

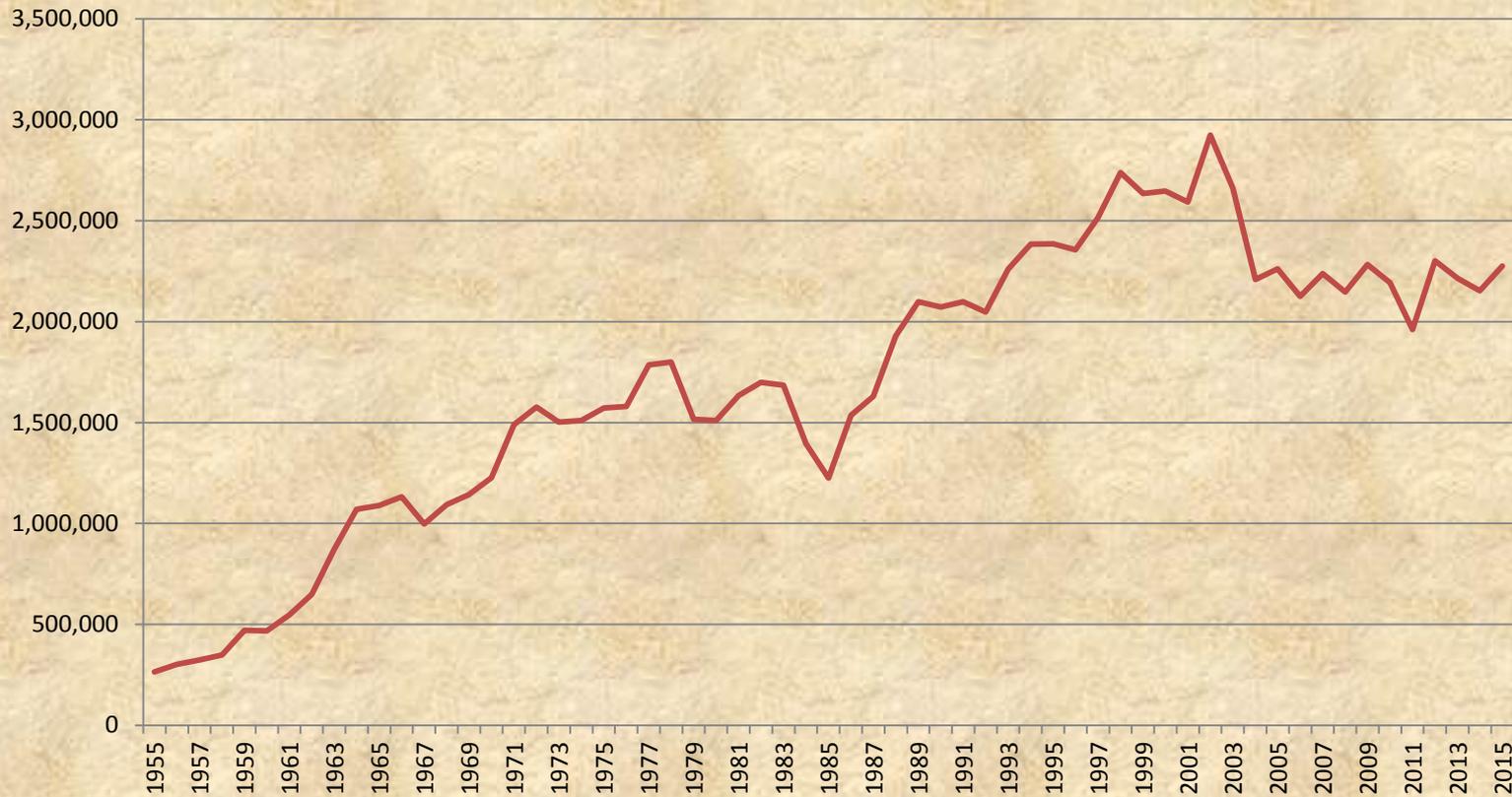


## NPS Visitor Use and Management





## Number of Recreational Visits to CAHA, 1955-2015





## Number of Recreational Visits to CALO, 1976-2015



## In Park Surveys

- Law enforcement rangers counted ORVs from 2012-2015 while on patrols
- RM staff counted ORVs from 2010-2014 as part of a shorebird survey effort
- Aerial surveys were done sporadically, mostly focused on holiday weekends in summer season
- No protocols were developed for any of these counts and they were done sporadically



## CAHA Visitor Use Study, 2003

- Completed by East Carolina University (Prior to ORV Management Plan/EIS)
  - Focused on how visitors use the Seashore
  - Data collected in 2001-2002 on:
    - Distribution and character of use
    - Visitor attitudes/norms towards density, other activities, off road vehicle use, aircraft





## CAHA Visitor Use Study

- Found average vehicle carrying 2.26 occupants, equaling approximately 2.25 million visitors entering the park that year.
- Approximately 10% of these visitors (225,000) were thought to be using ORVs in the park.
- Highest visitation were in areas of developed attractions (near visitor centers), moderate visitation at semi-developed areas (e.g., Coquina beach, Frisco bathhouse)

## CAHA Visitor Use Study

- Vast majority of ORV use in park was at points/inlets; ORV use high (average of 252 at any given time) but concentrated in few key areas.
- Most often activity report – recreational fishing
- Other activities – sunbathing, swimming, beach driving, visiting lighthouses



## Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Visitor Survey, 2014-2015

- Conducted from April 2014-May 2015
- Surveyed 11,183 visitors
- Visitor-intercept surveys made up 8,508. Remaining were online surveys.





## Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Visitor Survey, 2014-2015

**Exhibit 14—Activities/Attractions that Appeal to You**

Activity/ Attraction	# of Respondents	% of Total Respondents	Activity/ Attraction	# of Respondents	% of Total Respondents
Beach, ocean	9,503	86.1%	Water sports	1,163	10.5%
Lighthouses	5,821	52.8%	Golf	410	3.7%
Open natural area	5,446	49.4%	Festival or other special event	397	3.6%
Historical sites	4,071	36.9%	Site for a wedding	253	2.3%
Nature activities	2,934	26.6%	Good place for a honeymoon	218	2.0%
Safe place to visit	2,932	26.6%	Friend or relative's wedding	199	1.8%
National Park Service sites	2,375	21.5%	Study / educational tour	182	1.6%
Fishing	2,291	20.8%	Scuba diving	110	1.0%
Other outdoor activities / recreation	1,783	16.2%	Business trip	82	0.7%
Inexpensive travel cost	1,698	15.4%	Competitive sports event	76	0.7%
Shopping	1,643	14.9%	Company meeting / conference	34	0.3%
Visit friends or relatives	1,578	14.3%			
Short travel time	1,225	11.1%			



## Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Visitor Survey, 2014-2015

**Exhibit 27—Activities That You Did During Your Stay**

Activity/ Attraction	# of Respondents	% of Total Respondents
Beach	9,682	87.7%
Scenic drives	7,621	69.1%
Lighthouses	7,311	66.3%
Dining at restaurants unique to the area	5,773	52.3%
National parks	5,436	49.3%
Museums / historic sites	5,278	47.8%
Shopping	5,106	46.3%
Ferry	2,748	24.9%
Fishing from beach or pier	2,378	21.6%
Wildlife preserve/ bird watching	2,361	21.4%
Hiking	2,234	20.2%
Beach/off-road driving	1,772	16.1%
Kite flying	1,544	14.0%
Biking	1,330	12.1%
Kayaking/canoeing	1,007	9.1%
Art gallery	789	7.2%

Activity/ Attraction	# of Respondents	% of Total Respondents
Water sports	776	7.0%
Charter/boat fishing	671	6.1%
Golf	656	5.9%
Surfing	542	4.9%
Camping	523	4.7%
Festival or other special event	515	4.7%
Study /educational tour	442	4.0%
Theater performance	427	3.9%
Concert or musical performance	257	2.3%
Parasailing	246	2.2%
Wedding	238	2.2%
Tennis	185	1.7%
Hang gliding	146	1.3%
Competitive sports event	126	1.1%
Kite boarding	88	0.8%
Scuba diving	61	0.1%

## Balancing Visitation and Wildlife Protection

- 2010 Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan EIS/ROD
- 2012 Final Rule
- 2015 Review and Adjustment of Wildlife Protection Buffers EA/FONSI (2014 NDAA)
- 2016 Consideration of Modifications to the Final Rule for ORV Management EA (2014 NDAA)





## 2010 ORV EIS/ROD and 2012 Final Rule

- Wildlife Protection Buffers
  - Buffers prescribed for each species
  - Protocols developed for implementation
  - Pre-nesting areas protect suitable habitat throughout breeding season
- Night-time driving restrictions during summer – for sea turtle protection
- Vehicle Free Areas – pedestrian areas; wildlife protection buffers still apply
- Seasonal ORV routes – developed primarily for pedestrian/ORV conflict (e.g., in front of villages in high use time periods), but some coincide with high use wildlife areas
- Pets prohibited in resource closures and in front of protection areas

# National Park Service



## MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

## SHOREBIRDS

### Prenesting

**All species:** By **Mar 1**, Seashore staff will evaluate all potential breeding habitat for piping plover, Wilson's plover and American oystercatcher and recommend prenesting closures for those species based on that evaluation. CWB breeding habitat will be evaluated by **Apr 1**. Areas of newly created habitat will also be evaluated during the annual habitat assessment. Areas of suitable habitat that have had individual PIPL, WIPL or AMOY nests, or concentrations of more than 10 CWB nests in more than one of the past five years and new habitat that is particularly suitable for shorebird nesting, such as the habitat at new inlets or overwash areas, will be posted as prenesting closures using symbolic fencing (string between posts) or with other closure signs by **Mar 15** at sites involving piping plover, Wilson's plover, and/or American oystercatcher; and by **Apr 15** at sites involving only colonial waterbirds. Because CWB colonies may shift locations from year to year, ORV ramps and pedestrian access points that have had colonies in more than one of the past five years will remain open until scraping or nesting is observed. Prenesting closures adjacent to such ramps and access points will still be established in these areas, subject to standard buffers once scraping or nesting is observed. The NPS will determine the configuration of specific prenesting closures based on an annual habitat assessment. Once established at the beginning of the breeding season, these areas would not be reduced to accommodate an ORV corridor. Prenesting closures would be removed if no breeding activity is seen in the area by **Jul 31** (or **Aug 15** if black skimmers are present), or 2 weeks after all chicks have fledged, whichever comes later. Nonbreeding shorebird habitat protection would be implemented, as described later in this table, before prenesting areas are removed. Pedestrian access along ocean and inlet shorelines below the high tide line will be permitted in front of (i.e., seaward of) prenesting areas until breeding activity is observed, then standard buffers for breeding activity would apply. **The NPS retains discretion at all times to enforce more protective closures or take other measures, if considered necessary, consistent with its obligations under the law.**

Pets and horses are prohibited in pedestrian shoreline access areas in front of prenesting areas. ORVs, pedestrians, pets and horses are prohibited within all resource closures, including prenesting closures.

**ORV corridors at Cape Point and South Point:** When prenesting closures are implemented, the ORV access corridor at Cape Point and South Point will be reduced from 50 meters (164 feet) during the nonbreeding season to 35 meters (115 feet). Once established, the prenesting closure will not be modified if the beach erodes into the ORV corridor or into the protected habitat. Once breeding activity is observed, standard buffers for breeding activity will apply. The ORV corridor width will be restored to 50 meters (164 feet) after breeding activity is completed at the site and prenesting closures are removed.

### Courtship/Mating Surveys

**All species:** Prenesting closures would be surveyed three times per week. Outside of prenesting closures, potential suitable habitat would be surveyed three times per week once breeding pairs are present.

### Courtship/Mating Buffers

**All species:** The Seashore retains the discretion to expand courtship/mating buffers depending on bird behavior. In unprotected areas, a buffer will be established within 12 daylight hours when courtship or mating by piping plover, Wilson's plover or American oystercatchers is observed. When courtship or mating is observed in the immediate vicinity of paved roads, parking lots, campgrounds, buildings, and other facilities, such as within the villages or at NPS developed sites, NPS retains the discretion to provide resource protection to the extent possible while still allowing those facilities to remain operational. This provision does not apply to ORV routes or ORV ramp access, which would be subject to standard buffers.

# National Park Service



## MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

## SHOREBIRDS

<b>Piping Plover and Wilson's Plover</b>	If breeding activity is observed outside of an existing closure or within a closure less than the prescribed buffer distance from the closure boundary, a buffer will be established or expanded to ensure a 75-meter buffer for the observed birds. Buffers will be increased in 50-meter increments if human disturbance	<b>American Oystercatcher</b> If breeding activity is observed outside of an existing closure or within a closure less than the prescribed buffer distance from the closure boundary, a buffer will be established or expanded to ensure a 150-meter buffer for the observed birds. Buffers will be increased in 50-meter increments if human disturbance occurs. Outside of prenesting areas, closures will be removed if no breeding activity is observed for at least a 2-week period, or when associated breeding activity has concluded.	<b>Colonial Waterbirds</b> Buffer establishment will be based on the location of scrape(s) and not location of copulation or "fish flashing."
<b>Scrape/Nest Surveys</b>	<b>Piping Plover and Wilson's Plover</b> A walk-through will be conducted to look for scrapes/nests every 3 days until such monitoring will disrupt other nesting species in the area. Monitoring of known and potential breeding areas will continue from a distance. Nests will be observed daily from a distance that does not disturb the birds, based on professional judgment. Nests will be approached once per week to observe and record data.	<b>American Oystercatcher</b> A walk-through will be conducted to look for scrapes/nests when observations suggest a scrape or nest is present. Nests will be observed daily from a distance that does not disturb the birds, based on professional judgment. For incubating birds that cannot be observed from a distance, nests will be checked every 3 days.	<b>Colonial Waterbirds</b> If scrape(s)/nest(s) are observed outside a resource closure or within a closure less than the prescribed buffer distance from the closure boundary, a 100-meter buffer will be established around the scrape location for least terns (if only least terns are present), or a 200-meter buffer when other colonial waterbird species are present. Buffers will be increased in 50-meter increments if human disturbance occurs. Colonies will be surveyed during the peak nesting period for each species, which generally is during the first part of June for tern species, but could be later for species such as black skimmers. Nests will be observed daily from a distance that does not disturb the birds, based on professional judgment. For incubating birds that cannot be observed from a distance, colony activity will be checked every 3 days.



MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY	SEA TURTLES
<p><b>Nest Closures / Buffers</b></p>	<p>A buffer approximately 10 × 10 meters will be established with symbolic fencing and signage around nest. Closure size may be modified depending on environmental conditions at the nest site.</p> <p>Approximately 50–55 days into incubation, closures will be expanded to the surf line. The width of the closure will be based on the type and level of use in the area of the beach where the nest was laid:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. VFAs with little or no pedestrian traffic—25 meters wide (i.e., 12.5 meters on either side of the nest).</li> <li>2. Village beaches or other areas with high levels of pedestrian and other non-ORV use—50 meters wide (i.e., 25 meters on either side of the nest).</li> <li>3. Areas with ORV traffic—105 meters wide (i.e., 52.5 meters on either side of the nest).</li> </ol> <p>On the landward side of the nest, the closed area will be expanded to 15 meters from the nest where possible, but no less than 10 meters landward from the nest. If appropriate, traffic detours behind the nest area will be established and clearly marked with signs and reflective arrows.</p> <p>Light-filtering fence will be used in a U-shaped configuration around nests nearing their hatch dates, with the open face of the U oriented toward the water, to block light pollution from the villages and vehicles operating on the beach after dark.</p> <p>Once the buffer expansion is implemented, NPS staff will use rakes or a steel mat attached to an ATV or UTV to smooth any vehicle tracks between the nest and the water, so that tracks do not impede hatchlings from reaching the water.</p> <p>If multiple nests are located near each other (within 50 meters), and have similar hatch dates (within 14 days of each other), then closures will encompass all nests in the area and will not be removed until all nests within the closure have hatched.</p>
<p><b>Nest Watch Program</b></p>	<p>A cadre of trained volunteers will be established to watch nests that have reached their hatch windows in order to monitor hatchling emergence success and success reaching the water, and to provide for the minimization of negative impacts from artificial lighting, predation, and human disturbance. Depending on the number of nests that may be ready to hatch and the availability of volunteers, it may be necessary for NPS turtle staff to prioritize which nests are watched on any particular night. Priority will be given to watching the nests that are most likely to be negatively impacted by manageable factors.</p>

# National Park Service





## Sea Turtle Nest Exclosures



## 2015 Review and Adjustment of Wildlife Buffers (2014 NDAA)

- The 2014 Act directed the NPS “to ensure that the buffers are of the shortest duration and cover the smallest area necessary to protect a species, as determined in accordance with peer-reviewed scientific data.”
- Wildlife buffers were adjusted for:
  - American oystercatcher
    - Allowed a corridor within 25m from a nest
  - Piping Plover
    - Nest buffer reduced from 75 to 50 meters
    - Unfledged chick buffer reduced from 300 meters to 100 meters for pedestrians and from 1000 meters to 500 meters for ORVs, and to 200 meters where access blocked. (with intensive monitoring)





## 2015 Review and Adjustment of Wildlife Buffers (2014 NDAA)

- Wildlife buffers were adjusted for:
  - Least tern buffer for unfledged chicks reduced from 200 meters to 100 meters
  - Terns and skimmers reduced from 200 meters to 180 meters
  - Sea turtles reduced to 30 meters, allow corridor in front of nest when no other access. Ruts are removed at beach closing.
  - Sea turtle nest exclosures for nests laid after August 30 may not be expanded.

# National Park Service



## 2016 Consideration of Modifications to the Final Rule

- National Defense Authorization Act (2014):
  - Opening beach segments in the morning on a rolling basis
  - Extending seasonal ORV routes for additional periods in the fall and spring if it would not create resource management problems
  - Modifying the size and location of VFA's

