



THE COASTLAND TIMES

Published On Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays In The Interest Of The Walter Raleigh Coastland-Outer Banks Areas
VOLUME LXXV, NUMBER 81 MANTEO, NC 27954 Tel. 252-473-2105 • KILL DEVIL HILLS, NC 27948 Tel. 252-441-2223

A NEW ENDANGERED SPECIES

By Jack Shea, Dare County Commissioner

Everyone has heard about the plight of endangered species. Environmental groups have been vocal advocates for a wide assortment of endangered animals and plants. Federal protection is legislated for various endangered turtles, birds and mammals. Even species of endangered snakes, spiders and snails are protected. Any species properly classified as “endangered” enjoys substantial legal protection. In most cases, environmental groups have blamed mankind for the plight of all species. You have likely seen press conferences demanding justice for polar bears, pandas, gray wolves and others. They would have the public believe that all species are endangered, when in fact they are not. In their quest to champion the cause of the “endangered,” vast funds have been raised from countless individuals and businesses across our country under false pretenses.

In spite of their claim to be advocates for all endangered species, I propose they have intentionally omitted a species from the list that is truly endangered. This endangered species is not particularly large. It numbers only in the thousands. However, the survival of this species is crucial for the stability of its local habitat. This forgotten and ignored endangered species is found only on Hatteras Island on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Survival of this species is critical to future generations and to millions who visit their habitat.

In keeping with scientific tradition, this endangered species needs a scientific name, such as assigned to all species. This name could appropriately be “Homo sapiens, Hatteras Islanders” or in plain English, Hatteras Island Humans.

Ironically, this species is not threatened by mankind, but by so-called “environmentalists” who claim their mission is to protect endangered species. The threat to the humans of Hatteras Island began in 2008 when a small group of environmentalists sued the National Park Service, which manages the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area. They alleged that the Park Service and, by inference, the residents and visitors of the area, were not doing enough to protect wildlife.

In hearing the lawsuit, a Federal Judge sided with the “environmentalists” and offered the residents one of two draconian choices. Either risk complete closure of the beaches or accept a consent decree that would severely restrict access to key areas during the most important times of the year. Reluctantly the consent decree was chosen as the lesser of two evils.

People have been quarantined from large areas of the recreational area. They have been denied access during critical periods of time to responsibly enjoy swimming, fishing, surfing and other beach activities in the place that was established as the first national seashore. The enabling legislation creating this area promised that recreational access would never be denied.

The result of the consent decree has been a continuing decline in local economic viability. The impact on the local tourism-based economy has been devastating. Businesses are hurting. People are struggling to survive. Unchecked, this decline will doubtless increase and threaten the livelihood of all residents and their families.

Sadly, the people of Hatteras Island who have done the most to protect wildlife are now the ones suffering the most. For generations, residents and visitors have faithfully participated in volunteer programs to protect turtles and birds and their stewardship has had excellent results. In fact, none of the birds protected by the consent decree are classified as endangered. And, only one species, the Piping Plover, is even considered threatened. Do not be misled by “environmentalists” who would have you believe that all birds are on the brink of extinction.

Now is the time for the people of this Country to act quickly to return public access to this recreational area. You can help by visiting www.PreserveBeachAccess.org and signing-up at “Act Now.” Then encourage people you know, throughout the entire United States, to help us by writing or calling their Senator and Representative asking support for legislation to set aside the consent decree. H.R. 718 and S.1557 would reinstate the previous Interim Plan that was carefully prepared by the National Park Service. Effective grassroots action now can help the truly endangered humans of Hatteras Island to survive.