



# Off-Road Vehicle Management Program Update



Fire Island National Seashore (Seashore) continues to work through the process of updating the Seashore's Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management Program, including updates to the Seashore's ORV driving regulation (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] § 7.20(a)). The National Park Service began the current effort in 2020, forming an interdisciplinary project team comprised of Seashore staff including the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, the Park Planner, and staff responsible for permit administration, natural and cultural resources management, and law enforcement. This team also includes National Park Service staff from outside of the park, including a project manager and experts in policy, law, and science, as well as a contractor who specializes in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

In Fall 2020, the Seashore hosted public meetings and requested public comment on the permit process, categories, caps and restrictions. The team considered the comments collected in 2020 while developing a Preliminary Proposed Action to update the ORV Management Program, which was introduced to the public through a newsletter in March

2022. Sharing the Preliminary Proposed Action was an early step in the Seashore's planning process, meant to encourage feedback from all interested parties. This feedback is critical to support the Seashore's development of a full range of alternative actions to update the ORV Management Program as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

With the release of the March 2022 newsletter during this "pre-NEPA" period, the Seashore started another public comment period. The Seashore held public meetings on May 5 and May 7, 2022, followed by a public information session on November 5, 2022. Most of the feedback received during this comment period and meetings was from residents, contractors and service providers who live or work on Fire Island. Feedback included support for ideas that allowed equitable access for residents and encouraged younger residents to move to the island to maintain thriving communities. Commentors also voiced concerns about the impacts of increased driving in communities as well as about town and village capacity to administer and regulate driving within communities.

Since November, the Seashore has met

with municipal partners and community representatives to discuss community impacts of the Preliminary Proposed Action and opportunities to collaborate and improve the ORV Management Program. The Seashore has also drafted a range of alternative approaches to the ORV Management Program, informed by the best available science and the feedback we've received as part of this process.

The Seashore looks forward to beginning the NEPA process with scoping scheduled in Fall 2023. NEPA Scoping will include more public meetings and another public comment period. The National Park Service will work with municipal and community leaders to find the best possible venue and approach to ensure maximum participation in this planning effort.





## Background

The Seashore encompasses 19,580 acres of upland, tidal, and submerged lands along a 26-mile stretch of the 32-mile barrier island. It contains nearly 1,380 acres of federally designated wilderness, an extensive dune system, centuries-old maritime forests, solitary beaches and the Fire Island Lighthouse.

Interspersed among the federal lands are 17 residential communities that predate the Seashore's authorization. Communities on Fire Island are accessible mainly by passenger ferry or private boat. During the summer season, the population of Fire Island is approximately 30,000, with a total of two to three million visitors each year. In 2019, recreational visitation to sites and facilities owned or managed by the Seashore topped 391,000. The Seashore's primary Fire Island visitor facilities are the Fire Island Lighthouse, Sailors Haven, Talisman/Barrett Beach, Watch Hill and the Wilderness Visitor Center.

No hard-surfaced roads connect the communities, either to each other or to the mainland of Long Island. Without paved roads and with limited traffic, the communities have retained much of their original character. Vehicle use is restricted within the boundary of the Seashore, with the National Park Service, the Town of Islip, the Town of Brookhaven, the Village of Saltaire, the Village of Ocean Beach, and Point O' Woods each responsible for administering driving programs on their respective lands.

The Seashore's ORV driving regulation (36 CFR § 7.20(a)) allows for limited driving access on park lands for those who meet specific criteria and it is managed through the Seashore's permitting system. The regulation was intended to protect the natural and cultural resources and visitor experience while allowing access to privately owned properties within the Seashore when waterborne transportation is not available.

## Why Update the ORV Management Program?

The Seashore is currently updating the administration of our ORV Management Program, which includes reviewing and potentially updating the existing 1987 ORV regulations, the Seashore's Superintendent's Compendium, and the existing ORV permits, to accomplish multiple goals:

- allow appropriate, equitable vehicular access to supplement water-based transportation, which is the primary means of transport to Fire Island and the communities
- protect Seashore resources and a safe visitor experience
- improve the administration of the ORV permitting program

To address changes in development, access, technology and use on Fire Island, the Seashore needs to consider revisions to the 1987 regulations. We must also consider changes that will occur because of the dynamic nature of the barrier island (e.g.,

the wilderness breach caused by Superstorm Sandy in 2012). The updated program should provide future flexibility as conditions continue to change. Revisions should also update and clarify the process for driving permits applicants and decision makers.



## A Message from the Superintendent

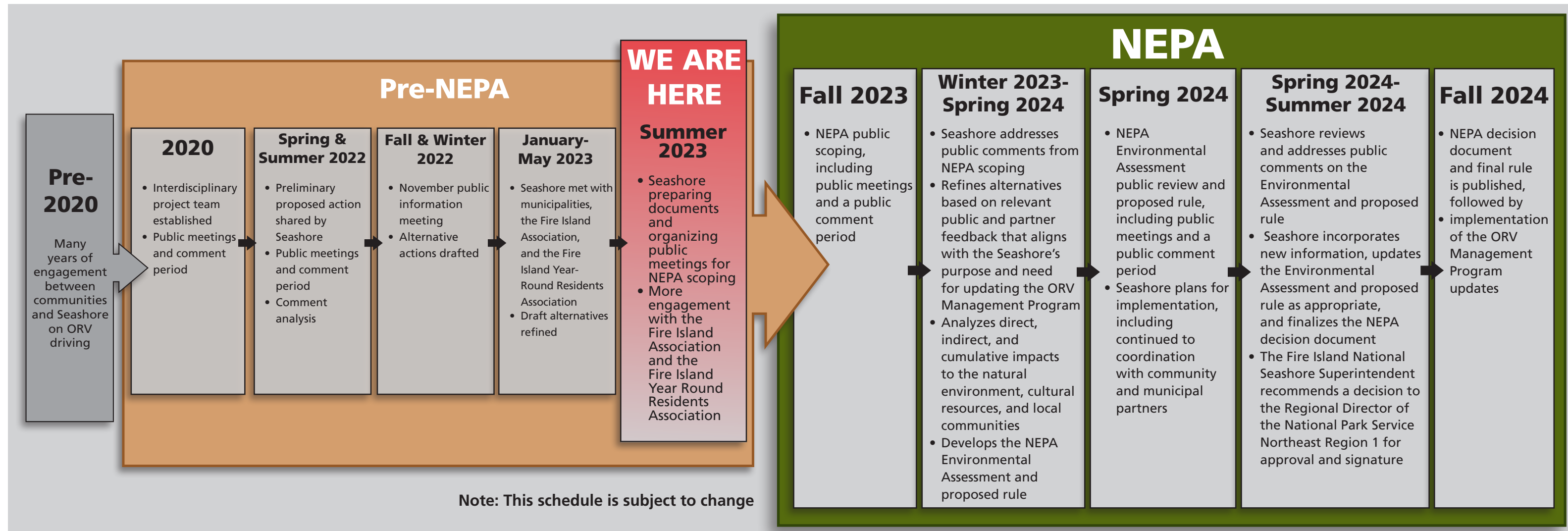
My team and I appreciate that there is a long history of partnership between Fire Islanders and the National Park Service. We want to reassure you that we value collaboration across the overlapping jurisdictions within Fire Island National Seashore. The team and I will continue to meet with community and municipal leaders during this planning process and will provide as much information as possible.

This newsletter is to inform the public and our Fire Island partners on our progress and the path ahead for updating the ORV Management Program as we prepare for NEPA scoping. All the changes being considered, big and small, are carefully vetted by the interdisciplinary Seashore staff. We are focused on practical solutions, based on what we've heard, to improve resource stewardship and program administration. On behalf of the Seashore team, we look forward to working with all of you and thank you for your robust participation in previous listening sessions, public meetings, public comment periods and all other forms of engagement on this important and challenging issue.

Alexcy Romero, Superintendent

## How to Stay Engaged

- Email [FIIS\\_Driving@nps.gov](mailto:FIIS_Driving@nps.gov) to join our mailing list.
- Visit the project website to read FAQs and other resources: [go.nps.gov/FIISdriving](https://go.nps.gov/FIISdriving)



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



**Fire Island National Seashore**  
120 Laurel Street  
Patchogue, New York 11772