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April 4, 2008

Mr. Spence Hackney
106 Island Bridge Way
Wilmington, North Carolina 28401

Dear Mr. Hackney:

Thank you for contacting me regarding off-road vehicle use on Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CHNS). I appreciate hearing from you and would like to take this opportunity to respond.

On July 17, 2007, a ruling by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina brought into question the use of off-road vehicles by visitors and residents on CHNS, a part of the National Park Service (NPS). The use of off-road vehicles on CHNS has been an important economic and recreational mainstay for many generations of North Carolinians. I believe that it is important to preserve this tradition, and ensure North Carolinians' will not be adversely affected by this ruling.

As you may be aware, in 1972, President Richard Nixon issued an Executive Order that required all federal parks, refuges and public lands that allow off-road vehicles access to develop and implement a detailed management plan to regulate and assess the environmental impacts. CHNS never developed a management plan, and as a result, Cape Hatteras has been out of compliance for over three decades.

In December 2005, the NPS developed a three-phase plan to begin the negotiating process and create regulations that would allow CHNS to meet compliance standards for off-road vehicle use. Unfortunately, following the July 17, 2007, ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, an injunction was filed to prevent off-road vehicle use until a management plan is established and approved. The process of developing off-road vehicle regulations is currently ongoing and will take time. I do believe, however, that through a fair and open negotiation process, those who filed the injunction—beach users and members of the local community—will be able to fairly express their concerns and reach a compromise that will ensure the protection of the natural habitat at CHNS, as well as the important economic and recreational aspects of enabling off-road vehicles access to the beaches.

You should also know that on August 3, 2007, I joined Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) and Representative Walter Jones (R-NC) in writing a letter to the Director of the National Park Service expressing our deep concern about the negative ramifications a ruling preventing or

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severely restricting off-road vehicle use at CHNS would have on the local community and economy of Eastern North Carolina.

Again, thank you for contacting me with your concerns. Should you have additional questions or comments, please feel free to contact me or visit my website at http://dole.senate.gov.

With my warmest best wishes,

