

Fall 2024 NEWSLETTER

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Director's Letter



AS WE WRAP UP ANOTHER EVENTFUL YEAR in our Outer Banks national parks, as well as our fifth anniversary, we're reflecting on the impact you've made possible in our parks. Each gift – whether you give \$50, \$500 or \$5,000 – is an investment in the future of these special places that mean so much to each of us.

Our parks continue to face challenges like adapting to a changing coastline, preserving the many historic structures they manage, and budget cuts that further restrict staffing at a time when our parks continue to see high levels of visitors. Our goal is to help connect you to meaningful ways you can support our parks as they confront these challenges and work to continue providing engaging experiences for you and your friends and family.

One thing is clear, our parks need your support now more than ever. **One of the ways we are preparing for our parks' greatest needs is by creating a Parks Forever Fund** that will allow us to pool funds from each of you, as well as our local business partners, to be able to adapt to immediate needs as they arise and create a sustainable way to address longer-term needs.

When you give to our Parks Forever Fund, you will help us to support our parks through things like:

- Internships that engage the next generation in protecting our parks and increase our parks' capacity to provide amazing experiences for you and your loved ones.
- Conserving our unique barrier island environment by addressing the threat of invasive plants to our fragile ecosystem.
- Making our parks more accessible by supporting projects that address the needs of visitors of all ages and abilities so everyone can learn and experience the rich history and beauty of these places.

I hope you will consider a gift today to protect and enhance these special places and create your legacy here in the Outer Banks.

Jessica Baimes

Director, Outer Banks Forever



New Freedom Trail exhibits

Over the past few years, some of the projects you've made possible include:

Building the first designated kayak launch at Cape Hatteras National Seashore to make it easier for paddle sports enthusiasts to explore the area around Oregon Inlet.

Creating a new educational experience along the Freedom Trail at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site that highlights the story of the Freedmen's Colony of Roanoke Island.

Helping park rangers at Wright Brothers National Memorial reach more students across the state and beyond with the inspiring story of the first flight by expanding their digital education capabilities.



Outer Banks Forever is the official nonprofit partner of our Outer Banks national parks, helping you protect and enhance these special places. Established in 2019, Outer Banks Forever has helped support projects like the mobility-friendly Oregon Inlet Kayak Launch, programs like Adopt a Pony and Adopt a Sea Turtle Nest, virtual experiences that help keep visitors connected to our parks year-round, and more. To learn more please visit www.OBXForever.org

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Pathways to Your *National Parks*

WE ARE ENJOYING FALL HERE in the Outer Banks after another busy summer season, but a lot is still happening in our national parks! As of October 21, the concrete for the new Cape Hatteras Lighthouse multi-use path is fully complete. There were a few delays toward the end of the summer as often happens with these types of projects. From culverts that needed replacing, to damage from storms that came through during the construction process, our park staff and the contractor continued to work diligently to make this project a reality.

Now that the path itself is complete and locals and visitors are utilizing it, the next steps are to put on the finishing touches, which include:

- Trailhead signage that will give direction and context to the area at the entrance to Route 12.
- Additional enhancements to the landscape at the entrance to Route 12 to create a more inviting experience to one of our country's most iconic lighthouses.
- Educational signage along the pathway that highlights the wildlife and environment of our unique area, the history of watersports on Hatteras Island, and a new experience that will take you along part of the same journey the lighthouse itself took to its current location back in 1999.
- A new family-friendly, accessible restroom and shower facility at the beach access along the pathway.





The signage and entrance enhancements are planned to be completed by January 2025. We will also break ground on the new restroom facility in early 2025. While we'd hoped to have supporters like you out to celebrate the pathway this fall, we felt that seeing the finishing pieces of this project come together – including our new donor recognition signage – would be a better experience for you.

We are now looking at a spring event to celebrate this exciting project. Stay tuned in the coming weeks for more information!

Thank you!

Thank you to all of our sponsors and donors who helped us raise over **\$800,000 for this project!** Check out all our project supporters on our website: obxforever.org/pathways





DID YOU KNOW that biologists at Cape Hatteras National Seashore carefully track, learn from, and protect hundreds of sea turtle nests each summer?

Check out our sea turtle stats below (as of November 1, 2024) to learn more about the 2024 nesting season.

NUMBER OF NESTS:

303

Sea turtle species:
Loggerhead, Green,
Leatherback (rare), and
Kemp's Ridley (rare)

NUMBER OF EGGS LAID:

29,533

NESTS ADOPTED

303

FUNDS RAISED \$31,177

50 *Kemp's
Ridley*
HATCHLINGS

The Kemp's Ridley sea turtle is the most endangered sea turtle species in the world. We were thrilled to learn one of the 303 nests on the Seashore was from a Kemp's Ridley! That special nest had 50 hatchlings emerge and venture out to sea. A Kemp's Ridley sea turtle has a special way of nesting that has been coined as the Kemp's Ridley dance — most turtles use their flippers to cover their nest with sand, but a Kemp's Ridley uses her entire body, making it look like she's "dancing" on top of her nest!

Donor Spotlight: Dane & Karen Blythe

Please tell us a little bit about yourselves and your connection to the Outer Banks.

Dane: The Outer Banks have been a part of our lives for our entire lives. My grandparents bought a cottage in Kitty Hawk in the 1960s and my family vacationed every year. I spent many summers working here. I bagged groceries at the S&K Supermarket, worked at Wave Riding Vehicles, the Yellow Submarine, and The Carolinian. Our kids love it here as well. Four generations strong and hopefully many more!

Karen: I also spent my summers in Nags Head and Hatteras with my grandparents. We went to the lighthouses, “The Lost Colony” outdoor drama, and Wright Brothers National Memorial.

Why are our Outer Banks national parks important to you?

Dane & Karen: The national parks are important to us for several reasons. We love the history of the Outer Banks and the natural beauty. The parks are an essential part of the history of the Outer Banks. We know it is vital to preserve these incredibly valuable spaces.

What is a favorite memory you have from visiting our Outer Banks national parks?

Dane: Surfing at Cape Hatteras National Seashore – I’ve spent many a happy hour there. A very special moment occurred at the top of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse: I asked Karen to marry me!

Karen: Dane knew that the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse in Buxton is



my “favorite place in the world.” My fondest childhood memories are climbing it with my cousins, then at the top thinking there is nothing better than the view anywhere. My grandfather was a merchant marine and loved this island where the sea is a part of everyone’s DNA.

What is your favorite way to enjoy our Outer Banks national parks?

Dane & Karen: Surfing and enjoying the solitude of the beach in the off season. The sunsets are so often stunning! We love walking and enjoying nature and the amazing history.

Why did you choose to support Outer Banks Forever?

Dane & Karen: We believe in the mission. We believe the national parks are an essential part of the uniqueness

of the Outer Banks, and individual financial contributions can make a positive difference.

WE’D LIKE TO THANK Dane and Karen for sharing their OBX story, and for hosting a fun gathering of their friends at Elation Brewing in Norfolk, VA earlier this fall to help spread the word about Outer Banks Forever. **Do you have friends or family who love our OBX national parks?** Consider hosting a gathering in your area to help them learn more about our projects and how to get involved. We’ll bring the OBX to you! Contact Nicole Erickson at NicoleErickson@OBXForever.org to learn more.



P.O. Box 1635,
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Save the Date:

**GIVING
TUESDAY**

**GIVING TUESDAY IS
DECEMBER 3!**

Giving Tuesday is a day of giving celebrated each year around the world following Black Friday and Cyber Monday. We're inviting you to join the global movement and give back to our Outer Banks national parks! If you'd like to give early, scan the QR code to make your gift today!



Here's what's inside:

Project Update:
Pathways to Your
National Parks



**Sea Turtle
Scoop 2024**



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Plus: FALL 2024 DIRECTOR'S LETTER