You're invited!

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING — AUGUST 2015

The Final Rule for off-road vehicle (ORV) management at Cape Hatteras National Seashore (Seashore) was implemented in 2012. On December 19, 2014, the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (the 2014 Act). The legislation provides 180 days for the Secretary of the Interior, in coordination with the state of North Carolina and in accordance with applicable laws, to review and modify wildlife buffers and designate pedestrian and vehicle corridors around buffers to allow access to areas that are open at the Seashore. The Review and Adjustment of Wildlife Protection Buffers Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed in June 2015.

The 2014 Act also requires a public process to consider, consistent with management requirements at the Seashore, changes to the Seashore's ORV special regulation as it relates to the morning opening of beaches, extending the length of seasonal ORV routes in the fall and/or spring, and modifying the size and location of vehicle-free areas (VFAs). The National Park Service (NPS) is beginning the EA process for the second portion of the Act, which could result in a modification to the Final Rule for ORV management at the Seashore.

YOUR PARTICIPATION WILL HELP SHAPE THIS EA

You can be involved in several ways:

- Attend a public scoping meeting
- Submit comments electronically to: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/caha-orv-ea
- Submit written comments by mail to:

  Superintendent
  Outer Banks Group/Cape Hatteras National Seashore
  1401 National Park Drive
  Manteo, NC 27954

Please submit your comments electronically or provide written comments by mail. Faxed comments and emails will not be accepted. Please be sure to include your full name and e-mail address, if available, with the comments, so we can add you to our mailing list for information about the planning process. For your comments to be the most useful in developing the EA, please submit comments by August 21, 2015.
You should be aware that your entire comment—including personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and e-mail address—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations will not be accepted.

Purpose and Need

PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to consider changing seasonal ORV route dates, morning beach openings from nighttime closures, and the size and location of vehicle-free areas, as well as explore alternative permit options and access construction projects within the park.

NEED

Action is needed as a result of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, which directs the NPS to undertake a public process to consider, consistent with management requirements at the National Seashore, the following changes to the Final Rule:

- Opening beaches at the National Seashore that are closed to night driving restrictions, by opening beach segments on a rolling basis as daily management reviews are completed
- Extending seasonal ORV routes for additional periods in the Fall and Spring if ORV use would not create resource management problems at the National Seashore, and
- Modifying the size and location of vehicle-free areas.

Action is also needed to continue to improve ORV management at the Seashore, which could include changes to the existing ORV permit system.

Preliminary Alternative Elements

The park has developed preliminary options for the following five alternative elements. Are there any additional alternative options you would like the NPS to consider?

MORNING BEACH OPENINGS

Currently all ORV-accessible beaches open at 7 a.m., after resource management staff have marked the location of any new turtle nests, false crawls, or turtle hatches that have occurred overnight. The NPS developed preliminary options for opening beaches earlier than 7 a.m. These preliminary options are:

- designating priority beaches that are cleared by resource management staff and opened at 6:30 a.m.
- allowing visitors to follow resource management staff onto the beach at a designated ramp and to drive a safe distance behind staff as they clear the beach

SEASONAL ORV ROUTES

Currently, seasonal ORV routes, located in front of the villages and Ocracoke campground, are open from November 1 through March 31. An additional seasonal ORV route on Bodie Island is open from September 15 through March 14. That seasonal route period is due to resource considerations, and park staff indicate that the current seasonal route period has been consistent with bird activity in that location. Therefore, the NPS would like to focus on the village and campground ORV route locations. For the seasonal ORV routes in front of the villages and Ocracoke campground, the NPS preliminary alternatives include extending the ORV route period for:

- an additional two weeks in the fall and spring
- an additional four weeks in the fall and spring
- an additional six weeks in the fall and Spring
- an extension in the fall only

VEHICLE-FREE AREAS

Current locations of VFAs and designated ORV routes were developed throughout the ORV management plan/environmental impact statement planning process, which concluded in 2010. Throughout that process, factors that were considered in designating ORV and pedestrian-only locations (or VFAs) included:

- Proximity to villages, ensuring both the pedestrian and ORV visitor experience was available within a reasonable distance from each village
- Presence of adequate parking, high-density day use areas, and lifeguarded beaches, which could better support VFAs
- Resource management concerns, including the location of wintering shorebird activities
- Providing for a balance between ORV areas and VFAs

What locations do you see as potential areas for modification?

ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Existing ORV routes and ramps were designated at these locations with the intent to provide access on either side of an ORV route to allow for reliable access, even if one ramp is unusable due to a resource closure. *The 2010 ORV EIS also proposed new or expanded parking areas to improve pedestrian and ORV access. What are some key locations where changes to parking or ramp configurations could improve beach or soundside access?*

PERMITS

Under the Final Rule, the NPS can only issue annual permits, valid for the calendar year, and seven-day permits. Based on visitor feedback, the NPS would like to explore different permit lengths, and some options being considered include:

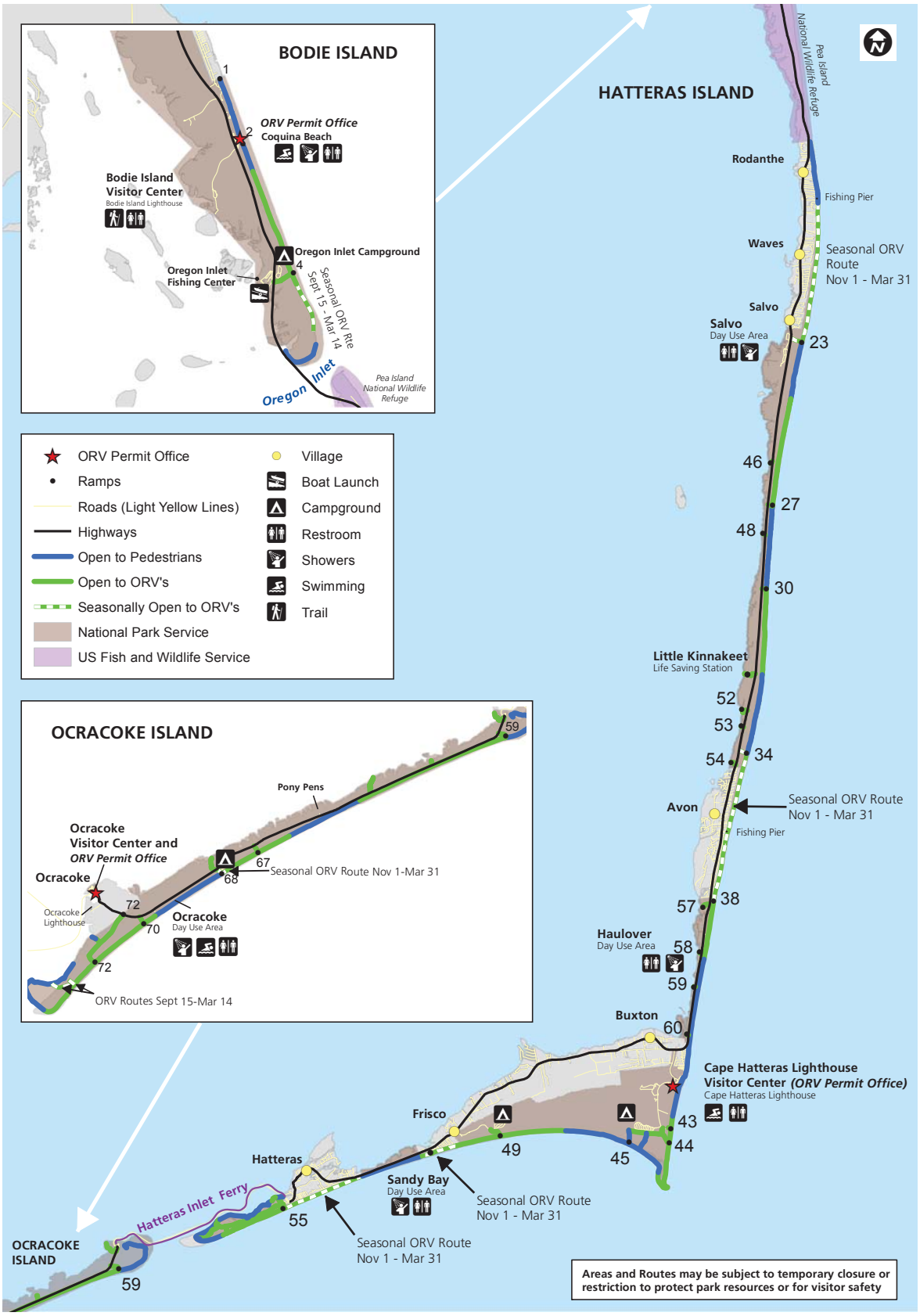
- 3-day permits
- 10-day permits
- 14-day permits
- Annual permits, valid for a year from issue date

Are there any other permit periods you would like to see considered?

Project Schedule

AUGUST 2015	Public Scoping — **WE ARE HERE**
OCTOBER 2015	Review public scoping comments and refine alternatives
DECEMBER 2015	Release EA/begin public review period
WINTER 2016	Review and respond to public comments
SPRING 2016	Decision document
SUMMER/FALL 2016	Modify the ORV final rule/implement the selected alternative

Designated Off-Road Vehicle Routes



2/10/2012

Public Scoping Meetings Schedule & Locations

Scoping is the first step to involve the public in the EA process. Scoping includes holding meetings and providing opportunities for the public to comment so that their concerns are identified early and the analysis is focused on important issues.

The meetings will consist of a brief presentation and clarifying question and answer period, followed by a workshop, where the public can talk with park staff and provide input on the EA process and preliminary alternative elements.

The five public meetings are scheduled as follows:

Ocracoke, NC August 5, 2015 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	**Ocracoke School** 1 Schoolhouse Road, Ocracoke Island, NC 27960
Raleigh, NC August 6, 2015 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	**McKimmon Conference & Training Center** 1101 Gorman Street, NC State University Campus, Raleigh, NC 27695
Buxton, NC August 10, 2015 6:00 p.m.to 8:00 p.m.	**Cape Hatteras Secondary School** 48576 Highway 12, Buxton, NC 27920
Kitty Hawk, NC August 11, 2015 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	**Hilton Garden Inn** 5353 Virginia Dare Trail, Kitty Hawk, NC 27949
Hampton, NC August 12, 2015 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	**Embassy Suites Hampton Inn** 1700 Coliseum Drive, Hampton, VA 23666