



PRESS RELEASE

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CAPITOL HILL HEARING FRIDAY ON NC ANGLER ACCESS RFA Says Congress To Discuss Cape Hatteras National Seashore

This Friday, April 27 at 9 a.m. the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands will hold a legislative hearing on a bill sponsored by Walter Jones (R-NC) which would authorize pedestrian and motorized vehicular access in Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area.

The aptly titled *Preserving Access to Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area Act* (HR4094) would effectively revoke the recent National Park Service consent decree which has begun closing huge areas of Cape Hatteras beaches.

“I am very pleased that the National Parks Subcommittee has agreed to take up this bill,” said Congressman Jones. “This is an urgent situation. The access restrictions mandated by the National Park Service’s final rule are significantly impacting the Hatteras Island economy and are totally unnecessary to protect wildlife. This 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 the 2008 U.S. District court approved Consent Decree. Both the Rule and the Consent Decree excessively restrict human access to the Recreational Area. The bill would reinstitute the Park Service’s 2007 Interim Management Strategy (IMS) to govern visitor access and species protection in the Recreational Area. The Interim Strategy was backed up by a 113-page Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which found that it would not jeopardize the species of concern, namely piping plover and sea turtles.

In 2008, NPS caved to a pair of lawsuits brought forth by Defenders of Wildlife and the National Audubon Society claiming that human access to primary portions of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area was harmful to nesting birds. The resulting denial of angler access has been viewed by Atlantic Coast surfcasters as an arbitrary measure directed by hardcore environmental activists.

“It doesn’t take much for a preservationist to kick a fisherman off the water today whether by boat or by beach,” said Jim Donofrio, executive director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) which is supporting Rep. Jones’ legislative efforts to protect angler access at Cape Hatteras. “Whether it’s protecting the piping plovers, deepwater corals or groundfish stocks, these radical enviro’s are not willing to bend on reasonable access to any natural resource.”

“Anti-fishing groups are using whatever means necessary to deny angler’s access to the fishing grounds, which in this case was another bloated lawsuit that has seriously impacted local businesses along the Outer Banks,” Donofrio added. “RFA thanks Congressman Jones for getting this Committee hearing scheduled and leading efforts to protect our coastal fishermen.”

The House Natural Resources Committee itself at its website has noted that the decision to turn away surfcasters is in many ways similar to the implementation of ‘no take’ marine reserves planned in other areas to ban boating anglers too.

“The National Park Service is pushing a new management plan at Biscayne National Park that will eliminate access to over 10,000 acres of sport fishing waters and dissuade visitation to other areas of the park,” the background statement reads at the House Committee website. “Fishing is an important economic activity that draws tourists and provides locals with an excellent outdoor recreational opportunity.”

“Access to Cape Hatteras National Recreational Area has been severely limited by Park Service management and environmental lawsuits under the guise of species protection. Not only have vehicles been restricted from areas traditionally available, but in some areas pedestrian access was eliminated as well,” the statement read.

This Friday’s congressional committee hearing on his bill to restore reasonable motorized and pedestrian access to Cape Hatteras National Seashore is taking place at the urging of Rep. Jones and should be broadcast live through the House Natural Resources Committee website at <http://naturalresources.house.gov/Live>.

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The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA’s Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation’s saltwater fisheries. For more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.