

Burgos, Alexander N

From: Jennifer Hufham <jenifr75@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 10, 2023 8:17 PM
To: Burgos, Alexander N; rrc.comments
Cc: Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project
Subject: [External] Proposed Rule 15A NCAC 07H. 0308 (c) (5) - Beach Mats

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Hello, this is to provide comments in reference to the state of North Carolina proposing to change a rule about the restrictions/guidelines for how/where/when beach mats are allowed on all beaches across NC.

I am the Endangered Species Sea Turtle Permit Holder for Kure Beach, and the Vice President of the Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project.

Many visitors and residents alike are aware how large plastic mats covering portions of the beach can be harmful to many wildlife species on our beaches.

For those who are proposing that this provides access to limited mobility and handicap people, I would like to point out that a small mat at the top of the beach does not really provide true/full access to the beach... we always recommend the wheelchairs provided by our towns (wheelchair access pages are hyperlinked here - [Carolina Beach](#) and [Kure Beach](#)) because these chairs DO allow true/full access to our beaches (all the way down to the water). We have seen our federally protected nesting turtles go right up beside and in front of beach accesses to nest, and all areas of the beach are important habitat for protected shore birds and their well camouflaged babies too. Crabs are also a critical part of the beach ecology and mats will disturb and minimize habitat for them and all animals on the beach. This could potentially cause a ripple effect that over time could destabilize the health of our beaches, leading to terrible long term impacts.

*Lets encourage **not** paving over our beautiful North Carolina Beaches with more plastic, and utilize those wonderful chairs that will allow people to really experience the entire beach!*

Thank you for your time and consideration of our wildlife and the future of our beaches.

*Jennifer Hufham
Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project*

Burgos, Alexander N

From: monica probst <probst123@twc.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2023 7:41 PM
To: rrc.comments
Cc: Burgos, Alexander N
Subject: [External] proposed rule 15A NCAC 07h. 0308(c)(5)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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I have been involved with the Emerald Isle Sea turtle program since 2016 and am now currently a Nest Responder (NRT) with specialized training in regards to Sea Turtles and their nesting. We focus on ensuring the safety of the Sea Turtle nests and the Sea Turtles themselves when they lay and when the nests hatch. We spend countless hours monitoring these nests under the guidance of the North Carolina Wildlife resources commission. There have already been numerous issues with the homeowners who have beachfront properties. They continue to encroach onto the Dunes and beach itself. They have put up fencing which is or should be illegal, and this new proposed rule which would allow these homeowners to lay mats or walkways thru the dunes from their property will certainly cause issues with nesting and hatching Sea Turtles. I have no issues with those who are genuinely handicapped and need these access's from their properties to the beach strand; however if all owners are allowed to do this it will cause major issues. The resources used to enforce the already existing ordinances are spread thin, and moving forward with this new rule as its presented will be hard if not impossible to enforce and the wildlife will suffer. Emerald Isle is a Sea Turtle sanctuary or at least it touts itself to be so. To allow this new order to move forward would be a great disservice not only to the Turtles, but to the tourists who come here partly because of the natural beauty and wildlife that abounds in the area, and to the local community that lives here full time and does its best to keep this wonderful place as pristine and natural as possible. We live in an area that the Sea Turtles have been using as nesting sites for many, many years and to allow this to go forward would be shameful. We say we are a Sea Turtle sanctuary, lets act like we truly mean that, We can and should do better.

v/r

Monica Probst

Burgos, Alexander N

From: Patty Foley <foleyproperties710@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2023 1:36 PM
To: rrc.comments
Cc: Burgos, Alexander N
Subject: [External] Proposed Rule 15A NCAC 07H.0308 (c)

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Hello,

I am opposed to the proposed rule 15A NCAC 07H.0308. Beach mats at only the handicap walkways make more sense. Allowing any homeowner to install structural or beach mats will claim more nesting area on our beaches. Sea turtles already have obstacles that include deep holes, trash, beach equipment and beach lighting. Being a sea turtle sanctuary, we should do all we can to protect the quality of our beaches. Please say NO to mat walkways.

Patricia Foley

Burgos, Alexander N

From: Nancy Busovne <pn.busovne@att.net>
Sent: Monday, August 7, 2023 10:35 AM
To: rrc.comments
Cc: Burgos, Alexander N
Subject: [External] Comment on proposed rule 15A NCAC 07H. 0308 (c) (5)

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Good morning, I am submitting a comment opposing the above referenced rule for additional plastic beach mats on our beaches.

My name is Nancy Busovne and I hold Endangered Species Permit #23ST22 for Sea Turtle Management in Carolina Beach and am President of the Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project, a nonprofit that encompasses Sea Turtle activity in Carolina and Kure Beach NC.

In Spring of 2022, our Project was contacted by a local nonprofit about the placement of plastic handicap accessible mats in front of the Boardwalk area in Carolina Beach. I readily agreed to support this effort, as I believe in the overall mission of this nonprofit to make our marine environment accessible to all. The success of the disabled surfing events and beach wheelchairs that this organization has funded are a testament to the good work that this nonprofit does in this regard.

The location of this mat worked well with our Sea Turtle Project, as historically, we have had very little nesting activity in this area due to lighting issues, heavy human traffic, and noise. (2 nests in the last 10 years have been recorded in this spot) . I also thought this location was a great choice for those who needed to use it; the location is central to a lot of activity in Carolina Beach with plenty of parking and other things to see and do. I was excited to be able to work with the nonprofit to make this happen for our beach.

Since then, however, communications from the group have stopped and unauthorized matting has been popping up at other locations, such as Alabama Avenue, which IS a very heavy nesting ground with more than two dozen reported nests in the past 10 years. In addition to the matting's planned T shape which can inhibit at least 18 horizontal feet of quality nesting area, this large footage of plastic on the beach also inhibits nesting and feeding birds, ghost crabs, and other important marine life.

I am confused as to why plastic continues to pop up without the proper permits, this should not be allowed, and I don't feel that more plastic is necessary when we already have a proper area of matting that all can enjoy.

I plan to work closely with the State on this issue and, should these these mats be approved, please know that I am obligated to report any and all interference that excess plastic on the beach may cause to the threatened and endangered species that are trying so hard to survive here. I also feel that all unauthorized matting that was placed without CAMA approval should be removed as soon as possible as we still have a month to go in our nesting season. I also do not agree with additional plastic being placed on our beaches...here and across the state.

I greatly respect the mission of our local nonprofit , and hope they can continue all of the wonderful things they are doing for the disabled without the need to spread plastic all over turtle nesting grounds. More beach wheelchairs and volunteers who can help these folks and their families come to mind as one of the many solutions to allowing access for all without destroying habitat.

I really feel that beaches across NC can be made accessible in one or two preapproved spots without the wanton spread of plastic on our beaches.

Thank you for allowing me to comment, and please feel free to reach out to me if you have any further questions.

Regards,
Nancy Busovne
910-538-2918

Burgos, Alexander N

From: Dale Baquer <dale.baquer@emeraldiseaturtlepatrol.com>
Sent: Friday, August 4, 2023 9:56 AM
To: rrc.comments
Cc: Burgos, Alexander N; Rep. Maria Cervania; Rep. Pat McElraft; Celeste.Cairns@ncleg.gov
Subject: [External] Proposed Rule15ANCAC 07H.0308(c)(5) Beach Matts

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To whom it may concern,

I am the Sea Turtle Program Coordinator and Endangered Species Permit holder (NCWRC ES Permit 23ST13) for The Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Patrol. It is with great concern that I urge you to halt Structural accessways and beach matts in Emerald Isle, and all beaches in North Carolina. Emerald Isle is known as a Sea Turtle Sanctuary, yet our shoreline seems to be shrinking yearly.

In 2021 Beach Renourishment was completed on Emerald Isle to build up the integrity of the primary dunes to protect our beach against encroachment of the ocean during storms and hurricanes. While this is great for the home owners, our dunes seem to be lower on the beach now taking up more nesting area. Home owners are now putting up more fencing to claim the dunes as their own, leaving less area for our precious sea turtles to nest.

I'm not opposed to Beach Mats at handicap walkways, but to allow everyone to put them out at will is of grave concern to me, and in my opinion a big mistake. Beach Mat walkways will claim more nesting area on our beach, and to all North Carolina beaches.

Sea turtles already have obstacles that include unfriendly beach lighting, deep holes, trash, and tents left on the beach overnight.

Sea turtles are vital to the health of our Ocean, and also provide nourishment for sea grass that stabilize the dunes.

Please say NO to Beach Mat walkways.

v/r

Dale Baquer

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Dale Baquer
Program Coordinator and President
Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Patrol
"that they may have LIFE"

Burgos, Alexander N

From: Michele Lamping <abseaturtle@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 7, 2023 1:36 PM
To: rrc.comments; Burgos, Alexander N
Subject: [External] concerns over beach mats

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Hello there,

I'm writing to you representing the Atlantic Beach Sea Turtle Project, where I serve as volunteer coordinator and also serve as president of our non profit organization. While I also work as a full time state employee who serves on DEAI committees for our state, I have some concerns over the proposed rule of beach mats. While excited over the prospect of accessibility for all to our beach strand, this ruling could have a huge negative impact on our native species who have to use the beaches for their survival.

We have spent countless hours over the last 15 years of our organization making sure our beaches are clear from human interference of tents, chairs, holes etc...that block sea turtles from being able to nest on the beach. Our beach is not even 5 miles long and this year alone we had 25 crawls that resulted in 18 nests. We already have huge areas that are a loss of nesting habitats because of the high volume of lights and structures. The beach mats will be more of a loss of nesting habitat if they can not be removed every single night. From my understanding, this proposed ruling doesn't limit how many and who can install the beach mats which could easily become out of control and have dire consequences to our populations.

Thank you,
Michele Lamping