



MEMORANDUM

Town of Nags Head

Jockey's Ridge State Park

Soundside Access Working Group

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Jockey's Ridge State Park Soundside Access Working Group (Members: Megan Vaughan, Bobbie Murray, Mayor Pro Tem Michael Siers, Police Chief Phil Webster, Planning and Development Director Michael Zehner, Jockey's Ridge State Park Superintendent Joy Greenwood).

Date: March 25, 2021

Subject: Recommendations for Jockey's Ridge State Park Soundside Access

The following recommendations to the Board of Commissioners are intended to address the issues and concerns raised by residents of the neighborhood, while balancing the interests of the general public and recognizing the mission of Jockey's Ridge State Park. Given her role, Park Superintendent Joy Greenwood, while a member of the Working Group, participated in the discussions but did not believe it was appropriate to vote on the recommendations. The remaining members of the committee voted 5-0 to approve the following recommendations.

1. Traffic Study

The Town, using appropriate means, resources, and professional methodology, shall have a traffic study conducted to determine the traffic impacts associated with the Soundside Access.

2. Parking Restrictions along W. Soundside Road.

The Town should prohibit on-street parking within the right-of-way of W. Soundside Road, S. Thirteenth Street, and Deering Street.

3. Improvements to W. Soundside Road.

The Town should conduct an audit of existing parking and traffic regulation signs along affected streets, and consider existing signs when instituting additional no-parking areas and traffic regulations.

The Town should review the appropriateness of establishing a 3-way stop along W. Soundside Road, at the entrance to the Soundside Access. The Town should explore the feasibility and appropriateness of other traffic calming measures along W. Soundside Road that would physically limit or discourage the ability to speed such as a chicane or other measure.

4. Access Hours

The Town should request Jockey's Ridge State Park's commitment to limit open hours, as follows:

April 1 to September 30: 8:00am to 7:00pm
October 1 to March 31: 8:00am to 5:00pm

And, further, that gates be opened no earlier than 7:50am, and that vehicles be physically restricted from entering the access after the signed closing time (i.e., 5:00pm or 7:00pm). These hours should be consistently posted whether through signage or through other methods of communication including internet and social media sites.

5. Traffic Counts

The Town should request Jockey's Ridge State Park to maintain their traffic counter at the Soundside Access gate, support the installation of a counter that can provide hourly counts, and share such data monthly with the Town.

6. Events and Groups

The Town should request that Jockey's Ridge State Park limit events held at the Soundside Access to 50 or fewer participants, that events held at the Access after open hours shall not utilize W. Soundside Road for access, and that the Town be notified of scheduled events.

The Town should request that Jockey's Ridge State Park require that group education activities with 15 or more participants utilize shared transportation and not allow participants to individually travel to the Access.

7. Alternative Sound Access

The Town should seek out and promote alternative Sound access in other town locations for the general public and for education and recreation groups. The Town should strongly encourage and support efforts by North Carolina State Parks to develop a separate sound access facility at Jockey's Ridge State Park that addresses current demand which is accessed internally within the park.

8. Enforcement

The Town should commit to continued coordination between its Police Department and Park Rangers, performing routine visits to the Soundside Access when open. The Town should work with Jockey's Ridge State Park on supervision of the beach and water during the season, and request that North Carolina Marine Patrol dedicate attention to this area.

9. Access Infrastructure

Parking spaces have increased over time through use of parking in the shoulder of the unimproved drive aisle but not through a formal plan that was developed in partnership between the Town and the North Carolina State Parks. This has resulted in an increase in capacity of the access. If there is an interest in increasing the capacity of the access, it should be done through a formal planning process and not in the method that it has occurred. The members of the W. Soundside neighborhood serving on the task force are opposed to an increase in the capacity of the access in its current location and configuration along W. Soundside Road. At this time, the task force recommends no parking along the access drive aisle.

10. Beach Access

The task force recommends addition of accessible parking to the existing parking lot and removal of the accessible parking space along the drive aisle. The beach walkover closest to W. Soundside Road should be removed once the structure reaches the end of its useful life.

11. Neighborhood Coordination

The Town, Jockey's Ridge State Park, and neighborhood representatives should establish a standing committee that meets at least twice annually, prior to the season and following the season, and as needed to address concerns and issues.

12. Operational Agreement

The Town and North Carolina State Parks should develop a new agreement that reflects the roles of each party in the operation and future maintenance of the access.