



NEWS RELEASE

Congressman Walter B. Jones

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JONES RENEWS EFFORT TO ALLOW OFF-ROAD VEHICLE USE ON CAPE HATTERAS, INTRODUCES LEGISLATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Yesterday Congressman Walter B. Jones (R-NC) introduced H.R. 718, legislation that would reinstate the Interim Management Strategy governing off-road vehicle use on Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CHNS) pending the issuance of a final rule for off-road vehicle use by the National Park Service. Jones first introduced the bill on June 11, 2008, in the 110th Congress as H.R. 6233.

The reinstatement of the original Interim Management Strategy, issued by the National Park Service (NPS) on June 13, 2007, would set aside current mandates and requirements which were put in place in the wake of a consent decree filed in U.S. District Court that prevents off-road vehicle and citizen access to major portions of Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

“This bill would restore reasonable public access and would bring the public back into the process on a level playing field by reinstating the Interim Management Strategy until the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee can produce a final rule,” said Jones.

If Congressman Jones’ bill is enacted, the National Park Service’s Interim Management Strategy will go into effect immediately and end upon the National Park Service establishing a long-term off-road vehicle management plan for the use of CHNS by the public.

Background

In 1972, President Richard Nixon issued an Executive Order that required all federal parks, refuges and public lands that allow off-road vehicles access to develop and implement a detailed management plan to regulate and assess environmental impacts. CHNS never developed a management plan, and as a result, Cape Hatteras has been out of compliance for over three decades.

In December 2005, the NPS developed a three-phase plan to begin the negotiation process and create regulations that would allow CHNS to meet compliance standards; however, on July 17, 2007 an injunction was filed by the Defenders of Wildlife and the National Audubon Society to prevent off-road vehicle use until a management plan is established and approved. A settlement negotiation process ensued, and on April 30, 2008, a federal judge approved a consent decree, proposed by the plaintiffs and agreed to by the parties involved in the case – the National Park Service, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Seashore and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The settlement, which went into effect on May 1, 2008, restricts public access to prime recreation locations in many parts of the Seashore.

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