



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Outer Banks Group:
· Cape Hatteras National
Seashore
· Fort Raleigh National
Historic Site
· Wright Brothers National
Memorial

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National Park Service News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **DATE: April 29, 2011**
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Nighttime Driving Restriction on Cape Hatteras National Seashore Beaches begins May 1, 2011

Superintendent Mike Murray reminds park visitor that beginning May 1, 2011 all Seashore beaches are closed to off-road vehicles (ORVs) between the hours of 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. in accordance with the court ordered consent decree. Enforcement of the restriction will begin at midnight on April 30, 2011. The 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. prohibition on beach driving will remain in effect until November 15, 2011. Under the terms of the consent decree the National Park Service (NPS) may issue permits between September 16 and November 15 to authorize night driving on Seashore beaches between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. The NPS retains the discretion to limit night driving to certain areas or routes, based on resource protection considerations

Cape Hatteras National Seashore provides crucial nesting habitat for loggerhead and green sea turtles, as well as the occasional leatherback. Loggerhead and green turtles are currently listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and leatherbacks are considered endangered. Sea turtles typically lay nests at night between May and September, when adult turtles come ashore to deposit around 100 ping-pong ball sized eggs into a cavity in the sand. While nesting, these turtles are susceptible to human disturbance on the beach. If a nesting turtle is disturbed, it may not nest at all, or may lay a nest in a less than optimal area. Once laid, eggs will incubate in the sand for 50-70 days before the hatchlings emerge and make their way to the ocean. The hatchlings will use light cues in order to find their way from their nest to the sea, making them vulnerable to artificial lights from houses, piers, headlights, beach fires and lanterns. Although studies vary, it is estimated that only 1 in 1000 to 1 in 10,000 hatchlings will survive to adulthood. Ten to 15% of the turtle nests laid in North Carolina are laid on Cape Hatteras National Seashore beaches.

The night driving restriction will be posted at all Seashore ORV access ramps. The regulation is enforceable by NPS law enforcement rangers and violators are subject to up to six months imprisonment and up to a \$5,000 fine. To report violations, contact: Dare Central Communications: 252-473-3444. For further information, contact the Chief Ranger's Office at 252-473-2111.

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