valuable wetlands, and may take years to decades to recover naturally.

The deep ruts and ridges of the tracks interrupt the natural surface hydrology of the wind-tidal flat. This primary wetland area is characterized by long dry periods of exposure until inundation by lagoon waters driven by strong northerly winds. Flooding of the area is relatively brief, with water loss due to either a shift in wind direction or evaporation. Alterations to the topography result in changes to depth and duration of flooding. Wind-tidal flats are a very limited and specialized environment existing within a few centimeters of sea level, leaving them vulnerable to potential loss as a result of climate change or sea level change.

Wind-tidal flats serve as an important winter and migration foraging habitat for shorebirds, including the federally threatened Piping plover and Red knot. Wind-tidal flats such as those at Yarborough Pass are able to support large blue-green algal mats, creating an ideal environment for a thriving benthic community. Shorebirds feed on the polychaetes, crustaceans, and insect larvae found within the algal mats.

An EA will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that (1) analyzes reasonable alternatives to meet project objectives, and (2) evaluates issues and impacts to park resources and values.

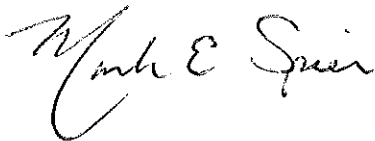


The NPS encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to formally comment on the project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the EA. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project, and invite you to submit your written comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>.

If you are not able to submit comments electronically through this website, then you may also submit written comments to me at the address on the letterhead. Please provide all comments by March 20, 2015. These comments will be considered during preparation of the EA. We look forward to hearing from you!

If you have any questions, or require additional information, please contact Mr. James Lindsay at (361) 949-8173 ext. 223, or email James_Lindsay@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark E. Spier".

Mark Spier
Superintendent

