

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 1, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Jacob Lew, Director
Office of Management and Budget
1650 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Salazar and Director Lew:

We write regarding pending federal regulations to guide the management of Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) use at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, in Dare County, North Carolina. Given the expected impact of these regulations on the Dare County economy and communities throughout North Carolina's Outer Banks, we ask that you ensure that any final management strategy will maximize public access to the extent permissible under law.

Cape Hatteras National Seashore was authorized as the nation's first national seashore in 1937, and has been managed by the National Park Service (NPS) since 1953. The beaches of Cape Hatteras are among the nation's best because they offer an opportunity for visitors to enjoy a natural landscape largely untouched by human development. To do so, park visitors use motorized vehicles to access many of the seashore's recreational areas.

Pursuant to Executive Orders 11644 and 11989, the NPS has worked in recent years to develop a rule to govern ORV use at Cape Hatteras. Most recently, the NPS concluded an environmental review of proposed alternatives, and has selected a preferred approach to comply with resource protection requirements (FR Doc. 2010-32549). We are concerned that this environmental impact analysis does not appear to reflect the input of local residents and businesses. However, this analysis will now serve as the basis for a management plan to implement the NPS findings.

An overly restrictive ORV management plan will further imperil the economic vitality of Dare County families and businesses already struggling under current management practices. North Carolina's coastal communities have long fought to maintain the natural landscape of our beaches, and have resisted the extensive development that is seen elsewhere in the country.

These good intentions may be punished, however, should ORV regulations impose undue restrictions on beach access at Cape Hatteras. With this in mind, and with the NPS working with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to draft and review this rule, we urge you to provide as much public access to all Cape Hatteras Beaches as possible.

In particular, we ask that you provide additional access through the inclusion of ORV corridors that will allow access to all recreational areas open to ORV usage. Because Hatteras Island has an average width of only 1,500 feet, restrictions proposed by the NPS effectively close many areas in which there are no environmental concerns. For this reason, providing a means for the public to navigate through or around otherwise restricted areas to reach prime recreational opportunities will help to maximize responsible motorized access throughout the Seashore.

While we understand the unique challenges associated with managing ORV use at Cape Hatteras, we firmly believe the federal government is capable of providing a more appropriate balance between reasonable public access and environmental stewardship than what is contemplated under the Park Service analysis. We thank you for your efforts to strike this balance. Should you need any further information, please contact Perrin Cooke in Senator Hagan's office, Margaret Brooks in Senator Burr's office, and Joshua Bowlen in Congressman Jones's office.

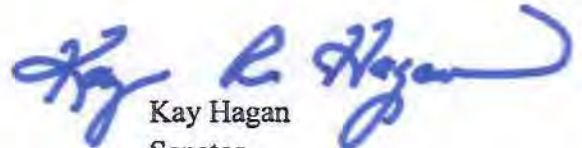
Sincerely,



Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress



Richard Burr
Senator



Kay Hagan
Senator