



## ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PREFERRED PLAN

### OVERVIEW OF ALTERNATIVES

After soliciting input from various Federal/State/local government representatives, organized interest groups, and concerned individuals, four alternative concepts were developed for more detailed public discussion. Those alternatives are briefly summarized below:

#### Alternative 1

Relocate ferry operations to federally owned facilities at Cedar Island and Harkers Island. Construct ferry pier at one of three locations in Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. Negotiate long-term contracts with concessioners to transport visitors and vehicles from new facilities to Long Point and Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. Improve overnight accommodations by removing old cabins at Great Island and constructing new cabins at Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area.

#### Alternative 2

Relocate ferry operations to federally owned facilities at Cedar Island and Harkers Island. Construct ferry pier at one of three locations in Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. Negotiate long-term contracts with concessioners to transport visitors and vehicles from new facilities to Long Point and Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. Improve overnight accommodations by removing old cabins at Great Island and constructing new cabins at Long Point, Great Island, and Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area.

#### Alternative 3

Negotiate long-term contracts with concessioners to transport visitors and vehicles from Davis and Atlantic to Great Island and Long Point. Improve overnight accommodations by removing old cabins at Great Island and constructing additional new cabins at Long Point and new cabins at Great Island. Continue and improve IBP relationship with small craft operators that provide transport services to visitors to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area.

#### Alternative 4

Negotiate long-term contracts with concessioners to transport visitors and vehicles from Davis and Atlantic to Great Island and Long Point. Improve overnight accommodations by removing old cabins at Great Island and constructing new cabins with minimum amenities to preserve the traditional fish camp experience on Great Island. Continue and improve IBP relationship with small craft operators to provide transport services for visitors to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area.

### DISCUSSION OF NON-FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES

Of the four alternatives considered, only alternative 3 and alternative 4 were identified as viable options for further consideration. A more detailed analysis by NPS, in consultation with concerned public and private interest groups, indicated alternative 1 and alternative 2 were not feasible for the following reasons:

Both alternatives 1 and 2 would have located all or some of the cabins to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. Locating cabins in this area would have concentrated visitor use and vehicles near areas designated for the protection of piping plovers and loggerhead turtles. The potential disturbance of these species and their nesting areas would increase because of the greater number of vehicles, lights from the cabins and vehicles, and increased pedestrian traffic.

Locating cabins in the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area would have required the construction or rehabilitation of ferry docking sites. The monetary costs and potential environmental effects of such actions would have been substantial. Using the U.S. Coast Guard dock would have invoked a higher level of licensing and boat requirements for the concessioner because the ferry would have entered open waters instead of operating solely in the sound. An additional drawback to this option was the fact that loading and unloading vehicles at the U.S. Coast Guard dock during periods of heavy seas would have been an extremely difficult and potentially dangerous operation.

Similar disadvantages were identified for all three alternative locations selected as potential construction sites for new cabins. Those disadvantages included: creating a new disturbed area or enlarging an existing disturbed area, possible intrusion on the historic lighthouse scene, and susceptibility to overwash by being located in an inlet hazard area.

Visitors to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area are generally day users and campers without vehicles. Introducing cabin occupants to this area could cause tensions between these different user groups. Potential conflicts could also occur between cabin users and children attending the Cape Lookout environmental education camp that is located in close proximity to all three proposed construction areas.

Unacceptable levels of traffic congestion on Harkers Island may arise if all ferry services leave from the national seashore headquarters building. Locating a vehicle ferry at the headquarters building may greatly complicate the potential traffic problem.

Both alternatives would have relocated the Long Point ferry operation from Atlantic to the Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge in Lola. While providing a base of operations at an existing Federal facility, the move would have engendered several problems including the construction of a ferry dock and dredging and maintaining a new channel in a sensitive environmental area. Furthermore, during periods of inclement weather, travel time between Lola and Long Point would increase to approximately 1.5 hours, significantly longer than the 40 to 45 minutes in normal conditions or from the Atlantic location. In addition, the mainland roadway connecting the Lola facility to the mainland floods occasionally and becomes impassable during severe weather. If required, visitors to Long Point may not be able to be evacuated to the mainland.

## **DISCUSSION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS, PREFERRED PLAN, AND ALTERNATIVE PLAN**

The two remaining viable alternative concepts were further evaluated by NPS with careful consideration given to the information and recommendations provided by Federal/State/local governmental representatives, organized interest groups, and concerned individuals. Based on the GMP amendment issues developed during the public participation process, a comparison of the two viable alternatives to a continuation of existing conditions was used to select the preferred plan for implementation. The existing conditions

documents NPS assessment of how the national seashore operates at present and precedes the explanation of the preferred plan and the alternative plan.

A discussion of existing conditions, the preferred plan, and the alternative plan is presented in both narrative and graphic forms. The narrative portion of the discussion describes as many of the relative advantages and disadvantages of each management action as possible. For ease of understanding, management actions for the Long Point area (North Core Banks), Great Island area (South Core Banks), and Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area (South Core Banks) are discussed separately. In all instances, recommended actions strive to ensure the protection of the natural and cultural environment, including federally listed threatened and endangered species, while allowing appropriate levels and types of visitor use.

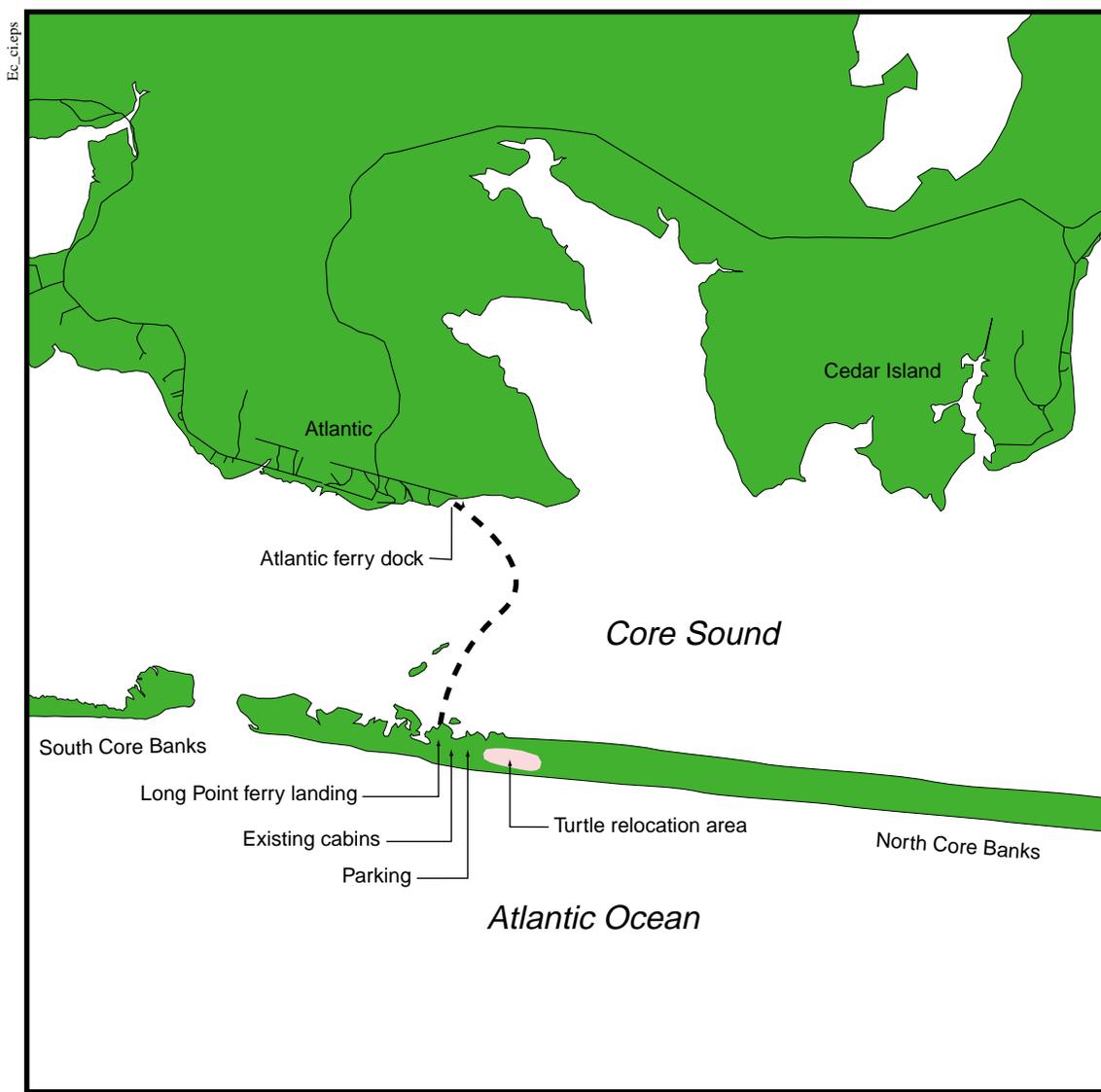
The preferred plan and the alternative plan represent different park management concepts designed to address the specific issues related to providing overnight accommodations and transportation services. The following descriptions are intended to: 1) describe a desired future condition that park administrators will strive to achieve and maintain over time and 2) recommend an array of management actions to promote those desired future conditions. The list of management actions identified for each alternative ranges from those that may be implemented immediately to those whose implementation can be phased in over time.

### **Existing Conditions**

"Existing conditions" describe the current situation in regard to the delivery of overnight accommodations and transportation services. Concessioners, operating on short-term permits/contracts, transport overnight visitors to cabin locations and long-term vehicle storage areas on the Core Banks. Visitors depart from concessioner-run ferry operations in Atlantic and Davis and from several small boat ferry operations on the mainland. Overnight visitors are accommodated in cabins at Long Point or Great Island. Day-use visitors reach the Core Banks via small commercial craft or by private boat.

### **Long Point Area—North Core Banks**

Visitors traveling to the North Core Banks depart the concession-operated facility in Atlantic. The current concessioner has been operating on a series of annual and biannual contracts since 1990. The facility at Atlantic consists of a ferry dock, gravel parking area, and a building containing an office, bar, restaurant game room, and outdoor restroom. The



Existing Conditions - Long Point Area

Atlantic departure location is well known to regular visitors and local citizens and is easily accessible from North Carolina Highway 70.

Most ferry users do not stop at NPS headquarters on Harkers Island before arriving at the departure location. Consequently, visitors often miss an important opportunity to learn and understand more about the natural and cultural resources of the national seashore. The concessioner can and has provided some background information to the uninformed visitor but, generally, cannot provide visitors with the quality interpretive experience commonly available at units of the National Park System.

The channel to the barrier islands is well established and dredging is normally not required. The channel is maintained at the 3-foot depth necessary to accommodate vehicle ferry by “kicking-out” built up sand and silt deposits with the engines of the boat. A one-way ferry trip usually takes approximately 45 minutes. The concessioner is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the ferry and the cabins. These normal Ferry operations are not a new activity and are referenced in the GMP.

The State of North Carolina applied and received a permit to dredge the channel into the Long Point cabin area. This is not a shorebird area. The Long Point cabin area is two miles from the closest piping plover area. The proposed dredge

disposal area is 90 feet long and could not stabilize the Core Banks and negate normal washover practices.

Between 1992 and 1997, the concessioner reports transporting between 10,000 to 12,000 visitors annually. Total visitation has risen approximately ten percent over the last six years. May, October, and November are the most popular months for surf fishing and thus the busiest for the ferry and cabin operations.

The ferry transports passengers to the Long Point dock from April through the end of November. Most ferry passengers are overnight visitors who occupy the cabins, stay in their own ORVs, or camp. Cabin occupants are typically fishermen who come to the area in large numbers during the spring and autumn fish migrations. However, construction of improved cabin units has encouraged many non-fishermen to stay overnight on the island when fishing is less popular. Most non-fishing visitors typically seek a remote beach experience away from the usual beach/hotel/resort experience found extensively along the North Carolina coastline.

The ferry transports vehicles to the barrier island for a fee of approximately \$80.00. Visitors who bring a vehicle to the island can leave it in a long-term parking area for the season. A 60-vehicle long-term parking area is located near the cabins. Vehicles must register with NPS and are subject to a weekly parking charge. Vehicles may remain on the island beginning in April and must be removed by December 31.

Many regular visitors transport ORVs or vehicle campers to the island. They typically use these vehicles for overnight accommodations and stay for periods ranging from several days to several weeks. The availability of long-term recreational vehicle parking provides a low-cost option for people who could not otherwise spend extended periods on the island.

Fishermen use their ORVs to travel up and down the shoreline in search of fish. ORVs must remain on designated transportation corridors that generally follow the beach below the high water mark and an unimproved route located behind the dunes. ORVs may traverse the dunes only at established crossings.

NPS, under the guidance of a wildlife management plan developed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, manages turtle and piping plover habitat. Piping plovers generally start nesting in late April or early May and chicks hatch into August. Turtles start nesting between late May and early August and have been known to hatch into October (nesting and relocation areas are indicated on the Existing Conditions map). NPS also collects data on the federally listed sea beach

amaranth. This species usually is found on Shackleford Banks or in the marsh areas of the Core Banks. NPS marks turtle nesting and relocation areas and piping plover nesting areas. NPS prohibits vehicle traffic in these protected areas. Generally, ORV operators respect these no entry zones although some vehicles enter and pose a threat to the species. In 12 years of monitoring piping plovers (since 1989), the NPS has not documented any piping plover chicks or adults or their nests being run over.

The departure dock at Atlantic and the landing dock at Long Point are in satisfactory condition and adequately serve the needs of the visitor. The infrastructure supporting the cabins at Long Point is sufficient to serve the occupants, however, some of the sewage holding tanks and drainage pipes need renovation.

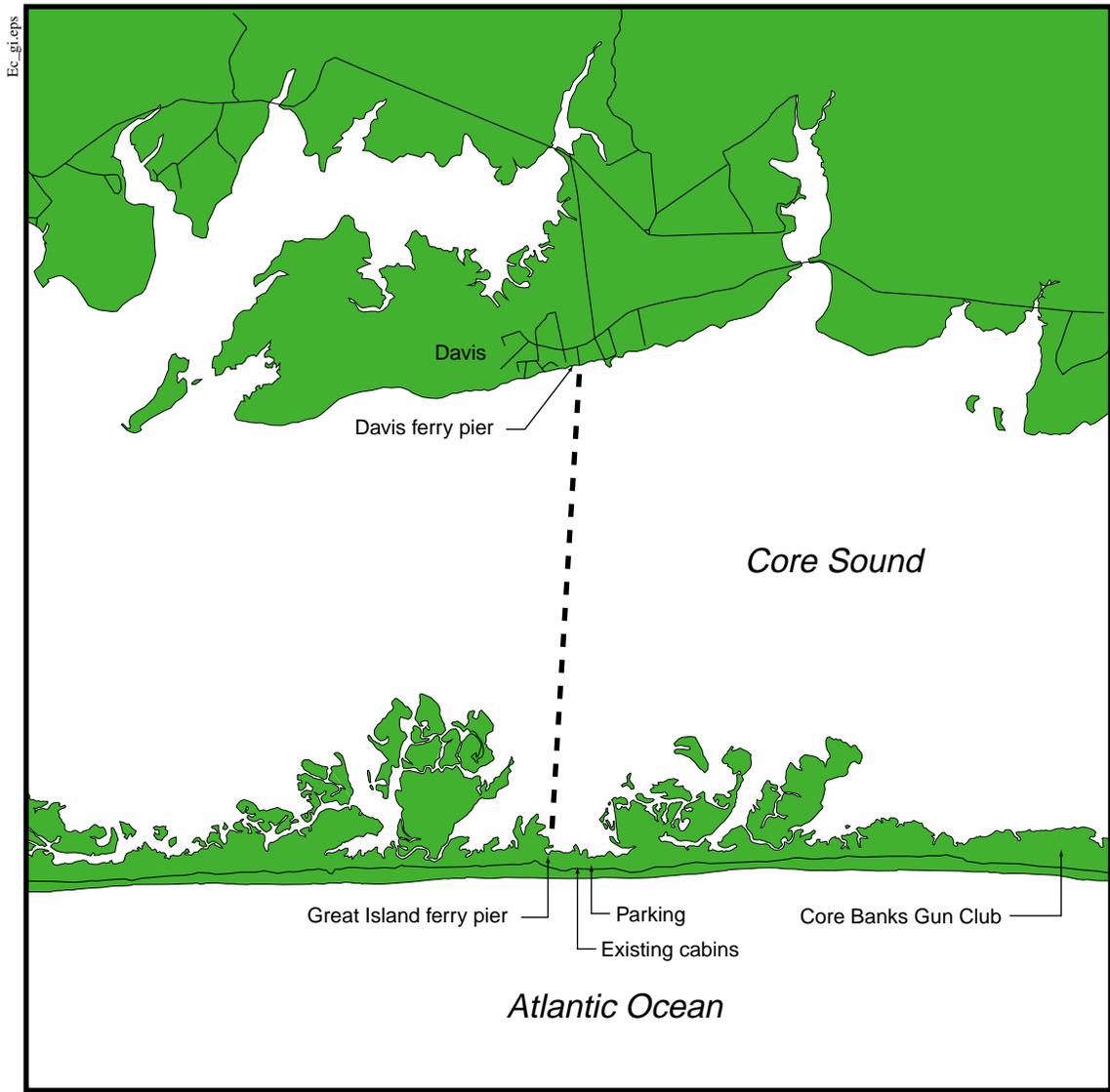
Desired improvements to departure and island facilities have been delayed because short-term contracts provide few incentives for the concessioner to invest capital in the operation. Upgrading of docks, parking areas, mainland office/restaurant structures, equipment, or cabin infrastructure must wait until a long-term contract is consummated.

### **Great Island Area—South Core Banks**

Visitors traveling to the Great Island area of the South Core Banks depart the concession-operated facility in Davis. The Great Island area is located about midway along the South Core Banks. The concessioner has been operating on a series of annual and biennial permits since 1990. The facility at Davis consists of a ferry dock, gravel parking area, and an office/residence. Vehicles turn off North Carolina Highway 70 to a paved road to reach the Davis departure facility.

Most ferry users do not stop at NPS headquarters on Harkers Island before arriving at the departure location. Consequently, visitors often miss an important opportunity to learn and understand more about the natural and cultural resources of the national seashore. The concessioner can and does provide some background information to the uninformed visitor but, generally, cannot provide visitors with the quality interpretive experience commonly available at units of the National Park System.

The channel to the barrier islands is well established and dredging is normally not required. The channel is maintained at the 3-foot depth necessary to accommodate a vehicle ferry by “kicking-out” built up sand and silt deposits with the engines of the boat. A one-way ferry trip usually takes approximately 25 minutes. The concessioner is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the ferry and the cabins.



Existing Conditions - Great Island Area

Between 1992 and 1997, the concessioner reports transporting between 15,000 to 18,400 visitors annually. Total visitation has risen approximately 16 percent over the last six years. May, October, and November are the most popular months for surf fishing and thus the busiest for the ferry and cabins. NPS attributes the increase in cabin use to an upgrade of the structures. The concessioner and members of fishing clubs have worked diligently over the past several years to make the cabins more livable. However, the cabins as a whole fail to comply with State and Federal building, health, and safety codes. The cabins generally attract a specialized clientele (the surf fishing community) and are underutilized during periods when the fishing is slow. Cabin occupancy ranges from 10 to 20 percent during the “off-months.”

The ferry transports vehicles and passengers to the Great Island dock from April through the end of November (limited service is available in March and December). Most ferry passengers are overnight visitors who occupy the cabins, stay in their own ORVs, or camp. Cabin occupants are typically fishermen who come to the area in large numbers during the spring and autumn fish migrations. Most non-fishing visitors typically seek a remote beach experience away from the usual beach/hotel/resort experience found extensively along the North Carolina coastline.

The ferry transports vehicles to the barrier island for a fee of approximately \$80.00. Once on the barrier island, visitors stay at the cabin units at Island or in their ORVs. Visitors who

bring a vehicle to the island can leave it in a long-term parking area for the season. A 60-vehicle long-term parking area is located near the cabins. Vehicles must register with NPS and are subject to a weekly parking charge. Vehicles may remain on the island beginning in April and must be removed by December 31.

Many regular visitors transport ORVs or vehicle campers to the island. They typically use these vehicles for overnight accommodations and stay for periods ranging from several days to several weeks. The availability of long-term recreational vehicle parking provides a low-cost option for people who could not otherwise spend extended periods on the island.

Fishermen use their ORVs to travel up and down the shoreline in search of fish. ORVs must remain on established routes and may traverse the dunes to the beach only on established crossings.

NPS, in a management plan developed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, manages turtle and piping plover habitat. Piping plovers generally start nesting in late April or early May and chicks hatch into August. Turtles nest from late May through early August and have been known to hatch into October (nesting and relocation areas are indicated on the Existing Conditions map). NPS also collects data on the federally listed sea beach amaranth. This species usually is found on Shackleford Banks or in the marsh areas of the Core Banks. NPS marks turtle nesting and relocation areas and piping plover nesting areas; it also marks a colonial shorebird nesting area in the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. NPS prohibits vehicle traffic in these protected areas. Generally, ORV operators respect these no entry zones although some vehicles enter and pose a threat to the species.

The departure dock at Davis and the landing dock at Great Island are in satisfactory condition and adequately serve the needs of the visitor. The infrastructure supporting the cabins at Great Island is sufficient to serve the occupants, however, some of the sewage holding tanks and drainage pipes need renovation. A central bathhouse with hot water showers and rest rooms serve day-use visitors to the Great Island area.

Desired improvements to departure and island facilities have been delayed because short-term permits provide few incentives for the concessioner to invest capital in the operation. Upgrading of docks, parking areas, mainland office/restaurant structures, equipment, or cabin infrastructure must wait until a long-term contract is consummated.

### **Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarter Area —South Core Banks**

The Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area is the primary day-use area of the barrier islands and is accessible by private boat or small for-hire craft operated by private businesses. Visitors enjoy the natural and historic resources of the south end of the South Core Banks.

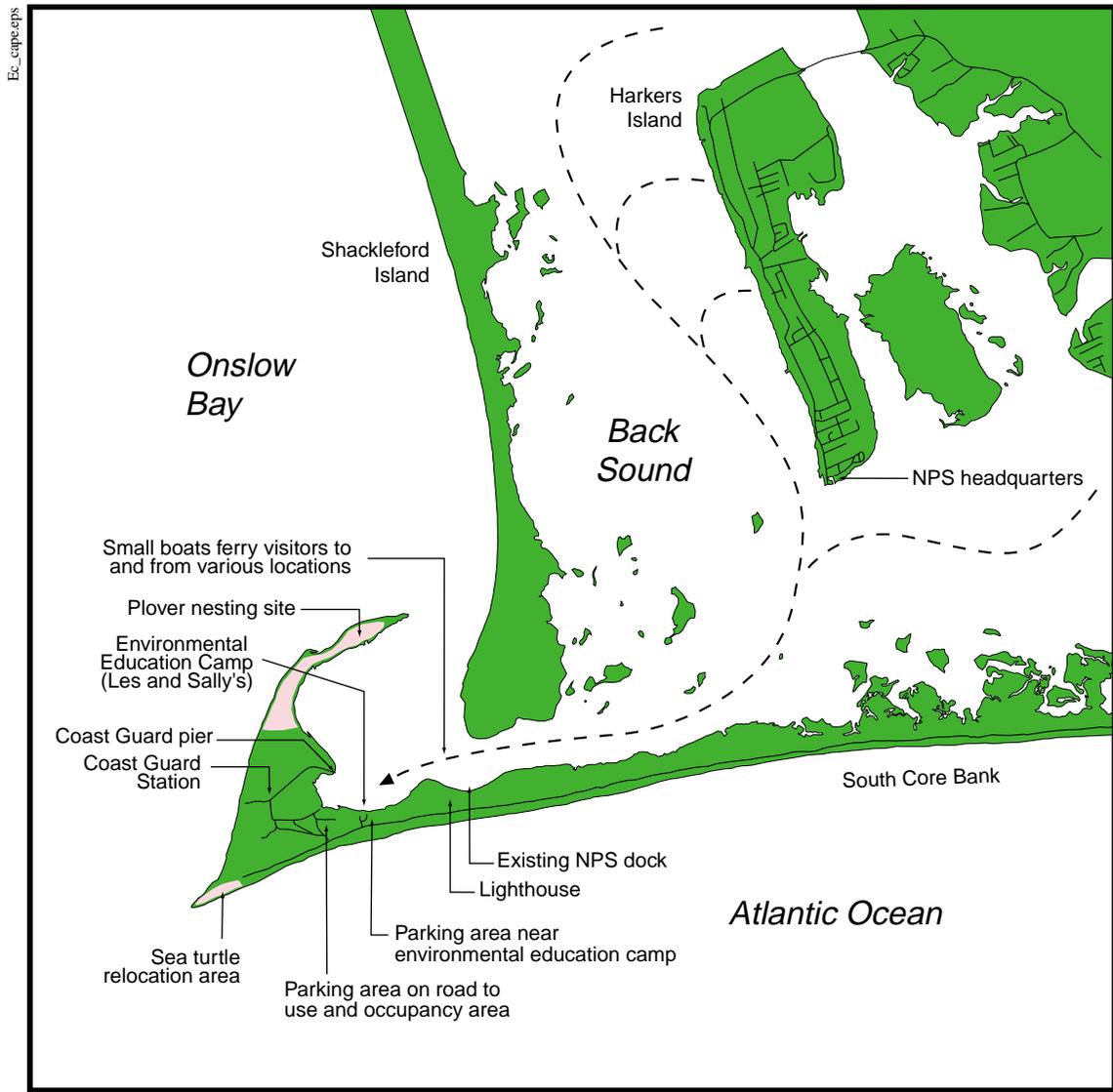
Three businesses provide for-hire transport for visitors to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. These businesses are located near the national seashore headquarters and visitor center on Harkers Island. The boats used by these businesses accommodate six or more passengers and operate on an as-needed basis. They provide flexible and reasonably priced transportation to the South Core Banks. NPS issues Incidental Business Permits to the operators who must meet U.S. Coast Guard safety standards. The permits are issued annually. In general, users are satisfied with the service.

Passengers who use the IBP services seldom come to the Harkers Island visitor center to learn more about the national seashore, and therefore miss an important opportunity to learn and understand more about the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the park. The IBP operators can and do provide some background information to the uninformed visitor but, generally, cannot provide visitors with the quality interpretive experience commonly available at units of the National Park System.

Managing multiple IBP's requires a significant management and administrative commitment by NPS and may not be the most efficient method for managing the operation. NPS has limited influence on the quality of these operations once an IBP is issued.

At times, large groups want to travel to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area and have difficulty finding adequate transportation from Harkers Island. Schools groups in particular find splitting large classes into small groups logistically difficult because of the extra time and supervision required. Consequently, some of the groups that would benefit most from a trip to Cape Lookout National Seashore miss out on the opportunity to experience a truly special resource.

NPS has consummated a cooperative agreement with the Cape Lookout Environmental Center to operate a residential environmental camp for children. The Cape Lookout Environmental Center is upgrading and renovating several structures located approximately three-quarters of a mile south of the lighthouse. The center will provide a valuable service to



Existing Conditions - Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters Area

augment the national seashore's mission goal to increase the public's understanding about the park's cultural and natural resources.

Fishermen use ORVs to travel up and down the South Core Banks in search of fish. ORVs are required to remain within designated transportation corridors that generally follow the beach below the high water mark and an unimproved route located behind the dunes. ORVs may traverse the dunes only at established crossings. Two 60-vehicle parking areas are found in the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area: one near the environmental educational center and the other along the road to the use and occupancy area. Both parking areas are infrequently used and seldom contain more than five vehicles at one time.

**Summary of how the existing conditions address the issues:**

**Issue 1. Cabin Standards and Cabin Use**

An examination of the remaining 25 cabins by NPS engineers and public health officers concluded that these cabins fail to comply with State and Federal building, health, and safety standards. Continuing this situation would mean that NPS would provide substandard accommodations. Concessioners operating on a short-term contract would have little incentive to make a major capital investment to improve or build new accommodations. The existing cabins would continue to attract a fairly narrow range of occupants; the opportunity to

increase occupancy rates during the “low season” would probably not occur.

### **Issue 2. Location of Cabins**

The cabins at Great Island and Long Point are easily accessible and well known to fishermen and others who wish a remote, somewhat primitive experience on a barrier island. They are separated from the majority of the day-use areas and important threatened and endangered species habitat.

### **Issue 3. Location of ferry concession operations**

The ferry service locations at Atlantic and Davis are well known to park visitors from the local community and those who come from other parts of North Carolina and the nation. Using established channels to the Core Banks precludes the necessity of dredging and maintaining channels in undisturbed areas. However, a wide range of interpretive materials and programs for the national seashore visitor are not available at the Atlantic and Davis locations. The current informational effort is inadequate.

### **Issue 4. Incidental Business Permits**

Three IBP holders transport day-use visitors to the Cape Lookout Keeper’s Quarters area in small water craft. The IBP holders provide a reliable, reasonably priced service that eliminates the need, for the immediate future, for a concession ferry service from NPS headquarters on Harkers Island. However, the resources of the IBP holders are limited in regard to providing information or interpretive materials. Also, some school groups are reluctant to ride in the small boats and to split students into small groups.

### **Issue 5. Changing visitor use patterns**

Over the past 15 years the number of people visiting the Core Banks has increased noticeably. Day users visiting the Cape Lookout Keeper’s Quarter Area constitute the largest percentage of the increase. The number of fishermen has increased slightly but has leveled off over the last six to seven years. Occupancy in the cabins reaches 100 percent during the three busiest months, May, October, and November; some noticeable increases during the summer months have been recorded. The new cabins have helped attract new occupants to the Long Point area. However, the existing cabins at Great Island attract a narrower clientele and, correspondingly, a significant number of vacancies occur during the “off season.”

### **Issue 6. Long-term parking for recreational vehicles**

Long-term parking areas serve as a low-cost alternative for people who visit the Core Banks frequently and stay on the islands for a day to several weeks at a time. Some measures have been instituted to regulate the number of vehicles stored on the Core Banks and NPS restricts vehicles to defined routes. However, NPS must take additional measures to ensure that the island’s threatened and endangered species are not adversely affected. NPS’s current actions to protect the species still leave room for improvement while not diminishing the visitor’s enjoyment of the national seashore.

### **Issue 7. Conflicts between different user groups**

Generally, day-use visitors and fishermen occupy different areas. Most day-use visitors frequent the Cape Lookout Keeper’s Quarters area while fishermen generally congregate on the North Core Banks and the Great Island area of the South Core Banks. Mobile fishermen follow the fish up and down the entire length of the islands. The present cabin locations provide separation between overnight visitors and day-use visitors.

### **Issue 8. Impacts of visitors and visitor service infrastructure on natural resources**

NPS has a legal mandate to protect threatened and endangered species and habitat. Thus, NPS is aware of the possible effects of ORVs and human interference on the turtles, piping plovers, sea beach amaranth and their habitat. NPS carries out its management plans, under protocols developed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for the protection of the species. However, there has not been a concerted effort to monitor the adverse affects of ORVs and human interference (if any) on the species and their habitats. Present interpretive and educational efforts fall short of ensuring that visitors respect NPS responsibility to protect threatened and endangered species.

### **Issue 9. Impacts of visitors and visitor service infrastructure on cultural resources**

At present, visitors and visitor services and facilities have little if any adverse effect on the historic scene associated with the lighthouse.

### **Issue 10. Harkers Island Visitor Center**

At the present time, NPS has not made a concerted effort to entice visitors who use the ferries and small craft to stop at

the Harkers Island visitor center to learn more about the natural, cultural, and recreational resources at the national seashore.

### **Issue 11. Effect of preferred changes on park staff and resources**

Under the existing conditions, NPS would operate no differently regarding the number of staff, where the staff would be assigned, nor in the development of new interpretive or educational materials.

## **PREFERRED PLAN**

The preferred plan describes NPS proposed actions in regard to providing overnight accommodations and transportation services. Under the preferred plan, NPS's operation would be strengthened through long-term concession contracts providing transportation, accommodations, and information about the Core Banks. Traditional use patterns would continue, but a broad spectrum of overnight visitors could stay at improved accommodations. Holders of IBP's would continue to transport visitors from Harkers Island to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. An emphasis would be placed on monitoring the effects of visitors and visitor use patterns on threatened and endangered species and their habitat and increasing visitor awareness of the island's special resources.

### **Long Point Area—North Core Banks**

Under the preferred plan, NPS would enter into a long-term contract with a concessioner to provide ferry service between Atlantic and the Long Point cabin area. NPS would advertise for bidders; the prospectus would reflect the Service's rules and regulations concerning concessions. Generally, NPS would seek bids that would provide reliable ferry service, furnish mainland facilities that would appeal to a broad spectrum of park visitors occupying cabins and visiting the national seashore from April through November, maintain the existing cabins at Long Point, and construct ten additional units. The concessioner would be responsible for the financing, construction, and maintenance of the new units. Cabins would conform with State and Federal building, health, and safety codes, and would be sensitively designed and arranged to comply with the special conditions of a barrier island.

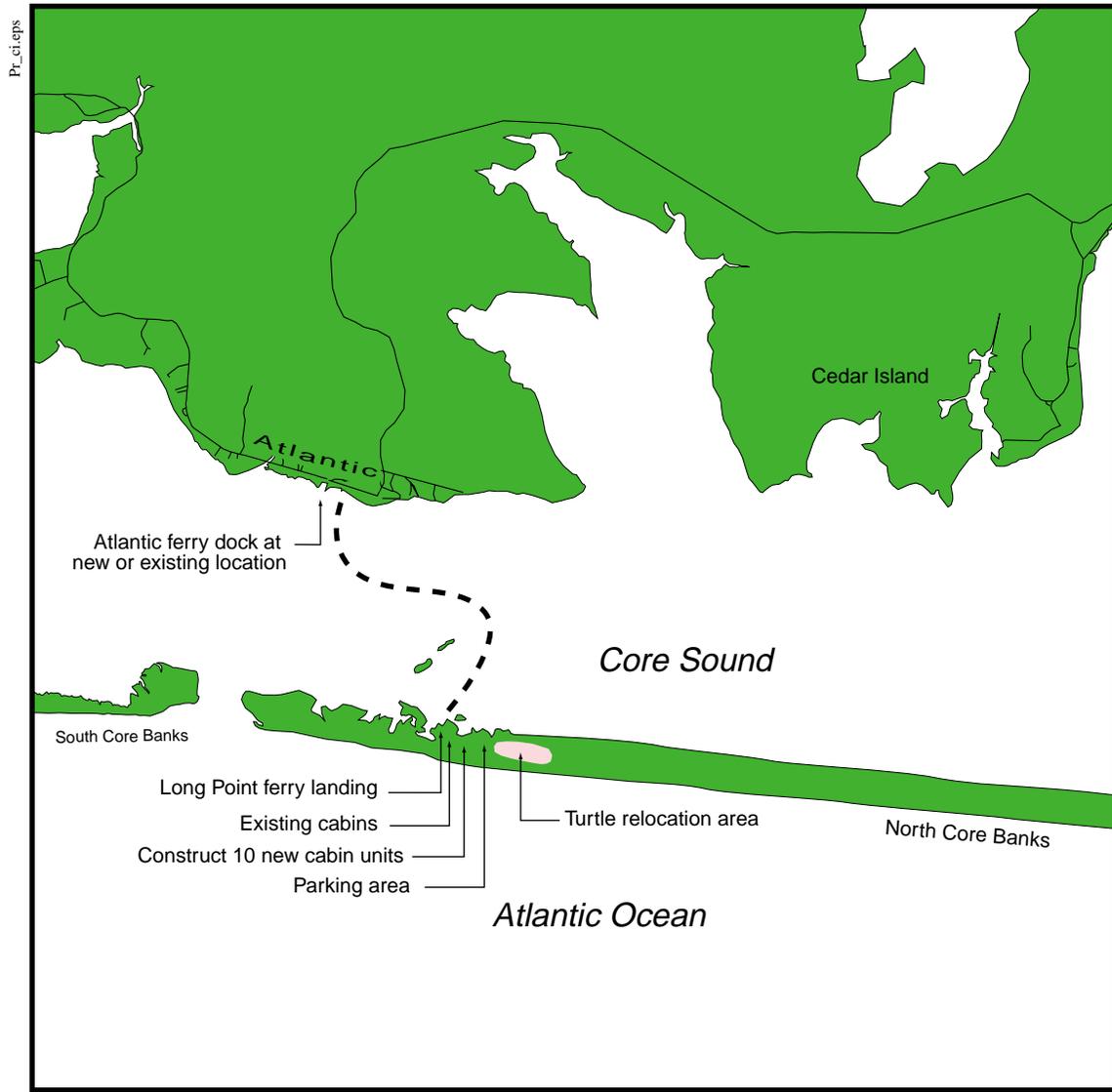
The construction of the cabins would be phased in. Scheduling would in part be based upon NPS's monitoring and study of the effects of ORVs and human interference with the national seashore's threatened and endangered species.

In an effort to enhance visitor understanding of the national seashore's natural and cultural resources, NPS would work closely with the concessioner and user groups. Information would be available at the Atlantic facility prior to visitors' arrival to North Core Banks. Terms of the educational and interpretive effort would be subject to an agreement among NPS, user groups, and the concessioner but may include having an NPS employee stationed at space made available by the concessioner, an annual educational registration program for ORV users and operators, and an organized education program among the user groups. These programs would emphasize the need to respect threatened and endangered species habitat and the history of the Core Banks including the surf fishing culture. Concessioner customers would be encouraged to visit the NPS visitor center on Harkers Island to learn more about the resources of the national seashore.

Visitors would leave Atlantic on a concessioner-operated ferry from a concessioner owned or leased facility. Ferries would transport both vehicles and passengers. In the event no successful bid comes forward, NPS would explore the purchase of property and construction of a departure facility in Atlantic to ensure the availability and administrative control of a departure facility. Purchase of property in Atlantic would necessitate a legislative boundary change. NPS would also explore the use of Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge land in Atlantic for a facility.

The concessioner ferry would land at the dock at Long Point. The concessioner would be responsible for regular repair and upgrading of the piers at both Atlantic and Long Point. The existing facilities consisting of 6 duplexes and 4 octagonal structures containing 20 rental units and associated administrative structures would remain in place. The concessioner would be responsible for upgrading the cabins' infrastructure (water and sewage).

Visitors to the cabins would park their vehicles at the cabins. Other visitors to the national seashore would have the option to bring their vehicles to the Long Point area on the concessioner-operated ferry and to store them at the parking area near the cabins or to bring them back on the ferry. All private vehicles must be removed from the Core Banks over the same three continuous months, primarily during the winter. NPS would allow vehicles on the islands during this period through the issuance of a special use permit. NPS would define the parameters of vehicle use, parking, and storage. The ongoing monitoring of the effects of ORVs on threatened and endangered species would contribute to these parameters.



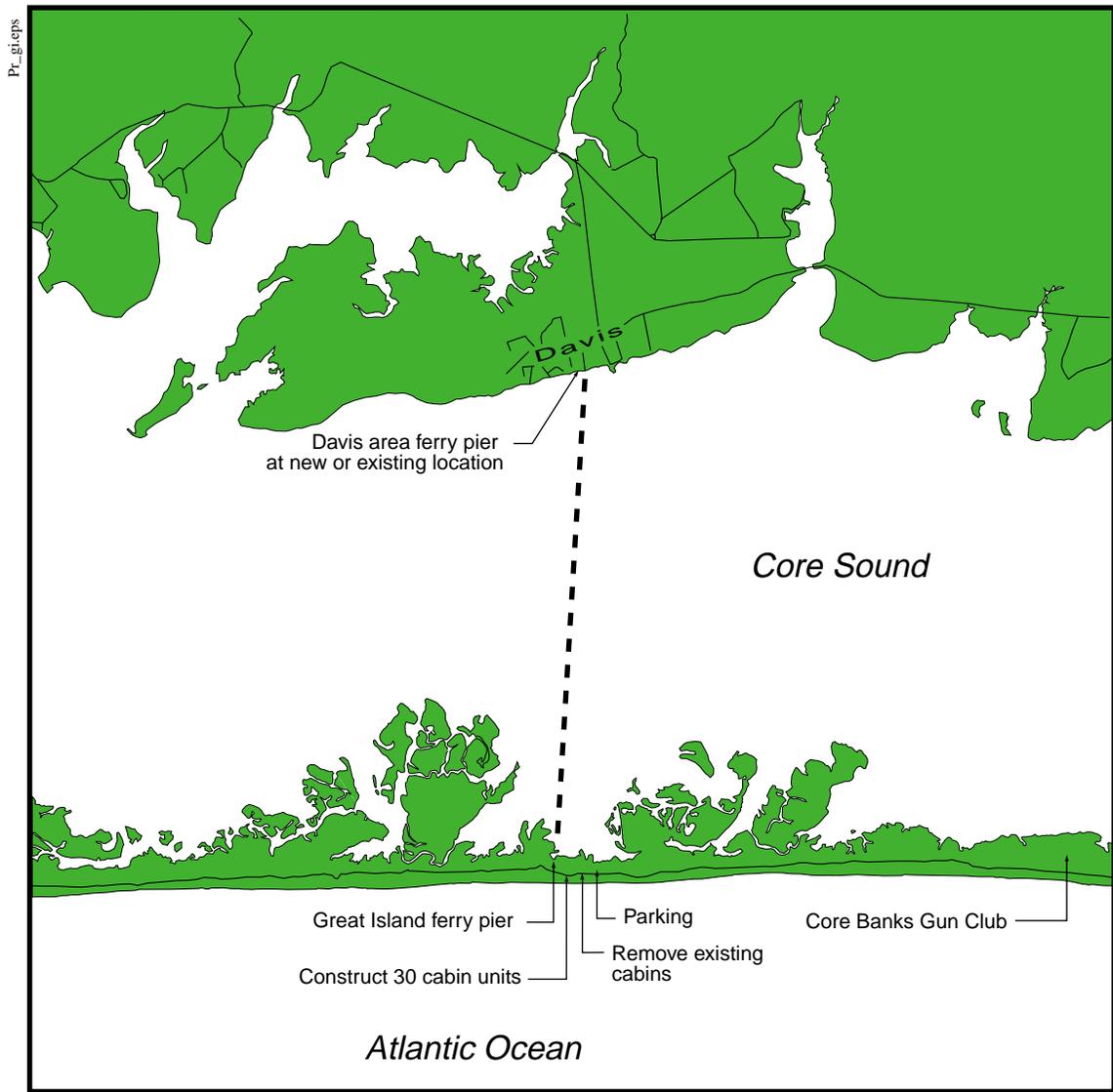
Preferred Plan - Long Point Area

### Great Island Area—South Core Banks

Under the preferred plan, NPS would enter into a long-term contract with a concessioner to provide ferry service between Davis and the Great Island cabin area. NPS would advertise for bidders; the prospectus would reflect NPS’s rules and regulations concerning concessions. Generally, NPS would seek bids that would provide reliable ferry service, furnish mainland facilities that would appeal to a broad spectrum of park visitors occupying cabins and visiting the national seashore from April through November, raze and remove the existing cabins at Great Island, and construct new cabin units (approximately 30) accommodating approximately the same number of occupants as in 1998. The concessioner would be

responsible for the financing, construction, and maintenance of the new units, and the razing and removal of the old units. Cabins would conform to State and Federal building, health, and safety codes; they would be sensitively designed to comply with the special conditions of a barrier island.

The removal of the old cabin units and the construction of the new cabin units would be phased in. Scheduling would in part be based upon NPS’s monitoring and study of the effects of ORVs and human interference with the national seashore’s threatened and endangered species. The new cabins would be arranged to allow for social space between cabins and would conform to State of North Carolina Coastal Area Management Agency guidelines regarding the location



Preferred Plan - Great Island Area

and orientation of structures on a barrier island. NPS would work with the concessioner to restore areas, no longer needed for cabins, to their natural conditions.

In an effort to enhance visitor understanding of the national seashore's natural and cultural resources, NPS would work closely with the concessioner and user groups. Information would be available before and when visitors arrive at the Davis facility. Terms of the educational and interpretive effort would be subject to an agreement among NPS, user groups, and the concessioner but may include having an NPS employee stationed at space made available by the concessioner, an annual educational registration program for ORV users and operators, and an organized education program

among the user groups. These programs would emphasize the need to respect threatened and endangered species habitat and the history of the Core Banks including the surf fishing culture. Concessioner customers would be encouraged to visit the NPS visitor center on Harkers Island to learn more about the resources of the national seashore.

Visitors would leave Davis on a concessioner-operated ferry from a concessioner owned or leased facility. Ferries would transport both vehicles and passengers. In the event no successful bid comes forward, NPS would explore the purchase of property and construction of a departure facility in Davis to ensure the availability and administrative control

of a departure facility. Purchase of property in Davis would necessitate a legislative boundary change.

The concessioner ferry would land at the dock at Great Island. The concessioner would be responsible for regular repair and upgrading of the piers at both Davis and Great Island. The concessioner would be responsible for upgrading the cabins' infrastructure (water and sewage).

Visitors to the cabins would park their vehicles at the cabins. Other visitors to the national seashore would have the option to bring their vehicles to the Great Island area on the concessioner-operated ferry and to store them at the parking area near the cabins or to bring them back on the ferry. All private vehicles must be removed from the Core Banks over three continuous months, primarily during the winter. NPS would allow vehicles on the islands during this period through the issuance of a special use permit. NPS would define the parameters of vehicle use, parking, and storage. The ongoing monitoring of the effects of ORVs on threatened and endangered species would contribute to these parameters.

### **Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area— South Core Banks**

NPS would issue biennial renewable Incidental Business Permits (IBP's) to ferry businesses authorizing them to transport visitors from Harkers Island to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. Operators would comply with all applicable State of North Carolina, U.S. Coast Guard, and NPS laws and regulations regarding health, safety, and insurance. NPS would not authorize the transport of vehicles.

NPS and IBP holders would coordinate a program to enhance the understanding of the natural and cultural resources of the national seashore. Particular attention would be placed on the respect and appreciation of the threatened and endangered species and their habitat and the cultural resources of the Core Banks. Customers of the IBP holders would be encouraged to visit the NPS headquarters on Harkers Island to learn more about the national seashore.

Small craft would leave the mainland from docks owned or leased by the IBP holders and disembark visitors at the dock near the lighthouse. NPS and IBP holders would closely monitor the demand for large group transport from Harkers Island to the Core Banks. If justified, issuance of an IBP would be predicated on providing service by larger craft to accommodate large groups. NPS would retain the option to relocate Harkers Island—Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area transport to NPS headquarters if IBP service proves unsatisfactory. In such case, NPS would enter into a

concession contract to provide this service operating from the Harkers Island headquarters.

NPS would eliminate the parking area located near the Cape Lookout environmental education camp and restore the area to natural conditions. The capacity of the parking area located on the road to the use and occupancy area would be reduced in accord with the findings of the proposed ORV plan; the area no longer used for vehicle storage would be restored to natural conditions.

### **Summary of how the preferred plan addresses the issues:**

#### **Issue 1. Cabin Standards and Cabin Use**

An examination of the remaining 25 cabins by NPS engineers and public health officers concluded that these cabins fail to comply with State and Federal building, health, and safety standards. Consummating a long-term contract provides a concessioner the opportunity to make a major capital investment to replace the substandard structures with cabins that will appeal to a broad spectrum of national seashore visitors, yet would retain the flavor of the Core Banks. The improved cabins may attract higher numbers of occupants during the "low season."

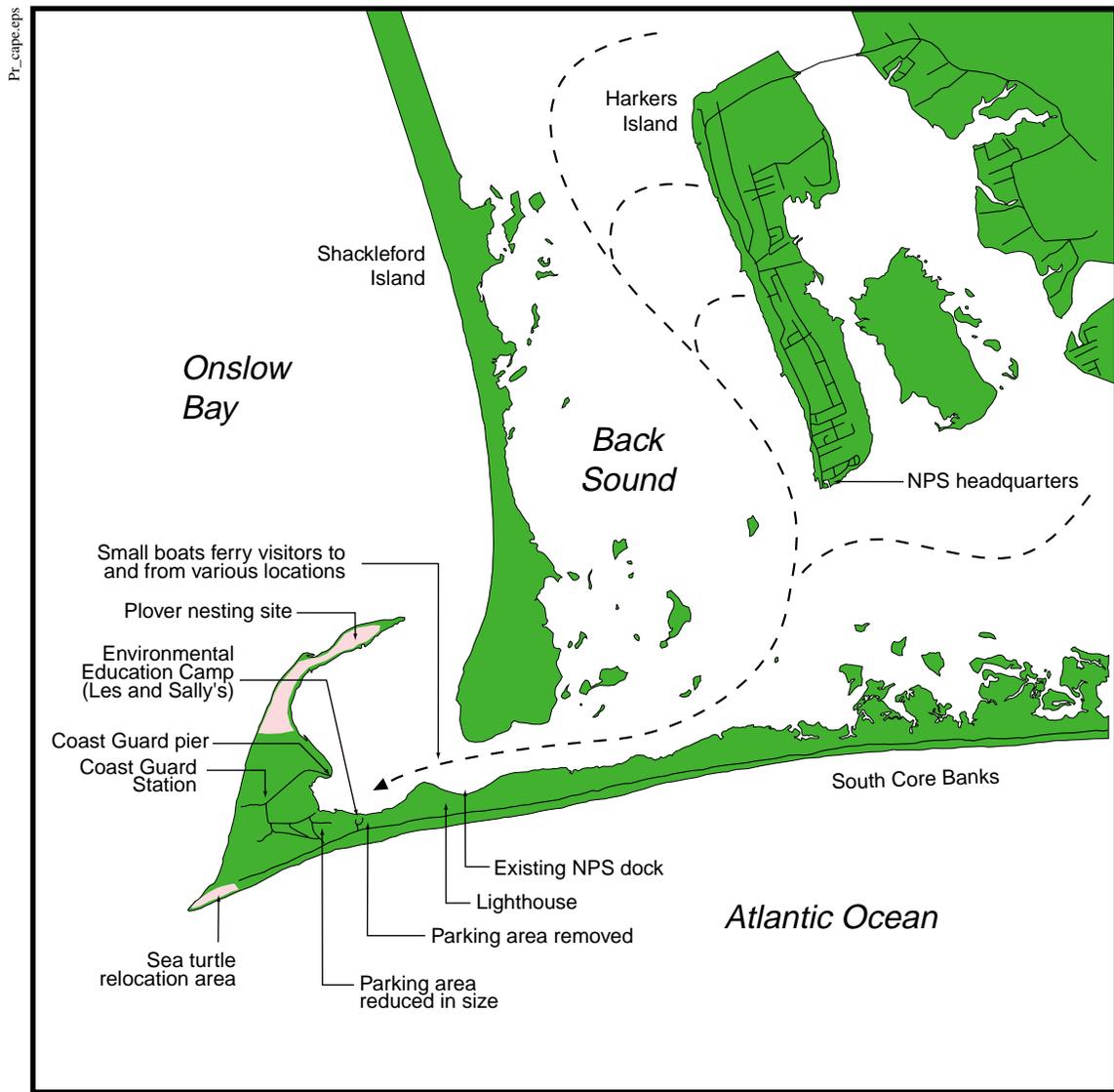
New and upgraded facilities would meet applicable State and Federal building, health, and safety codes and would be oriented to comply with CAMA guidelines. Measures would be taken to ensure that the basic infrastructure would conform to the problems posed by overwash. To retain a rustic appearance and atmosphere, only basic utilities would be provided.

#### **Issue 2. Location of Cabins**

The cabins at Great Island and Long Point are easily accessible and well known to fishermen and others who wish a remote, somewhat primitive experience on a barrier island. They are separated from the majority of the day-use areas and important threatened and endangered species habitat. The planning process evaluated alternative locations and concluded that the adverse affects to visitors and natural and cultural resources would increase if cabins were constructed at the other locations.

#### **Issue 3. Location of ferry concession operations**

The preferred plan would continue ferry service from Atlantic and Davis. These locations are well known to park visitors from the local community and those who come from other



Preferred Plan - Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters Area

parts of North Carolina and the nation. Using established channels to the Core Banks would preclude the necessity of dredging and maintaining channels in undisturbed areas. NPS evaluated other sites, but these (Lola and Harkers Island) would either cause some environmental degradation or visitors would be subjected to lengthy, and sometimes treacherous, trips to and from the barrier islands.

Services available and the appearance of Davis and Atlantic could be improved to cater to a broad range of park visitors. The preferred plan anticipates that upgraded ferry and cabin construction would attract visitors that would represent the

surf fishing community and others who desire a remote experience in accommodations that meet State and Federal building, health, and safety standards.

The preferred plan seeks a coordinated effort among NPS, concessioners, and users groups to prepare and present a wide range of interpretive materials and programs for the national seashore visitor at the Atlantic and Davis locations, then progressing to the ferries, and at both the Long Point and Great Island cabin locations. The plan also recognizes the need for some NPS presence at both Atlantic and Davis. The current informational effort is inadequate.

#### **Issue 4. Incidental Business Permits**

Three IBP holders transport day-use visitors to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area in small water craft. The IBP holders provide a reliable, reasonably priced service that eliminates the need, for the immediate future, for a concession ferry service from NPS headquarters on Harkers Island. Because the resources of the IBP holders are limited in regard to providing information or interpretive materials, NPS would work with these businesses to upgrade the interpretive efforts. Also, some school groups are reluctant to ride in the small boats and to split students into small groups. NPS would work with the IBP holders to determine the need to supply a larger boat to accommodate large groups of day-users. The provision of a larger boat could become a prerequisite for obtaining an IBP to transport visitors to the Core Banks.

#### **Issue 5. Changing visitor use patterns**

Over the past 15 years the number of people visiting the Core Banks has increased noticeably. Day users visiting the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarter Area constitute the largest percentage of the increase. The number of fishermen has increased slightly but has leveled off over the last six to seven years. Occupancy in the cabins reaches 100 percent during the three busiest months, May, October, and November; some noticeable increases during the summer months have been recorded. The new cabins have helped attract new occupants to the Long Point area. The preferred plan's emphasis on upgrading the cabin situation at both Long Point and Great Island should attract additional visitation during the off-months. It is beyond the scope of this general management plan amendment to address other facilities on the barrier islands.

#### **Issue 6. Long-term parking for recreational vehicles**

The preferred plan recognizes the need to retain long-term parking areas as a low-cost alternative for people who frequently stay overnight on the islands. In an effort to preserve the resources of the national seashore while providing amenities for its visitors, NPS realizes that some areas must be returned to their natural condition if not needed for visitor services. The capacity of the parking area located on the road to the use and occupancy area would be reduced in size and the area no longer used for vehicle storage restored to natural conditions. Even with some reduction in parking capacity, this parking area is sufficient in size to accommodate all vehicle storage needs in the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. In order to prevent potential

visitor conflicts, NPS would eliminate the parking area located near the Cape Lookout environmental education camp and restore the area to natural conditions.

#### **Issue 7. Conflicts between different user groups**

Generally, day-use visitors and fishermen occupy different areas. Most day-use visitors frequent the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area while fishermen generally congregate on the North Core Banks and the Great Island area of the South Core Banks. Mobile fishermen follow the fish up and down the entire length of the islands. The present cabin locations provide separation between overnight visitors and day-use visitors. The preferred plan would continue this pattern of separating overnight from day-use visitors and avoiding potential user conflicts.

#### **Issue 8. Impacts of visitors and visitor service infrastructure on natural resources**

The preferred plan acknowledges NPS's legal mandate to protect threatened and endangered species and habitat. Thus NPS must be aware of the possible effects of ORVs and human interference on the turtles, piping plovers, sea beach amaranth and their habitat. Under the preferred plan, NPS would continue to carry out its management plans, under protocols developed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for the protection of the species. NPS would pay particular attention to monitoring the adverse affects of ORVs and human interference (if any) and taking measures to mitigate these affects.

As a preventative measure, NPS proposes to join with the concessioner and user groups to develop a threatened and endangered species awareness program aimed at cabin occupants and ORV users. Although most visitors respect the flora and fauna and their habitat, adverse human actions could jeopardize the perpetuation of the species and visitor enjoyment of the national seashore's resources.

#### **Issue 9. Impacts of visitors and visitor service infrastructure on cultural resources**

Under the preferred plan, NPS would not take actions that would intrude on the historic scene associated with the lighthouse. At Great Island and Long Point, NPS would include in its interpretive messages materials exploring the story of surf fishing on the Core Banks.

### **Issue 10. Harkers Island Visitor Center**

Under the preferred plan, NPS would work with IBP holders and concessioners to encourage visitors to stop at the Harkers Island visitor center to learn more about the natural, cultural, and recreational resources at the national seashore. In the event visitors would not stop at the visitor center, NPS would increase its efforts, in cooperation with the IBP holders and the concessioners, to provide interpretive and educational materials and opportunities at Davis, Atlantic, and the embarkation points on Harkers Island.

### **Issue 11. Effect of preferred changes on park staff and resources**

Under the preferred plan, NPS would increase its presence at the concession operations at Davis and Atlantic particularly during May, October, and November. In April, June, July, August, and September, NPS presence would be more limited. The park would increase its efforts at monitoring the effects of ORVs and human interference on threatened and endangered species and their habitat. Additional resources would be needed to enhance interpretive messages and materials.

## **ALTERNATIVE PLAN**

The alternative plan describes a second viable way for NPS to provide overnight accommodations and transportation services. Under the alternative plan, NPS's operation would be strengthened through long-term concession contracts providing transportation, accommodations, and information about the Core Banks. Traditional use patterns would continue, but a broad spectrum of overnight visitors could stay at improved accommodations. The cabins would reflect traditional and more rustic styles, all meeting applicable codes. Holders of IBP's would continue to transport visitors from Harkers Island to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. A greater emphasis would be placed on monitoring the effects of visitors and visitor use patterns on threatened and endangered species and their habitat and increasing visitor awareness of the island's special resources.

### **Long Point Area—North Core Banks**

Under the alternative plan, NPS would enter into a long-term contract with a concessioner to provide ferry service between Atlantic and the Long Point cabin area. NPS would advertise for bidders; the prospectus would reflect NPS's rules and regulations concerning concessions. Generally, NPS would seek bids that would provide reliable ferry service, furnish mainland facilities that would appeal to a broad spectrum of park visitors occupying cabins and visiting the national

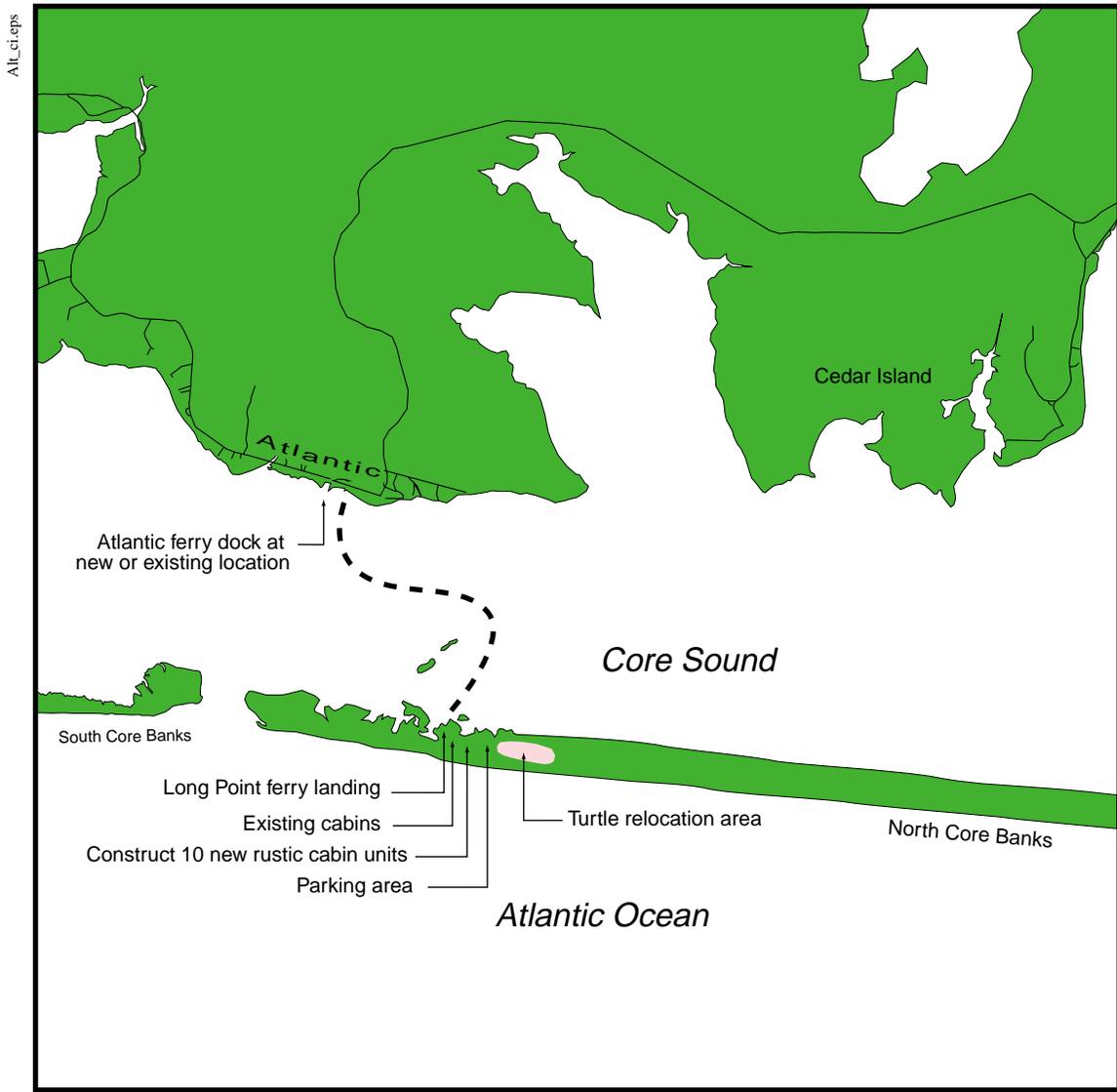
seashore from April through November, maintain the existing cabins at Long Point, and construct ten new rustic units. The concessioner would be responsible for the financing, construction, and maintenance of the new units. Cabins would conform with State and Federal building, health, and safety codes, and would be designed to provide shelter from rain, sun, and insects but would not include electricity or individual bathroom facilities. The concessioner would construct communal restrooms and showers to accommodate the occupants of the rustic cabins.

The construction of the cabins would be phased in. Scheduling would in part be based upon NPS's monitoring and study of the effects of ORVs and human interference with the national seashore's threatened and endangered species.

In an effort to enhance visitor understanding of the national seashore's natural and cultural resources, NPS would work closely with the concessioner and user groups. Information would be available at and before visitors arrive at the Atlantic facility. Terms of the educational and interpretive effort would be subject to an agreement among NPS, user groups, and the concessioner but may include having an NPS employee stationed at space made available by the concessioner, an annual educational registration program for ORV users and operators, and an organized education program among the user groups. These programs would emphasize the need to respect threatened and endangered species habitat and the history of the Core Banks including the surf fishing culture. Concessioner customers would be encouraged to visit the NPS visitor center on Harkers Island to learn more about the national seashore.

Visitors would leave Atlantic on a concessioner operated ferry from a concessioner owned or leased facility. Ferries would transport both vehicles and passengers. In the event no successful bid comes forward, NPS would explore the purchase of property and construction of a departure facility in Atlantic to ensure the availability and administrative control of a departure facility. Purchase of property in Atlantic would necessitate a legislative boundary change. NPS would also explore the use of Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge land in Atlantic for a facility.

The concessioner ferry would land at the dock at Long Point. The concessioner would be responsible for regular repair and upgrading of the piers at both Atlantic and Long Point. The existing facilities consisting of 6 duplexes and 4 octagonal structures containing 20 rental units and associated administrative structures would remain in place. The concessioner would be responsible for upgrading the cabins' infrastructure (water and sewage).



Alternative Plan - Long Point Area

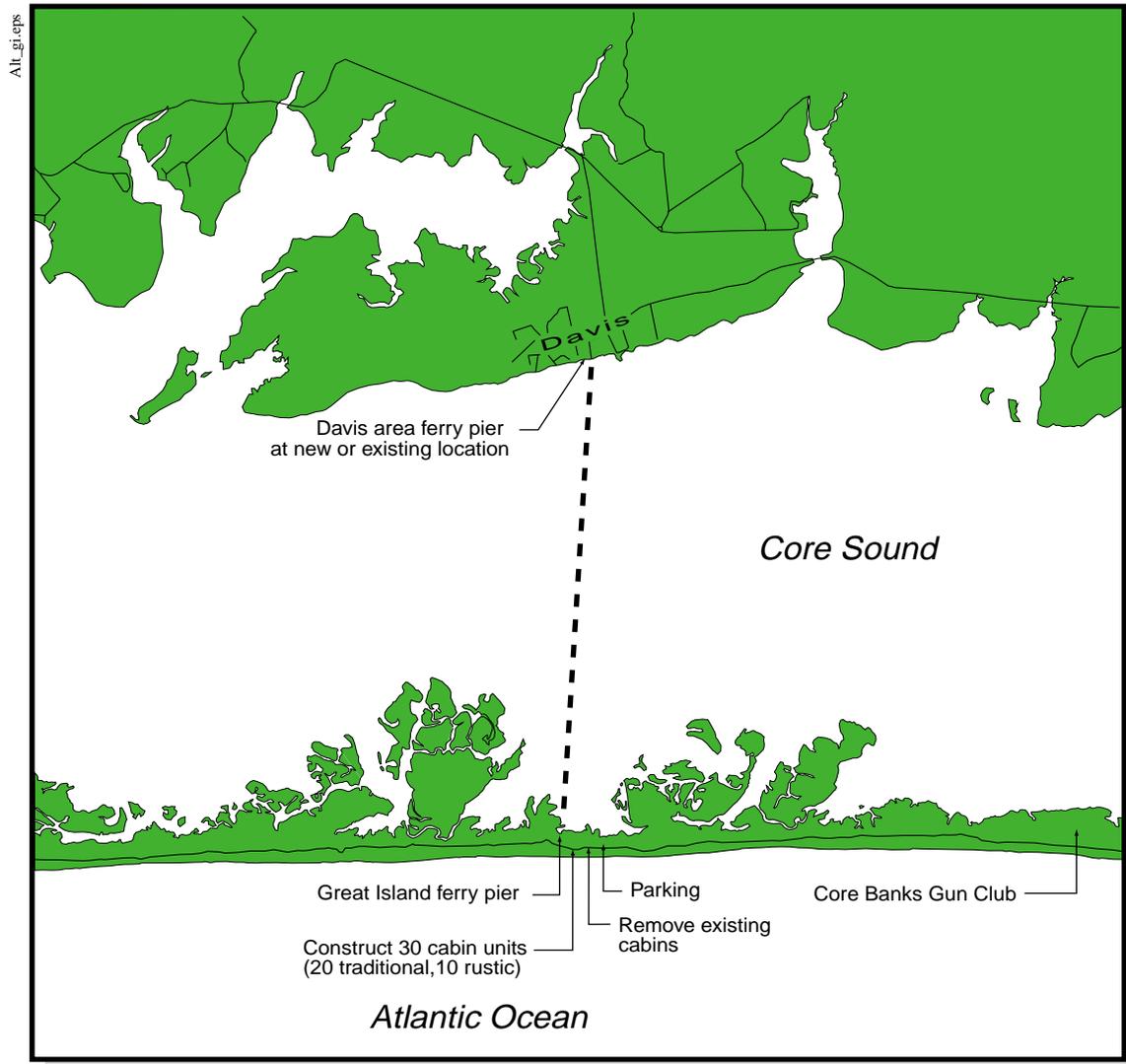
Visitors to the cabins would park their vehicles at the cabins. Other visitors to the national seashore would have the option to bring their vehicles to the Long Point area on the concessioner-operated ferry and to store them at the parking area near the cabins or to bring them back on the ferry.

In an effort to measure the effects of ORVs and human interference on threatened and endangered species, NPS would reduce the capacity of the parking area to 30 vehicles during the primary nesting/hatching period (June 1 through August 31). NPS would monitor closely the effects of fewer vehicles and visitors on the species and their habitat. Based upon the findings of the monitoring effort, the capacity of the parking area would be adjusted.

All private vehicles must be removed from the Core Banks over the same three continuous months, primarily during the winter. NPS would allow vehicles on the islands during this period through the issuance of a special use permit. NPS would define the parameters of vehicle use, parking, and storage. The ongoing monitoring of the effects of ORVs on threatened and endangered species would contribute to these parameters.

### Great Island Area—South Core Banks

Under the alternative plan, NPS would enter into a long-term contract with a concessioner to provide ferry service between



Alternative Plan - Great Island Area

Davis and the Great Island cabin area. NPS would advertise for bidders; the prospectus would reflect the Service's rules and regulations concerning concessions. Generally, NPS would seek bids that would provide reliable ferry service, furnish mainland facilities that would appeal to a broad spectrum of park visitors occupying cabins and visiting the national seashore from April through November, raze and remove the existing cabins at Great Island, and construct new cabin units (approximately 30) accommodating approximately the same number of occupants as in 1998. The concessioner would be responsible for the financing, construction, and maintenance of the new units, and the razing and removal of the old units. Cabins would conform to State and Federal building, health, and safety codes, and would be sensitively

designed to comply with the special conditions of a barrier island. Ten of the units would be rustic and be designed to provide shelter from rain, sun and insects, but would not include electricity or individual bathroom facilities.

The removal of the old cabin units and the construction of the new cabin units would be phased in. Scheduling would in part be based upon NPS monitoring and study of the effects of ORVs and human interference with the national seashore's threatened and endangered species. The new cabins would be arranged to allow for social space between cabins and would conform to State of North Carolina Coastal Area Management Agency guidelines regarding the location and orientation of structures on a barrier island. NPS would

work with the concessioner to restore areas, no longer needed for cabins, to their natural conditions.

In an effort to enhance visitor understanding of the national seashore's natural and cultural resources, NPS would work closely with the concessioner and user groups. Information would be available before and when visitors arrive at the Davis facility. Terms of the educational and interpretive effort would be subject to an agreement among NPS, user groups, and the concessioner but may include having an NPS employee stationed at space made available by the concessioner, an annual educational registration program for ORV users and operators, and an organized education program among the user groups. These programs may emphasize the need to respect threatened and endangered species habitat and the history of the Core Banks including the surf fishing culture. Concessioner customers would be encouraged to visit the NPS visitor center on Harkers Island to learn more about the national seashore.

Visitors would leave Davis on a concessioner-operated ferry from a concessioner owned or leased facility. Ferries would transport both vehicles and passengers. In the event no successful bid comes forward, NPS would explore the purchase of property and construction of a departure facility in Davis to ensure the availability and administrative control of a departure facility. Purchase of property in Davis would necessitate a legislative boundary change.

The concessioner ferry would land at the dock at Great Island. The concessioner would be responsible for regular repair and upgrading of the piers at both Davis and Great Island. The concessioner would be responsible for upgrading the cabins' infrastructure (water and sewage).

Visitors to the cabins would park their vehicles at the cabins. Other visitors to the national seashore would have the option to bring their vehicles to Great Island area on the concessioner-operated ferry and to store them at the parking area near the cabins or to bring them back on the ferry. All private vehicles must be removed from the Core Banks over the same three continuous months, primarily during the winter. NPS would allow vehicles on the islands during this period through the issuance of a special use permit. In an effort to measure the effects of ORVs and human interference on threatened and endangered species, NPS would reduce the capacity of the parking area to 30 vehicles during the primary nesting/hatching period (June 1 through August 31). NPS would monitor closely the effects of fewer vehicles and visitors on the species and their habitat. Based upon the findings of the monitoring effort, the capacity of the parking areas would be adjusted.

## **Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarter Area — South Core Banks**

NPS would issue annual renewable Incidental Business Permits (IBP's) to ferry businesses authorizing them to transport visitors from Harkers Island to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. Operators would comply with all applicable State of North Carolina, U.S. Coast Guard, and NPS laws and regulations regarding health, safety, and insurance. NPS would not authorize the transport of vehicles.

NPS and IBP holders would coordinate a program to enhance the understanding of the natural and cultural resources of the national seashore. Particular attention would be placed on the respect and appreciation of the threatened and endangered species and their habitat and the cultural of the Core Banks. Customers of the IBP holders would be encouraged to visit NPS headquarters on Harkers Island to learn more about the national seashore.

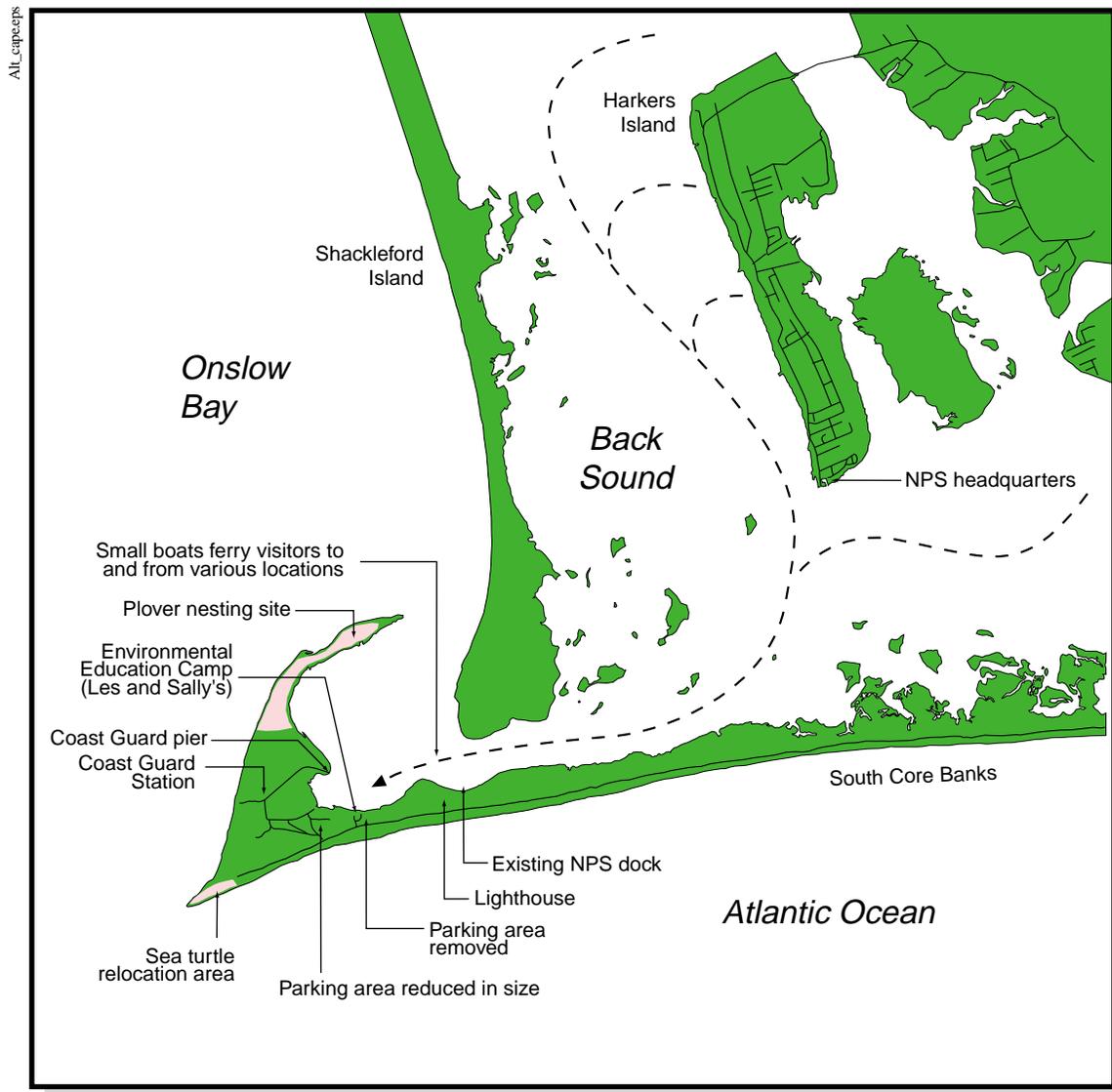
Small craft would leave the mainland from docks owned or leased by the IBP holders and disembark visitors at the dock near the lighthouse. NPS and IBP holders would closely monitor the demand for large group transport from Harkers Island to the Core Banks. If justified, issuance of an IBP would be predicated on providing service by larger craft to accommodate large groups. NPS would retain the option to relocate Harkers Island –Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area transport to NPS headquarters if IBP service proves unsatisfactory. In such case, NPS would enter into a concession contract to provide this service operating from the Harkers Island headquarters.

NPS would eliminate the parking area located near the Cape Lookout environmental education camp and restore the area to natural conditions. The capacity of the parking area located on the road to the use and occupancy area would be reduced in accord with the findings of the proposed ORV plan; the area no longer used for vehicle storage would be restored to natural conditions.

## **Summary of how the alternative plan addresses the issues:**

### **Issue 1. Cabin Standards and Cabin Use**

An examination of the remaining 25 cabins by NPS engineers and public health officers concluded that these cabins fail to comply with State and Federal building, health, and safety standards. Consummating a long-term contract provides a concessioner the opportunity to make a major capital



Alternative Plan - Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters Area

investment to replace the substandard structures with cabins that would appeal to a broad spectrum of national seashore visitors, yet would retain the flavor of the Core Banks. The improved cabins may attract higher numbers of occupants during the “low season.”

New and upgraded facilities would meet applicable State and Federal building, health, and safety codes and would be oriented to comply with CAMA guidelines. Measures would be taken to ensure that the basic infrastructure would conform to the problems posed by overwash. To retain a rustic appearance and atmosphere, only basic utilities would be provided.

## Issue 2. Location of Cabins

The cabins at Great Island and Long Point are easily accessible and well known to fishermen and others who wish a remote, somewhat primitive experience on a barrier island. They are separated from the majority of the day-use areas and important threatened and endangered species habitat. The planning process evaluated alternative locations and concluded that the adverse affects to visitors and natural and cultural resources would increase if cabins were constructed at the other locations.

### **Issue 3. Location of ferry concession operations**

The alternative plan would continue ferry service from Atlantic and Davis. These locations are well known to park visitors from the local community and those who come from other parts of North Carolina and the nation. Using established channels to the Core Banks would preclude the necessity of dredging and maintaining channels in undisturbed areas. NPS evaluated other sites, but these (Lola and Harkers Island) would either cause some environmental degradation or visitors would be subjected to lengthy and sometimes treacherous trips to and from the barrier islands.

Services available at and the appearance of Davis and Atlantic could be improved to cater to a broad range of park visitors. The alternative plan anticipates that upgraded ferry and cabin construction would attract visitors that would represent the surf fishing community and others who desire a remote experience in accommodations that meet State and Federal building, health, and safety standards.

The alternative plan proposes a coordinated effort among NPS, the concessioners, and users groups to prepare and present a wide range of interpretive materials and programs for the national seashore visitor at the Atlantic and Davis locations, then progressing to the ferries, and at both the Long Point and Great Island cabin locations. The alternative plan also recognizes the need for some NPS presence at both Atlantic and Davis. The current informational effort is inadequate.

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Three IBP holders transport day-use visitors to the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area in small water craft known. The IBP holders provide a reliable, reasonably priced service that eliminates the need, for the immediate future, for a concession ferry service from NPS headquarters on Harkers Island. Because the resources of the IBP holders are limited in regard to providing information or interpretive materials, NPS will work with these businesses to upgrade the interpretive efforts. Also, some school groups are reluctant to ride in the small boats and to split students into small groups. NPS will work with the IBP holders to determine the need to supply a larger boat to accommodate large groups of day users. The provision of a larger boat could become a prerequisite for obtaining an IBP to transport visitors to the Core Banks.

### **Issue 5. Changing visitor use patterns**

Response: Over the past 15 years the number of people visiting the Core Banks has increased noticeably. Day users visiting the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area constitute the largest percentage of the increase. The number of fishermen has increased slightly and has leveled over the last six to seven years. Occupancy in the cabins reaches 100 percent during the three busiest months, May, October, and November, some noticeable increases during the summer months have been recorded. The new cabins have attracted new occupants to the Long Point area. The alternative plan's emphasis on upgrading the cabin situation at both Long Point and Great Island should attract additional visitation during the off-months. It is beyond the scope of this general management plan amendment to address other facilities on the barrier islands.

### **Issue 6. Long-term parking for recreational vehicles**

The alternative plan recognizes the need to retain long-term parking areas as a low-cost alternative for people who frequently stay overnight on the islands. In an effort to preserve the resources of the national seashore while providing amenities for its visitors, NPS realizes that some areas must be returned to their natural condition if not needed for visitor services. The capacity of the parking area located on the road to the use and occupancy area would be reduced in size and the area no longer used for vehicle storage restored to natural conditions. Even with some reduction in parking capacity, this parking area is sufficient in size to accommodate all vehicle storage needs in the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area. In order to prevent potential visitor conflicts, NPS would eliminate the parking area located near the Cape Lookout environmental education camp and restore the area to natural conditions.

### **Issue 7. Conflicts between different user groups**

Generally, day-use visitors and fishermen occupy different areas. Most day-use visitors frequent the Cape Lookout Keeper's Quarters area while fishermen generally congregate on the North Core Banks and the Great Island area of the South Core Banks. Mobile fishermen follow the fish up and down the entire length of the islands. The present cabin locations provide separation between overnight visitors and day-use visitors. The alternative plan would continue this pattern of separating overnight from day-use visitors and avoiding potential user conflicts.

**Issue 8. Impacts of visitors and visitor service infrastructure on natural resources**

The alternative plan acknowledges NPS's legal mandate to protect threatened and endangered species and habitat. Thus NPS must be aware of the possible effects of ORVs and human interference on the turtles, piping plovers, sea beach amaranth and their habitat. Under the alternative plan, NPS would continue to carry out its management plans, under protocols developed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for the protection of the species. NPS would pay particular attention to monitoring the adverse affects of ORVs and human interference (if any) and taking measures to mitigate these affects. As an initial step, NPS would reduce the capacity of the vehicle storage areas during the primary nesting and hatching months (June 1 through August 31). As information is collected, NPS would adjust the number of vehicles allowed in the storage areas.

As a preventative measure, NPS proposes to join with the concessioners and user groups to develop a threatened and endangered species awareness program aimed at cabin occupants and ORV users. Although most visitors respect the flora and fauna and their habitat, adverse human actions could jeopardize the perpetuation of the species and visitor enjoyment of the national seashore's resources.

**Issue 9. Impacts of visitors and visitor service infrastructure on cultural resources**

Under the alternative plan, NPS would not take actions that would intrude on the historic scene associated with the lighthouse. At Great Island and Long Point, the Service would include in its interpretive messages, materials explaining the story of surf fishing on the Core Banks.

**Issue 10. Harkers Island Visitor Center**

Under the alternative plan, NPS would work with IBP holders and concessioners to encourage visitors to stop at the Harkers Island visitor center to learn more about the natural, cultural, and recreational resources at the national seashore. In the event that visitors would not stop at the visitor center, NPS would increase its efforts, in cooperation with the IBP holders and the concessioners, to provide interpretive and educational materials and opportunities at Davis, Atlantic, and the embarkation points on Harkers Island.

**Issue 11. Effect of proposed changes on park staff and resources**

Under the alternative plan, NPS would increase its presence at the concession operations at Davis and Atlantic particularly during May, October, and November. In April, June, July, August, and September, NPS presence would be more limited. The park would increase its efforts at monitoring the effects of ORVs and human interference on threatened and endangered species and their habitat. Additional resources would be needed to enhance interpretive messages and materials.

