



NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
SENATOR MARC BASNIGHT
RALEIGH 27601-2808

March 13, 2008

Mike Murray
Superintendent
Cape Hatteras National Seashore
1401 National Park Drive
Manteo, North Carolina 27954

Dear Superintendent Murray:

I appreciate your commitment to our National Seashore and to making our resources available to visitors and residents alike. I truly believe that the gifts that Nature has given our community must remain open and accessible to the public, so that all can enjoy and appreciate those bounties – and, most importantly, learn from them the great importance of environmental stewardship.

The 2007 federal plan to regulate off-road vehicle use was adopted through a public process and is being implemented in a fair and effective way. I credit you and your staff for all your hard work in developing this plan, and I am thankful your efforts to protect the seashore while preserving reasonable public access to it.

I am deeply troubled, as I know you are, by the current lawsuit against the National Park Service by the Defenders of Wildlife and the National Audubon Society regarding off-road vehicle access to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The residents, visitors, property owners and business owners on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands are extremely worried about the outcome of this lawsuit. A ruling against the United States in this matter could possibly be the ruin of the economy and culture of both islands.

The off-road vehicle users who visit our seashore are some of the most conscientious conservationists and environmentalists I've ever met. They work day in and day out to protect the beach through volunteering. They assist the Park Service, help monitor the beach, report violations and assist with litter management. The off-road vehicle user groups are mainly comprised of good intentioned, law abiding members who work diligently to protect their most prized resource, the beach. This seashore is the heart of our coastal heritage and culture, and to prevent public access to it will only deprive future generations of knowledge and appreciation of this heritage and resource.

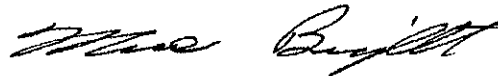
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The economies of Hatteras and Ocracoke depend solely upon fishing and tourism. Visitors from all over America – and from other countries as well – flock to both islands throughout the year for all types of recreation, especially fishing. The surf fishing off the coasts of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands is world renowned to be the best on the east coast. Losing visitor access to this national treasure would be a devastating blow to our local community.

As tourism is such a key engine in North Carolina's economy, I would argue that the state, too, has a vital interest in preserving access to the seashore. With that in mind, I have asked the North Carolina Attorney General's office to explore all possible avenues for the state to support the federal government in this lawsuit.

I hope the federal government to fight this lawsuit with every available resource. I truly believe, as I know you do, that preserving access to the seashore is absolutely critical to protect our cultural heritage, our economy, and the public's right of access to their seashore. Please know that I stand ready and willing to assist you in any way possible to protect this valuable resource for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Marc Basnight

Cc: North Carolina Congressional Delegation
Dare County Commissioners
Hyde County Commissioners