



A new reality

I emphatically oppose and take issue with a letter from Audubon North Carolina to members of the Dare County Board of Commissioners. Two remarks made by Audubon's Executive Director and Vice President are particularly offensive to me and merit reply.

First, he condescendingly says that we should be "making the most of a new reality at Cape Hatteras." A "new reality" must be his euphemistic way to describe the damage Audubon and others have done to our area. In other words, he would have those of us who live and work on the Outer Banks sit back and accept the harm that his group and others have caused our way of life.

I believe the author of this letter, and other misguided environmentalists, live many miles away from the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area. They are not here in our community to experience the results of their intrusion. They are also not here when our sea turtle nests need to be guarded and protected from natural predators. The true reality is that the residents and visitors of the Outer Banks care deeply about protecting wildlife and using transparent, peer reviewed science as the foundation for balancing resource management with reasonable access.

The second statement that I take particular issue with is his telling us that we should have, "a new and respectful tone toward all those with legitimate interest in the future of our country's first national seashore." I ask, who has a greater legitimate interest in the future of this national seashore than the people who live, work and visit this area? This is especially true for those whose livelihood and future depends on the continued ability of this location to provide opportunities for people to observe our local wildlife and responsibly enjoy recreational opportunities. By their actions, these misguided environmentalists have not respected our heritage, legacy and culture. Sadly, it is the hard-working people of the Outer Banks who have not been given the proper respect.

Yes, this national seashore is public land and as citizens we all have the right to express our opinions. However, I do not believe any special interest group has the right to have their will imposed to the detriment of hard-working people who have been responsible stewards of the area. Those who live, work, and visit this recreational area cling to the promises of responsible recreational access and have worked hard to balance this with scientific resource management.

To learn how we are working in Dare County to have sensible and effective protection of wildlife while providing responsible access, please visit our website www.PreserveBeachAccess.org. Here you will learn the unique beach access history of the Outer Banks and the on-going threat that exists not only to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, but also to all public lands throughout the nation by so-called environmentalists and their allies.

~JACK SHEA, Dare County Commissioner