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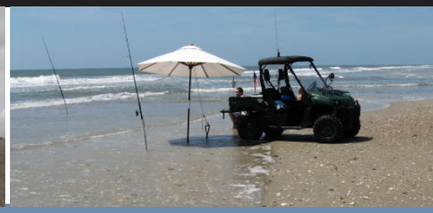
Cape Lookout National Seashore
131 Charles St.
Harkers Island, NC 28531

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cape Lookout National Seashore
North Carolina



Your Input is Requested!

Because of your interest in Cape Lookout National Seashore (the Seashore), we are requesting your input in developing the alternatives for the Off-road Vehicle Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (plan/EIS).
Your participation is vital to our planning process.

These alternatives were developed with input from comments received as a result of public scoping meetings and from public comments received on the Alternative Elements Workbooks.

Purpose of the Plan/EIS:

The purpose of this plan/EIS is to manage ORV use in compliance with the Seashore's enabling legislation, NPS management policies, and other laws and regulations to ensure protection of the natural, cultural, and recreational values of the Seashore's dynamic coastal barrier island environment for present and future generations.

Need for the Plan/EIS:

An ORV management plan is needed to:

- Comply with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 regarding ORV use, and with NPS laws, regulations (36 CFR 4.10), and policies to minimize impacts to Seashore resources and values.
- Establish an approved plan incorporating public input that reduces the potential for inconsistent management of ORV use, user conflicts, and safety concerns.
- Provide for sustainable recreational use.
- Protect natural and cultural resources from potential effects of ORV use.
- Provide for protected species management in relation to ORV and other uses to replace the Cape Lookout National Seashore Interim Protected Species Management Plan/EA and associated Biological Opinion.

There are two ways of submitting comments on the proposed alternatives:

1. Through the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website, at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/calo

2. Submit written comments by mail to:

Superintendent
Cape Lookout National Seashore
131 Charles Street
Harkers Island, NC 28531

Comments must be received no later than 12 midnight EST July 20, 2012.

If you would like to receive email updates from the Seashore regarding the ORV Management Plan/EIS, please notify the Seashore by contacting Wouter Ketel at Wouter_Ketel@nps.gov.

Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or in any other method than those specified above. Comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—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.

What is Next?

After considering all comments received on the draft alternatives, the Seashore will finalize the alternatives and begin to analyze their potential impacts. After the impact analysis is complete, a draft plan/EIS will be available for public comment.

The next steps for this project are:

1. Public comment on alternatives newsletter (Mid-June - July 20, 2012)
2. Public comment on Plan/DEIS
3. Public comment on Proposed Rulemaking
4. Plan/FEIS published
5. Record of Decision and Final Rule published

Draft Alternatives under Consideration:

Based on internal and public scoping, the Seashore has developed the following draft alternatives for consideration (These are summaries, detailed Alternatives will be released with the ORV Plan/EIS.)

	Alternative A[4]:	Alternative B:	Alternative C:	Alternative D:	Alternative E:
Management Practices For Species/Resource Protection[5] **Adaptive Management Strategy (AMS) - Alternative B, C, D** **Species Indicators (AMOY)** Breeding Population Size: Number of breeding pairs. • Target: 60 Nest Survival: % of Nests initiated that hatch 1 or more chicks. • Target: > 30% Chicks Fledged: Per breeding pair. • Target: > 0.40 Mammal Predation: Nests lost to mammals per year. • Target: < 20%	Species monitoring per the *Interim Protected Species Management Plan* (IPSMP) and the US FWS Biological Opinion; species protection measures are summarized below: **Piping plover**: April 1 close[8] historical and potential nesting areas; 150-foot courtship/mating and nesting buffer[8]; expand buffer to include a 600-foot ORV closure for chicks on beach[9]; 1.25 mile ORV closure of the north end of South Core Banks when nests hatch[9]. **Colonial nesting waterbirds**: April 1 close[8] active nesting areas and historic least tern, black skimmer nesting areas; 150-foot courtship/mating and nest buffer[8], keep min. 150-foot to full beach ORV closure for chicks on beach. **American oystercatcher**: no buffer for courtship/mating; 10 square-foot nesting buffer[8] in dunes; 300-foot nesting buffer[8] on beaches (600-foot pass through area); full ramp-to-ramp ORV closure[9] when chicks are present on beach (based on availability of back road). **Sea turtles**: establish three ramp-to-ramp turtle relocation areas (ORV closures)[9] on North Core and on South Core Banks during turtle nesting season; mark nests and establish ORV closure beginning 50-days after nest is laid, 30-foot at nest and 90-foot at high tide line. **Seabeach amaranth**: minimum 30-foot buffer around emergent plants[8].	Same as Alternative A, plus: • Night time driving **prohibited** from **May 1 until Aug. 31** • Increased resource management monitoring • Increased law enforcement presence • Increased education An **adaptive management strategy (AMS)** would be established to evaluate species disturbance and to respond to issues in a flexible manner consistent with experience; the A**merican oystercatcher (AMOY) would be used as an indicator species** and species indicators would be established for AMOY. If species indicators reach a moderate impact in successive years, changes in management practices would be implemented: **Step 1** - If 2 of 4 indicators are triggered in 2 successive years, actions would be taken, such as (but not limited to): increased buffers, predator control, trash management, increased education, focused enforcement. **Step 2** - If 2 of 4 indicators are triggered in 2 additional successive years, additional actions would be taken, such as (but not limited to): reductions in parking lot size, elimination of parking, reductions in the number of vehicle permits issued, a change in management of permits from weekly and/or annual permits to a daily permit. The adaptive management strategy would be evaluated after a five-year period and may be changed based on new information.	Same as Alternative B, except: • Night time driving **prohibited May 1 until Sep. 15.**	Same as Alternative C, except: Increased species buffers apply: **Piping plover**: 600-foot nesting buffer[8]; 3000-foot buffer to full beach closures[8] for chicks on beach. **Colonial nesting waterbirds**: 600-foot buffer for nests[8] and a 600-foot ORV closure chicks on the beach. **Least tern**: 300 foot nesting buffer[8]; expand to 600-foot ORV closure for chicks on the beach. **American oystercatcher**: 450-foot nesting buffer[8] on the beach; 900-foot pass through area for nests on beach; ORV closure for chicks on the beach (based in availability of the back road). **Sea turtles**: ORV closure 50 days after nest is laid is increased to 60-foot at nest and 150-foot at high tide line.	Same as Alternative A, except there would be no closures related to vehicle use.
ORV Driver Education Certificate	No education certificate required.	An education certificate for ORV users would be required and must be carried; ORV operators must view an ORV driver education program; there is no fee for the program.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.	No driver education program would be needed.

Notes:

1. "Potential access" means that the area is available for vehicle use but is subject to temporary species and/or safety related closures.
2. Vehicle permit fees have not been determined at this time, but will be established per NPS policy and guidance. Vehicle permit fees will be published in the Draft EIS, and the public will have an opportunity to comment on the permit fees during the public comment period.
3. Certain NC motor vehicle codes do not apply to ATV/UTVs; ATVs are limited to two axles and UTVs are limited to three axles.
4. Alternative A does not comply with Executive Orders 11644 & 11989, since under the current management, routes were not designated through a Special Regulation.
5. Management practices for species must conform to the FONSI for the Interim Protected Species Management Plan (IPSMP), and the US FWS Biological Opinion.
6. The final limit in the number of ORV permits available to issue each year would be determined by the average of the number of permits issued in year one through year three, once the plan is implemented (using full years).
7. Not-withstanding the definition of a "public vehicular area" in the NC Motor Vehicle Code.
8. Full Recreation Closures (e.g. bird species): no entry permitted by pedestrians, pets and vehicles.
9. ORV Closures (e.g. turtles): no entry by vehicles.

Cape Lookout National Seashore

Draft Alternatives under Consideration: Based on internal and public scoping, the Seashore has developed the following draft alternatives for consideration

(These are summaries, detailed Alternatives will be released with the ORV Plan/EIS.)

	Alternative A[4]: Continue Current Management (No-Action)	**Alternative B:** Maximizes ORV Opportunity	**Alternative C:** Seasonal Increases in Pedestrian-Only Areas	**Alternative D:** Maximizes Pedestrian-Only Areas	**Alternative E:** Eliminates ORV Use
Access for ORV users on Core Banks **Routes, Backroads, Ramps**	Potential access[1] to **45 miles** of beach **Mar. 16 until Dec. 31** (96% of Core Banks). No vehicle permit required. Vehicle routes same as 2011: with beach driving, backroad, ramps, routes in camps and some sound side access, no regular backroad maintenance.	Potential access[1] to **45 miles** of beach **Mar. 15 until Dec. 31** (96% of Core Banks). Routes same as Alternative A, plus: backroad maintenance, backroad vehicle bypass routes and emergency parking, some new ramps, and backroad added to bypass the Cape Lookout point from mile marker (MM) 44 to about MM 45. (open seasonally).	Potential access[1] to **40 miles** of beach from **Mar. 16 until Sep. 14** (85% of Core Banks). Potential access[1] to **45 miles** of beach from **Sep. 15 until Dec. 15** (96% of Core Banks). Vehicle routes same as Alternative B.	Potential access[1] to **40 miles** of beach **Mar. 16 until Dec 15** (85% of Core Banks). Vehicle routes same as 2011, except for 5 miles of new pedestrian-only areas, closure of the **Cape Lookout Village Historic District to through traffic**, and **backroad added to bypass the Cape Lookout point** from MM 44 to MM 45 is open Mar. 15 to Dec. 15.	No ORV access; a complete loss of recreational opportunity for ORV users.
Vehicle-Free Access on Core Banks	Pedestrian-only areas: **2 miles** of beach from **Mar. 15 until Dec. 31** (4% of Core Banks). Vehicle-free beach at the **Lighthouse area** and the **Spit** on South Core Banks.	Same as Alternative A.	Pedestrian-only areas: **7 miles** from **Mar. 15 until Sep. 14** (15% of Core Banks) — Vehicle-free beach includes a larger **Lighthouse area**, the **Spit** and added areas at **Cods Creek, Great Island** and **Long Point camps.** **2 miles** from **Sep. 15 until Dec. 15** (4% of Core Banks); Same as Alternative A.	**Pedestrian-only areas: 7 miles** from **Mar. 15 until Dec. 15** (increases pedestrian areas by 11% for a total 15% of Core banks) — Vehicle-free beach includes a larger **Lighthouse area,** the **Spit** and added areas at **Codds Creek, Great Island** and **Long Point camps.**	Pedestrian-only areas: **47 miles year round** (100% of Core Banks).
Vehicle Permits and Fees **Long-Term Parking**	No vehicle permit required. Long-term parking permitted with a weekly fee; the number of parking permits is not limited; the parking lots can get overfull.	Vehicle permit and a weekly and/or annual fee required[2] — there would be **no limit** on the # of permits issued (vehicle **#s** and density could increase, and the experience of an isolated beach could be impacted). Long-term parking: permitted with a weekly fee; the number of parking permits issued **is limited** to a designated lot capacity (based on the historical size/estimated capacity of the lots).	Vehicle permit and a weekly and/or annual fee required[2] — the # of **permits** would be **limited**; the **initial** #[6] of permits available is based on historical average use levels (vehicle density can increase during the spring / summer): • North Core Banks: **2,400 permits** annually • South Core banks: **2,700 permits** annually Long-term parking: same as Alternative B, except; the parking lot capacity would be **reduced** from **Mar. 15 until Sep. 15.**	Vehicle permit and a weekly and/or annual fee required[2] — the # of **permits** would be **limited**; the **initial** #[6] of permits available represent an 11% reduction from historic levels, based on increased pedestrian-only areas, and is designed to maintain ORV density at current levels. • North Core Banks: **2,136 permits** annually • South Core banks: **2,403 permits** annually Long-term parking: would be **eliminated**.	Vehicle permits and fees and long-term parking would not be applicable.
Miscellaneous Vehicle and Operator Requirements **Common to all Alternatives:** • Vehicles must at all times comply with NC traffic laws as if operating on NC highways[7]. • Vehicles must comply with NPS regulations in 36 CFR and the Superintendent's Compendium.	Common to All, plus: • ATV **use permitted Mar. 15 until Dec. 31** • Prohibited: vehicles with less than 3 wheels • Vehicles must be registered, licensed, inspected, and insured for highway use[3] • ATV operators and passengers must wear a DOT helmet and eye protection while riding/operating on the seashore • Operators must be licensed and be 16 years of age or older	Same as Alternative A, plus: • Prohibited vehicles: tracked, farm, amphibious, aircraft, 2-stroke engines, high-performance or sport ATVs • Vehicles limited to 2-axles, and 30 foot length[3] • Trailers limited to 2-axles, and 30 foot length (trailers must be street legal)[3] • Passengers may not ride in or on trailers unless the trailer is specifically designed by a manufacturer to carry passengers	Same as Alternative B, except: • ATV **use is permitted in fall only – from Sep. 15 until Dec. 15**	Same as Alternative B, except: • ATV use would be **eliminated** (after a 5-year grace period) • All trailer use would be **eliminated** (after 5-year grace period)	Vehicle and operator requirements would not be applicable.