

Statement of Congressman Walter B. Jones (NC-3)
H.R. 4094 – The Preserving Access to Cape Hatteras National
Seashore Recreational Area Act
House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Longworth 1324
April 27, 2012

- Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for holding this hearing and allowing me the opportunity to testify on my bill, H.R. 4094

- This bill is about jobs, it's about taxpayers' right to access the recreational areas they own, and it's about restoring balance and common sense to Park Service management.

- H.R. 4094 would overturn a final rule implemented by the National Park Service (NPS) in mid-February, as well as a 2008 U.S. District court ordered Consent Decree.

- The Rule and the Consent Decree excessively restrict taxpayers' access to Cape Hatteras National Recreational Area, and they are unnecessary to protect the wildlife.

- H.R. 4094 would reinstitute the Park Service's 2007 Interim Management Strategy to govern visitor access and species protection at Cape Hatteras.

- The Interim Strategy was backed by a 113-page Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which found that it would **not** jeopardize piping plover, sea turtles or other species of concern.

- In addition to providing adequate protection for wildlife, H.R. 4094 would give taxpayers' more reasonable access to the lands they own.
- It would reopen the 26 miles of beach that are now **permanently** closed to motorized beach access, and give seashore managers flexibility to implement more balanced measures that maximize both recreational access and species protection.
- By doing so, the bill would reverse the significant job loss and economic decline that Hatteras Island has experienced since the Consent Decree cut off access to many of the most popular areas of the seashore.
- To give you an idea of how bad it is, I'd like to submit a collection of notarized affidavits from Hatteras Island business owners.
- Hal Lester of Buxton states that his restaurant has seen "a total loss of 50% of our business since the consent decree. Previously I had a staff of up to 12 people. Now our workforce is half that size . . . and we struggle to survive."
- Motel owner Jaki Gray of Buxton states that during the first year under the consent decree, "we experienced a sudden 50% drop in business from the preceding year. This year, my business is down an additional 65%. Before the consent decree, my business employed 6 people. Because of the closures, we now have only 2 employees. Our 53-year old business is now in jeopardy."

- Mr. Chairman, the bottom line here is that the federal government is unnecessarily blocking the public from a national seashore created for their recreation, and in so doing, it is destroying jobs.
- We can fix this problem by enacting H.R. 4094, and there is broad, bipartisan public support for doing so.
- I am grateful that North Carolina Senators Richard Burr and Kay Hagan came together yesterday to jointly introduce a Senate companion to H.R. 4094.
- The bill is also supported by a wide variety of national sportsmen's and fishing groups, including:
 - The American Sportfishing Association;
 - Recreational Fishing Alliance;
 - Center for Coastal Conservation;
 - Coastal Conservation Association;
 - Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation; and,
 - International Game Fish Association.
- These groups, and many others, have signed letters supporting H.R. 4094 and I'd like to include those in the record.
- Mr. Chairman, this is a good bill, it's urgently needed, and I urge the Subcommittee to quickly take action to approve it. Thank you.