



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

May 1, 2016

Ms. Deborah A. Darden
Superintendent
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
7206 National Seashore Lane
Berlin, MD 21811

Re: Draft General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement, for Assateague Island National Seashore, Maryland, January 2016; CEQ 20160018

Dear Ms. Darden:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS), for Assateague Island National Seashore. The purpose of the GMP/EIS is to provide a decision-making framework that ensures that management decisions effectively and efficiently carry out the NPS mission at Assateague Island National Seashore into the future.

The DEIS evaluates four Alternatives:

- Alternative 1: NPS would continue to manage resources as it does today.
- Alternative 2: Most visitors would enjoy traditional beach recreation concentrated within a high density area accessible by private vehicles. This Alternative would likely require significant manipulation of the natural environment to protect facilities and infrastructure in the island developed area.
- Alternative 3 (Preferred Alternative): Over time infrastructure would evolve to more sustainable designs and likely shift to more stable locations both on and off the island. New water-based points of access would prove access to additional low density visitor use in the backcountry. This alternative represents a long-term shifting of facilities and assets to climate change.
- Alternative 4: Visitors would continue using existing facilities and infrastructure until such a time as they were lost and /or damaged by natural coastal processes and /or the effects of climate change/sea level rise. Lost or damaged facilities would either not be replaced or would be minimally replaced with sustainable substitutes. Alternative 4 represents a quicker adaptation of seashore facilities and assets to the effects of climate change.

Based on our review we rate this Draft EIS, Lack of Objection (LO). A description of our rating system can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa/comments/ratings.html>. However, we offer the following recommendations and suggest that additional information be provided describing future projects presented in the GMP/EIS.

- We suggest that the timeframe for this plan be clearly stated.
- It is suggested that additional information be provided in the Final EIS describing proposed stormwater management measures for future projects.
- Low impact development should be considered for future development.
- Air emissions and alternative fuel modes of transportation should be considered if and when ferry and shuttle services are developed. Also, the cost of these services to users should be included.
- The Final EIS should provide details on the environmental impacts (wetland, sub-aquatic vegetation, Aquatic Resources, dredging, etc) related to activities associated with the GMP/EIS. In addition, permits may need to be obtained as well as mitigation for unavoidable impacts. Impacts to species of concern, aquatic resources and other habitats should be avoided and minimized.
- The Final EIS should also identify seasonal aquatic construction restrictions related to fish, birds and other wildlife.

Please continue to work with EPA and other stakeholders as the Final EIS, Record of Decision and additional NEPA analysis for the various components of this plan move forward. Thank you for providing EPA with the opportunity to review this project. If you have questions regarding these comments, the staff contact for this project is Barbara Okorn; she can be reached at 215-814-3330.

Sincerely,



Barbara Rudnick
NEPA Team Leader
Office of Environmental Programs