

STUDY FOR A NATIONAL SEASHORE PARK  
COVERING IN A GENERAL WAY THE REGION  
FROM VIRGINIA BEACH TO HATTERAS INLET

AND

THE DISMAL SWAMP

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AND SPECIFICALLY REPORTING ON THE AREA

FROM

KITTY HAWK TO OREGON INLET.

SEASHORE STUDY  
AUTHORIZED  
BY

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REPORT ON AREA FROM VIRGINIA  
BEACH TO CAPE HATTERAS.

GENERAL.

The entire coastline from Virginia Beach to and beyond Morehead City, North Carolina, including Currituck, Albemarle and the broad Pamlico Sounds suggests a region in which a seashore park might be developed. While this area is very large and embodies long stretches of beaches, ocean and sound shores, there is no monotonous duplication of topography, landscape, or seascape, and it would be difficult to choose any one particular section. The Dismal Swamp, comprising a considerable area surrounding Lake Drummond and the swampland to the southeast might be added to this area. The writer did not have time to visit Lake Drummond in the central portion of this swamp, but penetrated the swamp by several minor roads and became generally acquainted with the topography and vegetation.

This great ocean region has three outstanding features:

1. The broad expanse of water beginning with Currituck Sound adjoining which is Albemarle, and then the great Pamlico Sound which is twenty-five miles wide and nearly one hundred miles long.

2. The long narrow stretch of land varying from two to five miles in width, extending the entire distance of approximately two hundred miles with but three intercepting inlets, those at Oregon, Hatteras, and Ocracoke.

3. The great swamps and marshes characteristic of the sound shores and particularly the great Dismal Swamp with its Lake Drummond and drainage areas north to Norfolk and southeast to Currituck Sound.

Other features offering recreational and educational facilities are minor bays and coves on the sounds, several fresh water lakes, areas wooded with a great variety of vegetation, sand dunes, historical interest, particularly that of Roanoke Island and Kitty Hawk, minor islands and wildlife, both land and water.

The sounds offer unlimited possibilities for all types of boating and fishing. Sailing would no doubt be the major sport on these great water expanses. However, there are innumerable minor coves and bays affording protection for the smaller crafts. The sounds, particularly Pamlico, might be criticized as being too broad for seashore parks, that is, that the water element far outweighs that of the

land. This, however, will depend on the developed meaning of a seashore park.

The great long spit is a very unusual phenomenon. It stretches the two hundred miles in a straight line with a right-angle turn at Cape Hatteras. On its ocean side is a sandy beach, varying in slope, but in general is gently sloping. It is possible to drive a car the entire distance from Virginia Beach to Hatteras Inlet with but one break at Oregon Island where a ferry is now in operation. The sound beach of the spit is surprisingly sandy with vegetation, woods or marshland encroaching to its very edge. The protection on the sound side offers ideal conditions for those not interested in more vigorous surf bathing.

There are two possible criticisms to this narrow strip - first, its isolation from the mainland, and second, its consequent difficult access. These criticisms are accentuated as one approaches the Hatteras area. While it is true one has a feeling of isolation, almost desolation, on the narrow stretches, water seems to be everywhere, and it is not difficult to imagine the waves rolling over to the sound, in the writer's opinion, there is a place in our national park system for a type of topography capable of producing such an experience. The answer to the second probable criticism would be that access though difficult,

is feasible. Some of the area should not be penetrated by a highway but remain in a primitive state.

The extensive marshes and swampland offer a type of scenery not being considered for preservation today, but which might very well be so considered. Certainly great stretches of marshes with their ever-changing color offer a source of inspiration. The great swamps of the northern section, particularly the Dismal Swamp, contain untold elements of interest in vegetation and animal life. Nowhere in this country is there such an enormous supply of cypress. The problem of mosquito control in the swampland is very serious, and to determine a possible solution would entail a vast amount of study. There are also several towns separating this swamp area from the main coastal region. But the presence of these problems do<sup>o</sup>not preclude the area from national park status, and it is heartily recommended that this great swamp be further investigated in relation to the great northeastern seacoast of North Carolina, or else studied as a separate project.

The writer is aware that to recommend such a vast region for further investigation presents an enormous task. But the area certainly represents a unit; is typical of our middle Atlantic states, and there is not included within its suggested boundaries any feature out of harmony with the

development of a great seashore park. It is most difficult to isolate any one area and earmark it as the best, and at the same time typical of all the region.

Should this great region not be considered feasible, there is one portion which might be segregated, that surrounding historic Roanoke Island, and Kill Devil Hill, as shown on the attached map. This area is more specifically the subject of this report.

AREA FROM KITTY HAWK TO  
OREGON INLET.

Presented according to Outline for  
Reports on  
Proposed National Beach Parks.

The interest in the area surrounding Kitty Hawk and Roanoke Island lies not only in the early history attached to Roanoke Island and the later significance of Kitty Hawk, but also in its fascinating topographic features, such as sand dunes, marshes, vegetation, and broad sound views. The native inhabitants are fishermen and the stamp of the sea is everywhere present. The town of Duck, north of the Wright Memorial Bridge, still carries a most primitive air. Its people have a distinct Cockney accent.

I. Location:

This area surrounds the Wright Memorial at Kill Devil Hill and includes the towns of Nags Head and Manteo, and also Bodie Island to Oregon Inlet.

II. Present means of access:

At present there is but one highway entrance to this area and this is not a through route. State Highway #344 branches from the Norfolk-Elizabeth City road at Sligo and crosses Currituck Sound by the Wright Memorial Bridge. This is now a toll bridge, but activity is being instigated whereby the State is to gain control and the toll will be taken off. From Kitty Hawk to a point opposite Manteo runs a straight asphalt and sand highway, but from Nags Head to Oregon Inlet one must travel either on the beach, at low tide, or follow a very sandy road on the higher portion of the island. A back road through the wooded area on the sound side from the Memorial to Duck is passable. Its location is plotted on enlarged map section.

III. Extent of area:

The area extends three or four miles north of the present Wright Memorial Bridge, excluding the village of Duck, comprising both sea and sound shore. Continuing



south from the Memorial Bridge and including both sea and sound shore, there should be incorporated the two Collington Islands, Kill Devil Hill, the many sand dunes in the immediate vicinity, also the northern portion of Roanoke Island in which is located Fort Raleigh, and the area known as Bodie Island as far south as Oregon Inlet.

#### IV. Physical Characteristics:

##### A. Scenic values:

The value of this area scenically lies in its long stretches of ocean and sound beach, its broad sound views, some low marshes, a great number of large and interesting sand dunes, the two Collington Islands, and abundant wooded area extending on the sound side from Kill Devil Hill north to the village of Duck.

Bodie Island from Nags Head to Oregon Inlet consists of a huge finger of land ten miles long and approximately one mile wide, with a broad gently sloping beach on the ocean side and a sandy beach on the sound side.

##### B. Character of beaches:

###### OCEAN BEACH.

###### 1. Width.

The width of the beach is approximately 200 feet at low tide. However, there is a strip several hundred feet *wide* of back land which might be clas<sup>s</sup>ed as gravel, but nevertheless<sup>is</sup> of beach character.

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2. Color and texture of sand.

The sand is a light brownish yellow, for the most part fine, but there are patches of fine small gravel.

3. Slope.

The slope is very gentle, dropping 3 or 4 ft. to the hundred.

4. Undertow.

There are no reasons for the presence of an undertow.

5. Protection.

The entire beach consists of one broad expanse and is entirely unprotected insofar as bays or coves are concerned.

SOUND BEACH.

1. Width.

The sound beach varies considerably, but is never broad.

2. Color and texture of sand.

The sand is yellow with slight admixture of clay. It is quite firm.

3. Slope.

The sound beaches have a slope of less than 2%.

4. Undertow.

There is no undertow on the sound side.

5. Protection.

Many coves and bays have full protection from sea.

C. Present development.

Entering the area from the Wright Memorial Bridge is the Kitty Hawk Beach development on the east side of the present highway. This is an ordinary beach development and could be stamped as undesirable and recommended for exclusion or purchase and removed.

Kill Devil Hill with the Wright Memorial and its adjacent development is at present not extensive. There are several beach cottages to the east scarring this area which should be acquired and removed.

South of the Memorial lies the town of Nags Head which no doubt would have to be excluded from the proposed boundary.

There are approximately forty families on Collington Islands. The area on which they reside could be excluded or the people rehabilitated.

Fort Raleigh on the northern portion of Roanoke Island presents a most interesting historical feature, and is now in the process of restoration.

The town of Manteo, with some 200 population would no doubt have to be excluded from the park development.

Between Nags Head and Oregon Inlet, with the exception of one or two hunting clubs, there is no development.

D. Possibility of boating.

This area would be most highly recommended for its

facilities for boating. Many sheltered coves offer protection and the broad sounds supply unlimited sailing waters.

E. Forest values.

The wooded areas are not extensive. Those on the northwestern section of the area and on the Collington Islands are the most important.

F. Wildlife values;

Fishing would be one of the greatest attractions of this region. There is an abundance of seashore bird life. This is the duck hunters' paradise. However, the sport is being hampered by the present restrictions on bag limit and many hunting clubs are becoming discouraged.

G. Possible cost of land.

That portion including four miles of beach directly opposite Kill Devil Hill, and the two Collington Islands, could be purchased for approximately \$30 to \$40 per acre. This entire recommended area embodies nearly ten thousand acres.

(From local data available the ocean property east of the present highway, a strip approximately 1,000 ft. wide, could be acquired for an average price of \$300 per acre.)

The north section of Roanoke Island, about 1500 acres, was quoted at \$25.00 per acre.

Bodie Island to Oregon Inlet was quoted at \$20.00 per acre for its 7,000 acres.

#### H. Special matters of interest.

The mosquito problem is not so serious here as might be expected. With the wind prevailing from the northwest and salt water on all sides, these pests are held in control. However, there are mosquitoes in the wooded area. No doubt the stagnant pools could be drained or filled to minimize their danger.

At present grazing is allowed over this area which in part accounts for its barren appearance. Where cattle have been excluded, ground cover has begun to develop.

The sand dunes reach heights of nearly one hundred feet and are most interesting. Whether they should be hindered in their movements could be a subject for study.

Such features as Fort Raleigh and the early English settlement, the birth of Virginia Dare, and ~~of~~ other early incidents of this region, are of national interest. So also are the activities of the Wright Brothers in the field of early aviation at Kitty Hawk.

VERY PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENT  
SUGGESTIONS

This is not the stage to make  
definite commitment.

I. New road or boat approaches desirable.

The present approach road is adequate.

There are numerous boat approaches, but docks  
would have to be constructed.

II. Types of accommodation desirable.

Tourist cabins would be developed in the wooded  
areas, particularly such a cabin colony is suggested  
on the larger Collington Island. On the great beach  
stretches camping could be considered.

III. Rough costs for developing utilities -  
water, sewage, electricity and  
telephone.

Electricity and telephone service now exists  
in the area. The water system would have to be aug-  
mented. Sewage disposal could be handled by septic  
tanks as the

sub-strata is very porous. Both of these utilities could be developed at ordinary costs.

IV. General outline of circulation needed - roads, trails and paths.

The present sand asphalt highway running in a straight line from Currituck to Nags Head is no doubt out of keeping with park development. A more ideal road would be located in the back country following in general the present old road location. However, it may prove unfeasible to make such a re-location.

The sand road through Bodie Island would have to be improved. The island suggests beach camping but not a cabin development. Its use should be confined to such activities as swimming, fishing and boating. No building should be constructed to destroy the present feeling of a vast wild and lonely flat area. The atmosphere is that of a prairie, if such a term were applicable to a seascape.