



Off-Road Vehicle Use



Cape Hatteras National Seashore contains a wealth of natural and cultural resources. Off-road vehicles (ORVs) are one way for visitors to enjoy the seashore's ocean beaches and sound-side waters. To provide for both visitor enjoyment and the protection of park resources, please observe the following regulations and recommendations:

What traffic laws apply to beach driving?

- **Drive only on marked ORV routes and comply with posted restrictions.** Do not drive on or between the dunes unless marked as an ORV route. Driving or parking on vegetation is prohibited.
- **Observe posted speed limits** - the speed limit on the beach, generally 25 mph, is reduced in certain areas.
- Laws applicable to vehicle use on a paved road also apply to ORV use on the beach.
- A current driver's license and valid vehicle registration, insurance, and license plate are required for all vehicles, including ATVs.
- Use only designated beach access ramps and sound-side access roads to enter designated ORV routes. Reckless driving, i.e. cutting circles or defacing the beach, is prohibited.
- Pedestrians have the right of way.
- Avoid driving or parking on the wrack line. The wrack line is a line of stranded natural debris on the beach left by the previous high tide that can be an important food source for protected birds.
- Open containers of any type of alcoholic beverage are prohibited in vehicles. Public consumption of spirituous liquors or fortified wines is prohibited.
- **If violations of protected species closures result in disturbance or harassment of wildlife or the vandalization of fencing, nests or plants, the closure is mandated to be expanded 50 m for the first violation, 100 m for the second violation and 500 m for the third. Violators are subject to a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or imprisonment up to 6 months.**
- The use of seatbelts is required.

What about night driving?

- **May 1 - Sept. 15, night driving is prohibited from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.**
- Sept. 16 - Nov 15, a permit is required for night driving from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Permit system to be established by Fall 2008.
- Nov. 16 - April 30, night driving is allowed.

What are park regulations that I need to know?

- **Pets must be on a six-foot leash at all times.** Pets are prohibited within any bird closure - they can disturb nesting adults, kill chicks, and crush eggs.
- **Feeding wildlife, including gulls, is prohibited.** Human food is unhealthy for wildlife and may create a harmful dependence on humans for survival. Feeding may artificially inflate animal populations, create aggressive behavior, and force other species out of the habitat.
- **Kite flying and frisbee tossing are prohibited within any bird closure.** Kites and frisbees can scare birds off their nests, leaving eggs and chicks exposed to predators and deadly heat.
- **Remove any trash or litter from the beach,** including bait, fish parts and dead fish. Trash attracts predators that may disturb and prey upon park wildlife.
- Return all fish not being kept (including skates and sharks) to the water alive.
- Camping is only allowed in designated campgrounds, not on the beaches.
- Beach fires are allowed from 6 a.m. to 12 a.m. (midnight) below the current high tide line and at least 100 feet away from any vegetation. Burn wood completely and extinguish with water, not sand. **Fires are prohibited 12 a.m. to 6 a.m.**
- Jet skis and personal watercraft are prohibited.
- Fireworks and metal detectors are not allowed.
- Do not dump wastewater or graywater on the beach. Use park dump stations.

What are helpful tips for driving on the beach?

- **Drive only four-wheel drive vehicles (not two wheel-drive) on the beach.** Towing is costly.
- **Some sections of beach can be cut off by high tide - be aware of tide changes** and don't get trapped.
- **Before entering the beach, lower tire air pressure to 20 psi or less.** Lowering tire pressure and driving at a slow, steady rate of speed are the best ways to provide enough traction for a vehicle to maneuver. Inflate tires to normal pressure after leaving the beach.
- If stuck, lower tire pressure more. If your wheels start to spin, slowly back up in your tire tracks for several car lengths and then slowly accelerate forward. Fill in holes once your vehicle is unstuck. Rangers are not allowed to winch or pull out stuck vehicles.
- Drive slowly and carefully around pedestrians, especially children.
- Avoid driving in the surf or standing water. Salt water is corrosive and can ruin your vehicle. Rinse off vehicles after each outing.
- Prepare for emergencies - know the current weather. Area tackle shops have local tide tables and are a good source of information on current beach conditions. Carry a shovel, tire pressure gauge, spare tire, jack and jack support (at least 12" x 12" of non-bending steel, 5/8" plywood, or 2" hardwood), tow rope (at least 18' long with a load strength of 5000 lbs or more), fire extinguisher, flashlight and first aid kit.
- Do not stop on or block beach ramps or other vehicle access points.
- Watch for fishing lines.

Why are some sections of beach closed?

Portions of the beach may be temporarily closed to ORVs due to mandated protection of wildlife and plant species, such as protected birds and sea turtles. Closure boundaries may shrink or expand given the specific behavior or requirements of protected wildlife. In addition, certain areas of beach may be closed due to seasonal pedestrian use or if the beach is too narrow for safe driving. Alternate routes or bypasses may be established if possible. For current information visit one of the seashore visitor centers or www.nps.gov/caha.

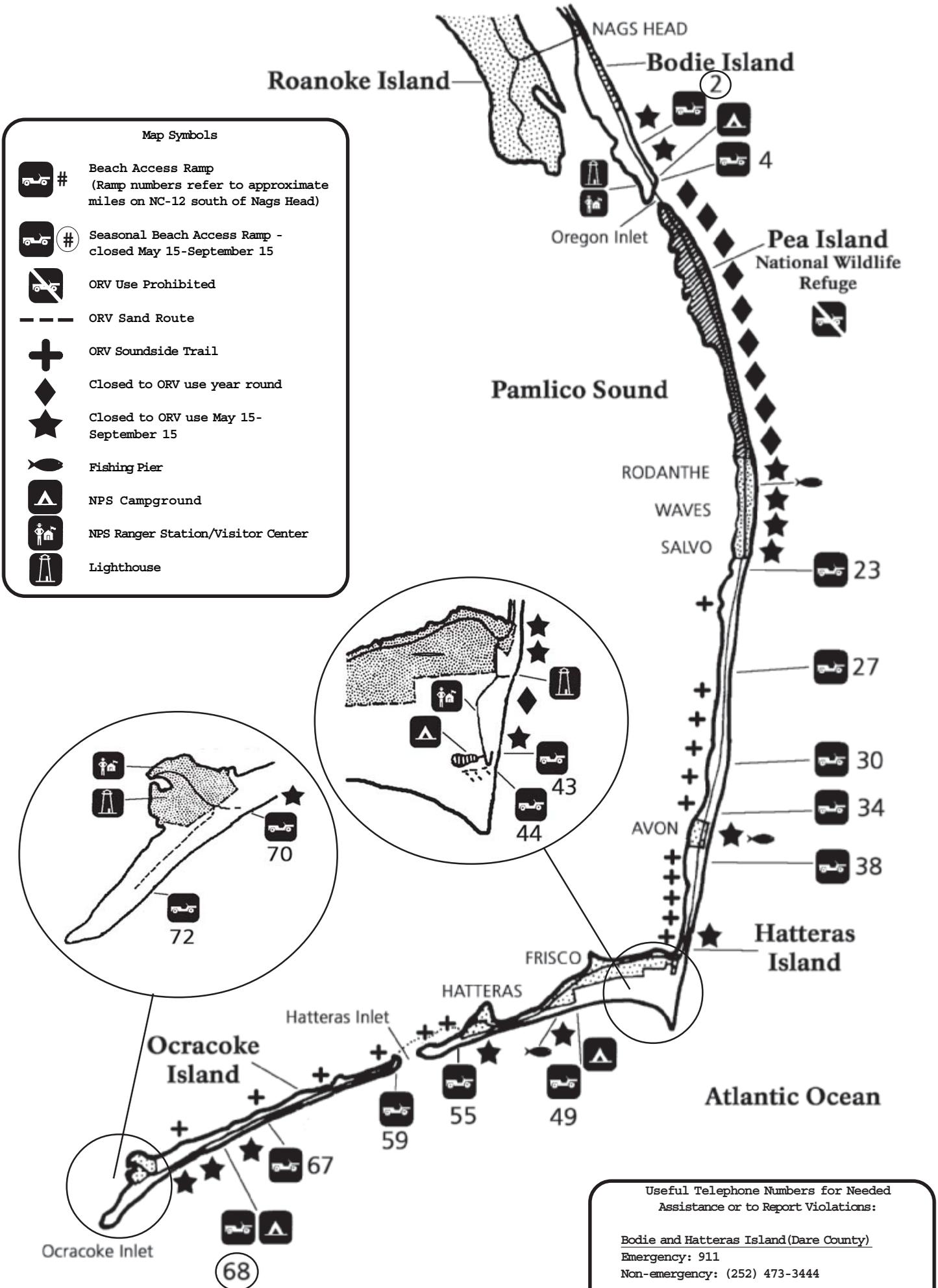
Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Off-Road Vehicle Routes

(Revised May 2008)

In addition to the seasonal closures noted on this map, beaches are subject to closure for mandated protection of wildlife and plant species or when they become too narrow for safe driving.

For updated information check: www.nps.gov/caha



Have a safe and enjoyable visit to Cape Hatteras National Seashore!