

The Nature Conservancy



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy
North Carolina Chapter
4705 University Drive
One University Place, Suite 290
Durham, NC 27707

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MM
7/24/08

July 21, 2008

Mike Murray, Superintendent
Outer Banks Group
1401 National Park Road
Manteo, NC 27954

Dear Mike,

I regret to request that The Nature Conservancy be dropped as a participant from the Cape Hatteras ORV "Reg Neg" negotiations. TNC requires that all positions we take and all actions we undertake must be science-based to support our mission. We entered these negotiations expecting them to be organized around interpreting sound and comprehensive data on the historical locations and habitat requirements for the target species. We expected the process to be time-limited and closely supervised to ensure that the parties would be negotiating on a tight schedule to advise NPS on how to properly interpret available data to meet the legal mandates. That seems a legitimate purpose for a FACA committee. TNC's particular goal was to ensure that the negotiations would look at whole ecosystems as well as target species and access issues. TNC did attempt to recruit an intern to build the information base we hoped we would all be able to use, but in the end, the public controversy over the ORV issue decided our candidate against this option. We regret we were not able to deliver.

TNC's current assessment of the negotiations is that they are not based on a mutually acceptable information base, nor are plans materializing for the development of such a base. Thus, success (science-driven consensus) by any given deadline seems unlikely. Like most negotiations, these were initially about defending pre-established positions, but we see little chance for movement away from that.

The NPS goal for these negotiations is certainly a worthy one, and we do appreciate the difficulty of the NPS position, caught between legal requirements and powerful interests. I wish TNC could have been more useful to help meet the goal.

Sincerely,

Sam Pearsall, Ph.D.
Director of Science
SamPearsall@tnc.org