

Fall 2022
NEWSLETTER

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Introducing: Pathways to Your National Parks



Our Pathways to Your National Parks project aims to make all three of our Outer Banks national parks safer and more connected over the next few years, while honoring

the history and the coastal environment of our local community. The first multi-use path we are partnering with our parks to bring you will connect to one of the most iconic sites in the Outer Banks: the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

YOUR NEW LIGHTHOUSE EXPERIENCE

The new Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Pathway will enhance the experience for everyone who visits the lighthouse, starting with improvements to the entrance.

Traveling alongside Lighthouse Road safely separated from traffic, you will have a chance to experience and learn about the ecology and wildlife that is unique to the Outer Banks.

As the ocean comes into view, you will stop at a new educational plaza and Old Lighthouse Beach where you will learn about the history of surfing and water sports that made Hatteras Island a premier water sports destination on the East Coast.

If you continue to the lighthouse, you will travel alongside the path that the lighthouse itself took on its historic 2,900-foot journey to safety back in 1999. There will be opportunities for you to stop along this route to learn why moving this iconic structure was necessary and, more importantly, how this incredible feat of engineering succeeded.



Watch our project video
to learn more!



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Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Pathway

Each year, millions of visitors venture to the Outer Banks to visit Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and many make a point to visit the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Considered one of the most iconic lighthouses in the country, the lighthouse site in Buxton, NC, is popular for its beautiful beach and is a top surfing destination on the East Coast.

MAKE IT SAFER

When families, local children, and surfers come to visit the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, they often take in the sights, sounds, and stories on foot or by bike. Currently, the only way to do this is to brave the main roads alongside vehicular traffic. Phase One of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Pathway will provide a safer alternative: a mile-long, accessible, paved path for walking, running, and cycling from Route 12 to the lighthouse.

CREATE CONNECTION

The first phase of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Pathway will begin at the entrance to the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse on Route 12, connecting the town of Buxton to Old Lighthouse Beach and the original site of the lighthouse, as well as to the current lighthouse grounds. A new trailhead and improved entrance signage will be added to guide park visitors into this important part of our Outer Banks community.

HONOR COMMUNITY

In addition to safely connecting the town of Buxton to these important local sites, new educational signage will be installed along the path to help everyone learn more about our unique barrier islands, the history of surf culture and water sports in the Outer Banks, and the story of why and how the lighthouse was moved in 1999.



How You Can Help

This project will only happen with the support of individuals, families, and business owners like you. Each gift to our Pathways to Your National Parks project gets us one step closer to connecting our parks and our community.

Visit www.obxforever.org/pathways to donate online or send in the enclosed donation form with your gift.





FALL 2022

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 October 1, 2022) to learn more about the 2022 nesting season.



TOTAL NESTS:
378

SEA TURTLE SPECIES:
Loggerhead, green sea turtle, leatherback (rare), and Kemp's ridley (rare)

NUMBER OF EGGS LAID:

37,741



ADOPTIONS:
229



FUNDS RAISED:
\$23,405

THIS SUMMER, A LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE nested on Cape Hatteras National Seashore for the first time in ten years! Check out these leatherback facts from our friend Benjamin Ranelli, Seasonal Biological Science Technician on Ocracoke Island:



Leatherback sea turtles are the largest sea turtle species and the largest species of any turtle. Fully grown adults can weigh over 1,500 pounds and reach over eight feet long.

Leatherback sea turtles are the last surviving members of a separate family, *Dermochelyidae*, Greek for "skin" and "turtle." Their family name

comes from the layer of leathery skin concealing their shell.

Leatherback sea turtles are capable of enduring more extreme environments than other sea turtles, holding the records for the deepest dive, enduring the coldest water, and undertaking the longest migrations.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

OCRACOKE LIGHTHOUSE SIGN:

Over the next three years, our donors and sponsors can help enhance our parks with a series of educational signs in all three parks to highlight the history and unique environments our parks protect. This summer we were able to help our park staff at Cape Hatteras National Seashore create and install a new sign on the grounds of the Ocracoke Lighthouse that shares the history of the oldest functioning lighthouse in North Carolina!



JUNIOR FLIGHT RANGER BOOKS:

Because of our generous donors, we were able to help our park staff at Wright Brothers National Memorial print 2,000 Junior Flight Rangers books when supply chain challenges delayed their order this summer. The Junior Flight Ranger program helps kids continue the Wright brothers' legacy of making the impossible possible by inspiring them to soar to new heights. More than 2,000 kids participated in the program this summer!

NEW EDUCATIONAL GARDEN AT FORT RALEIGH:

With the support of donors like you, we are working with our National Park Service staff and volunteers at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site to create a new education garden beside the park's Visitor Center. The garden will include three raised garden beds that will be used to grow crops that were cultivated by the Carolina Algonquian and members of the Freedmen's Colony on Roanoke Island.

The goal of this new education garden is to enhance the understanding of our local history and to help our park better tell the important stories of the people who shaped our unique community. The garden will also focus on the role women from these communities played in leading, organizing, and performing agriculture. This will be an engaging new experience for park visitors to understand how diverse peoples lived hundreds of years ago.





Small But Mighty, The Banker Ponies of Ocracoke Island

If you've had the opportunity to visit Ocracoke Island, you may have stopped to see some

of the island's most popular residents: the Banker ponies that are protected and cared for by our Cape Hatteras National Seashore staff.

But how did these ponies come to be on the island?

While many legends have arisen as to the ponies' origins, our Seashore staff believes it is likely the ponies first came to the island in the 1500s or 1600s aboard the ships of European explorers.

Despite the ever-changing winds and waves of the Outer Banks, the Ocracoke ponies established their home on our island more than 400 years ago. Banker pony herds also live along North Carolina's Shackleford Banks, which make up part of Cape Lookout National Seashore. Several of the ponies in the Ocracoke Island herd are direct descendants of the Shackleford herd.

The Ocracoke ponies are also related to the mustangs that make their home in the Corolla and Carova areas of the northern Outer Banks. Our friends at the Corolla Wild Horse Fund work diligently to protect these mustangs through herd management, visitor education, and a rehab facility for sick or injured horses. They told us the Ocracoke ponies share a common history with the mustangs, which is being investigated through DNA testing.

When people began to settle on Ocracoke in the 1700s, they began to domesticate some of the ponies. As our Seashore staff reports:

"When the early colonists settled Ocracoke, they used the ponies to help make life easier on the island by pulling carts to haul freight and fish. The U.S. Lifesaving Service

used them for beach patrols and to haul equipment to shipwreck sites and the U.S. Coast Guard kept a small band of ponies to patrol the beaches in World War II."

In the 1950s, Boy Scout Troop 290 took over the care and feeding of the ponies and became the first — and last — mounted Boy Scout troop in the United States. At that time, the free-roaming ponies would wander onto the island's new highway or into unfenced yards and gardens to eat, and the National Park Service worried the ponies' continuous

grazing would undermine efforts to prevent erosion of the sand dunes that protected most of the island. It was decided that a portion of the island's marshland should be dedicated exclusively to the ponies.

Ocracoke residents started a campaign for the new pasture project and raised \$1,300 dollars from people across the nation and around the world for fencing for the ponies. The National Park Service donated three acres of land and contributed fence posts to the project. The pens were completed in 1959 and the National Park Service took over care of the ponies in 1960. The Ocracoke ponies are truly a special part of our local history and culture.

We were proud to be given the opportunity in 2019 to care for these

beautiful ponies through our Adopt A Pony program. For a gift of \$45 or more, you can partner with us to provide care and feeding for a pony of your choice or of the entire herd. In return, you will receive an official adoption certificate and a picture of your pony or of the herd to keep! To learn more about our Adopt A Pony program, visit www.obxforever.org/adoptapony.

As a friendly reminder, if you visit the Ocracoke ponies or see the mustangs in the northern Outer Banks, please refrain from feeding them, as apples, carrots, and other human foods are deadly to them. And while you can approach the Ocracoke ponies at their pen, make sure to admire the mustangs from afar!





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P.O. Box 1635,
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Supporting OUR OUTER BANKS NATIONAL PARKS



Here's what's inside:

Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Pathway



Sea Turtle Scoop



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SCAN ME

There are many ways you can help protect and enhance our OBX national parks - from supporting a specific project to shopping in our online store, check out the many ways you can support our parks today.

Plus: OUTER BANKS PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS