

April 11, 2006

Issue: Cumberland Island National Seashore Update

Visitation: Requests for access to Cumberland Island are steadily increasing. Reservation requests on the concession-operated ferry routinely exceed the 300 per day limit set in the 1984 General Management Plan (15 times in March 2006). Commercial operations on Jekyll Island and Fernandina Beach are seeking permission to take visitors to the island. Private boater and kayak visitations have increased steadily. Camping requests regularly exceed the capacity of the campgrounds.

To support the growing interest and demand the Park Service is working to:

- Amend the General Management Plan to increase the daily visitor limit. This will require public participation per NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act)
- Upgrade and construct additional island facilities, such as restrooms, water-treatment facilities, shelters, boardwalks, trails, and camp sites
- Increase maintenance, visitor protection, and other support staffing to provide for health and safety needs of visitors
- Expand visitor services by adding concession operations

Plum Orchard: The Park Service is investigating use of Plum Orchard as a visitor center/museum to reduce demands on the Sea Camp and Dungeness areas. Concentrating visitation to these three areas will enable supporting increased visitation to the island without compromising the vast majority of the island's natural resources.

Transportation: A large portion of the general population can not enjoy Cumberland Island due to the lack of a public transportation system. The Park Service began the planning process (NEPA) for transporting visitors to the north-end Settlement in January 2006, and will also study the south end of the island. When the process is complete, the park will need resources to procure the selected transportation systems.

Beach Access: Cumberland Island has seventeen miles of beautiful unspoiled beaches that must be protected. With increased visitors and a planned transportation system, the Park Service is also planning a boardwalk system that will keep pedestrian traffic off the pristine dune system. The boardwalk will be designed to integrate with the selected transportation system.

Land Protection Plan: The number one priority in the CUIS Land Protection Plan is the acquisition of tract 05-108 located at 103 Wheeler Street, Saint Marys. It is imperative that this tract be acquired for additional visitor parking.

Action: Request your continued support of these initiatives to carry on the high quality management of this National Seashore, while allowing innovative approaches to support increased visitation and enjoyment of this National treasure.

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