OUTER BANKS
FOREVER



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

OUTER BANKS
FOREVER

Outer Banks Forever is the official nonprofit partner of our Outer Banks national parks—Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, and Wright Brothers National Memorial— helping to protect and enhance these special places, now and forever.


Photo: REAL Watersports


Photo: Cape Hatteras National Seashore


Photo: Wright Brothers National Memorial

STAFF:

Bryan Burhans, Director

Nicole Erickson, Development & Adoption Programs Manager

Rachael Graf, Communications & Grants Coordinator

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Cover: Bodie Island Light Station, Photo: Sean Pavone (Envato)

2025 OBX NPS VISITORS

Cape Hatteras National Seashore:
2,684,009

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site:
266,775

Wright Brothers National Memorial:
341,576

Total: 3,292,360

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

2025 WAS A YEAR OF MOMENTUM, IMPACT, AND POSSIBILITY. Together, we transformed generosity into action, funding critical projects, preserving cherished places, and strengthening the future of our Outer Banks national parks. The accomplishments highlighted in this report are proof that when a community comes together in support of the places it loves, extraordinary things happen.

Protecting what we love, our Outer Banks national parks, takes funding. Thanks to our generous supporters and partners we were able to fund some key projects:

- We secured funding through the National Park Foundation ($50,000) to develop a strong capacity building program to increase our organizational capacity to continue supporting our parks.
- We secured funding through the National Park Foundation ($75,000) to develop a plan to increase housing capacity for our parks by providing an eight-pad RV park for seasonal volunteers and employees at Wright Brothers National Memorial and Bodie Island Light Station.
- We secured funding for the restoration of the Bodie Island Double Keepers' Quarters, thanks to our partners at the Outer Banks Visitor Bureau and the National Park Foundation.
- We held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of the new multiuse pathway at the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.
- We started finalizing engineering plans for the accessible restroom and rinse station facility along the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Pathway.
- We secured funding through the National Association of Daughters of the American Colonists to improve visitor engagement at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site through the production of new educational films for the Visitor Center.
- Thanks to our Adopt A Pony supporters, we were able to cover the $10,000 in veterinarian costs in support of the Ocracoke herd's continued health.

We also secured funding from the National Park Foundation to support our operations. 2026 looks like an exciting year to say the least. We anticipate holding a ribbon cutting ceremony this fall for the completion of the Bodie Island Double Keepers' Quarters renovation and the installation of the new restroom and shower facilities along the multiuse pathway near the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. We will also begin our fundraising efforts to create an accessible Flight Line Pathway at Wright Brothers National Memorial, which will follow the track of the first four powered flights. And there is so much more to come! So much more.

It is thanks to your generosity that we can support our Outer Banks national parks. These are projects that will leave a legacy to benefit park visitors and enhance the visitor experience. Thank you!

Bryan Burhans

Bryan Burhans, Director, Outer Banks Forever

2025 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

PATHWAY RIBBON CUTTING AND DONOR CELEBRATION


Photo: REAL Watersports

On June 12, 2025, we hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony with our National Park Service partners, donors, and community members to celebrate the completion of our largest project to date: an accessible, 1.25-mile, multiuse pathway connecting Lighthouse Road, Old Lighthouse Beach, and the grounds of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse! Park visitors on foot or bike can now safely follow the path the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse took when it was moved to safety in 1999, as well as learn about the Seashore's unique ecology and status as a premier watersports destination on the East Coast. In October 2025, we held a reception to recognize the donors who helped launch this $4 million project. The next phase of this project includes the installation of an accessible restroom and rinse station facility along the pathway to further enhance beach and park visitor comfort.

ADOPT A PONY AND ADOPT A SEA TURTLE NEST PROGRAMS

Our Adopt A Pony and Adopt A Sea Turtle Nest programs had another successful year in 2025. These programs raised more than $17,000 for the Ocracoke Island Banker pony herd and $27,000 for Cape Hatteras National Seashore, respectively. Although biologists at the Seashore were unable to provide final tallies from the adopted sea turtle nests due to the government shutdown and adverse weather conditions, they recorded 218 sea turtle nests and 18,655 hatchlings prior to October 1.


Photo: Cape Hatteras National Seashore


Photo: Cape Hatteras National Seashore

BODIE ISLAND DKQ FUNDING AND PROJECT KICKOFF

Last winter, we began planning for the restoration of the Bodie Island Double Keepers' Quarters, which was damaged by an electrical fire in January 2025. We applied for and were awarded a Tourism Impact Grant of $150,000 from the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau for this project and were also fortunate to receive an additional $325,000 from the National Park Foundation. The restoration is currently in progress and is anticipated to be completed in fall 2026.

WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO EACH OF YOU WHO GAVE IN 2025 to support our work to protect and enhance our Outer Banks national parks! Last year marked our sixth year supporting these extraordinary places. People like you make it possible for us to preserve our parks now and for future generations.

$10,000+

National Park Foundation

National Society of Daughters of the American Colonists

$1,000 – $9,999

Anderegg Family Foundation

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Malcolm & Patty Brown

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2025 OBXF DONORS

In 2025, 504 people around the world supported our mission to protect and enhance our Outer Banks national parks. This map represents our incredible donor community!

DONORS

- 1-10
- 11-50
- 51-100
- 101-200
- JOIN US NEXT YEAR!

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2024 OBX NPS VISITORS/ECONOMIC IMPACT*

Park visitors spent millions of dollars in the towns and villages surrounding our three national parks in 2024. These expenditures supported thousands of jobs and added millions in labor income, value, and economic output. We are proud of the value our parks bring to our Outer Banks community.

In 2024, 2.8 million park visitors spent an estimated $650 million in surrounding communities while visiting Cape Hatteras National Seashore. These expenditures supported a total of 7,010 jobs and $493 million in value added in local economies.

In 2024, 275,000 park visitors spent an estimated $19.3 million in our surrounding communities while visiting Fort Raleigh National Historic Site. These expenditures supported a total of 208 jobs and $14 million in value added in local economies.

In 2024, 407,000 park visitors spent an estimated $28.6 million in surrounding communities while visiting Wright Brothers National Memorial. These expenditures supported a total of 311 jobs and $20.9 million in value added in local economies.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Total Visitors:
3,482,000
Total Spending:
$697,900,000
Total Jobs Supported:
7,529
Total value added:
$527,900,000

*(*2024 data released in 2025. 2025 data available next year!)*

PARKS FOREVER FUND UPDATE

Our Parks Forever Fund supports preservation, conservation, and education initiatives in our three Outer Banks national parks. In 2025, generous supporters like you helped us raise $30,426 for this fund! In 2026 and beyond, our Parks Forever Fund will aid in creating a fully accessible Flight Line Pathway at Wright Brothers National Memorial to ensure that park visitors can trace Orville and Wilbur's flight track during their quest for sustained, powered flight.

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This list reflects donations received between January 1 and December 31, 2025. If you do not see your name listed, please let us know by calling 252-423-4545.



WRIGHT FLIGHT ACADEMY – VIDEO SERIES AND PLANE COMPLETION

The Wright Flight Academy (First Flight High School Aviation) students continued building their very own "flying machine" on the grounds of Wright Brothers National Memorial in 2025. The students finished their build by December 17 and were recognized at the park's annual First Flight Anniversary Celebration. We are grateful for the donor support that kept the Academy operational during the government shutdown and allowed us to sponsor a video series following the students on their two-year-long journey to build their airplane!

Photo: Wright Brothers National Memorial, Dare County Schools

OUTER BANKS FOREVER

CAPE HATTERAS NATIONAL SEASHORE
FORT RALEIGH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
WRIGHT BROTHERS NATIONAL MEMORIAL

OUR MISSION:

Outer Banks Forever is the official nonprofit partner of the three national parks of the Outer Banks (Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, and Wright Brothers National Memorial), helping to protect and enhance these special places through public engagement, programming, and project support.

OUR VISION:

Our Outer Banks national parks protect much of what you love most about being here. With your support, Outer Banks Forever will ensure that future generations can continue to learn, grow, and create memories here in the Outer Banks through history, conservation, and the celebration of innovation. Together, we will support the Outer Banks national parks by engaging current and future visitors through philanthropy, education, volunteerism, and partnerships.

P.O. BOX 1635, KILL DEVIL HILLS, NC 27948
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(252) 423-4545

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