

## Executive Summary

This report describes the results of three studies for Cape Lookout National Seashore: two studies with systematic random samples of visitors to the park, and one study with a random sample of residents of Carteret County, North Carolina where the park is located. The Fall visitor study was conducted from October 25–November 23, 2013. The Summer visitor study was conducted from June 20–28, 2014. The Carteret County resident study was conducted in February and March 2014.

Responses were received from 573 of the 1,033 visitors interviewed during the Fall visitor survey, yielding a response rate of 55.5%. Responses were received from 459 of the 1,043 visitors interviewed during the Summer visitor survey, yielding a response rate of 44.0%. Responses were received from 794 of the 2,893 Carteret County residents with valid addresses in the Resident survey, yielding a response rate of 27.4%.

<b>Group size and type</b>	Most Summer visitors (78%), Fall visitors (64%), and Residents (79%) were in groups of 2 to 6 people. Fall visitors tended to be in larger groups than Summer visitors or Residents. The majority of Summer visitors were with a family group (67%), whereas the majority of Fall visitors were with friends (57%). Resident groups were more evenly split between family (37%), friends (30%), and friends and family (25%).
<b>State or country of residence</b>	Most Summer visitors (65%) and Fall visitors (89%) were from North Carolina. Only one respondent to the Summer visitor survey was from outside the U.S. (Chile), and no respondents to the Fall visitor survey were from outside the U.S. All Resident survey respondents were from Carteret County, North Carolina.
<b>Frequency of visits</b>	A majority of Summer visitors (53%) were making their first visit to the park in the past two years. Almost a third of Fall visitors (32%) had made two trips to the park in the past two years. About one-quarter of Residents (26%) had not visited the park in the past two years, and 11% had never visited the park.
<b>Age, ethnicity, race, and income level</b>	The average age of Summer visitor respondents was 50 years, the average age of Fall visitor respondents was 55 years, and the average age of Resident respondents was 61 years. Almost all (99%) of respondents for each survey were non-Hispanic, and over 97% for each survey were White. Larger percentages of Summer visitor and Fall visitor respondents were in higher income categories than Resident respondents.
<b>Knowledge about park</b>	Fall visitors express more familiarity than Summer visitors or Residents with the park in general, the park's purpose and mission, the park's recreation activities, the park's rules and regulations, and the park's geographic layout. Summer visitors were less aware that the park was a unit of the National Park System and home to endangered species than Fall visitors or Residents.
<b>Transportation to park</b>	Most Summer visitors (64%) and Residents (61%) used a passenger ferry to reach the islands of the park. Most Fall visitors (96%) used a vehicle ferry.

## Executive Summary (continued)

<b>Length of stay at park</b>	Most Summer visitors (87%) and Residents (91%) were on day trips to the park. Most Fall visitors (98%) were on overnight trips to the park. Almost two-thirds (63%) of Summer visitors on day trips spent 4 or less hours at the park. The average length of stay for Fall visitors on overnight trips was 5 days.
<b>Activities at park</b>	The most common activities for Summer visitors were taking photographs (77%) and shell collecting (69%). Similarly, the most common activities for Residents were taking photographs (57%) and shell collecting (51%). The most common activities for Fall visitors were fishing (97%) and beach driving (87%).
<b>Quality of park's facilities and services</b>	The majority of respondents to each of the three surveys found the quality of the following park facilities and services to be "good" or "very good": overall state of facility maintenance, restrooms, information signage, regulatory signage, directional signage, accessibility of historic structures, maintenance of historic structures, clean and trash-free areas, distribution of facilities, and access to the park in general.
<b>Interest in learning about park</b>	Learning more about the Cape Lookout Lighthouse was the resource topic with the most interest for Summer visitors (71%), Fall visitors (55%), and Residents (68%). The topic with the most interest for educational programs was collaborations between the park and local communities to address future challenges for Fall visitors (70%) and Residents (69%), and ways the park copes with the effects of rising sea levels for Summer visitors (72%).
<b>Importance placed on resource protection</b>	A majority of respondents to each of the three surveys found protection of the following resources to be "very" or "extremely" important: dunes vegetation, natural viewscape without development, nesting sea turtles and their eggs, nesting shorebirds and their habitats, the Cape Lookout Lighthouse, other historic structures, undeveloped natural condition, and wild horses.
<b>Support for actions protecting nesting species</b>	A majority of Summer visitors and Residents supported or strongly supported creation of pedestrian only areas on the beach; a majority of Fall visitors opposed or strongly opposed such action. A similar difference between each survey existed for full access closures for nesting birds, including prohibiting pedestrians. There was more support for prohibiting camping and beach fires to protect turtle nests among Fall visitors (48%) but still not a majority; majorities of both Summer visitors and Residents expressed support. Majorities of respondents to all three surveys expressed support for requiring pets to be leashed and temporary closures of beaches and/or rerouting Off Road Vehicles for bird and turtle nesting.

## Executive Summary (continued)

### Management of park resources

Most Fall visitors (75%) agreed or strongly agreed that no additional regulations are needed at the park; only 38% of Summer visitors and 39% of Residents responded similarly. A majority of respondents to all three surveys agreed or strongly agreed that park managers were doing a good job. The highest percentage of respondents for each survey were ambivalent (neither agreeing or disagreeing) about the following statements: park managers are too influenced by special interest groups, park managers change policies without good reasons, park managers have the same ideas about management as the respondent does, park managers listen to ordinary people's opinions, and park managers provide all relevant information about decisions to the public.

### Acceptance of management decisions

A majority of respondents to each of the three surveys found the following to be very or extremely important to their acceptance of a management decision: actions help support the local community, actions will protect natural resources at the park, the decision is based on environmental consequences, and the decision maintains access for recreation. A majority of respondents to each of the three surveys found "the decision is based on economic consequences" to be less (only moderately or very) important. A majority of Summer visitors found the following to be very or extremely important to acceptance while a majority of Fall visitors or Residents found them to be less (moderately or very) important: the respondent trusts in the decision of the park manager, the respondent understands the objective of a proposed action, and science plays a role in management decisions. A majority of Summer visitors and Residents found "the decision protects natural resources over human use" to be very or extremely important, while the majority of Fall visitors found the statement to be only moderately or very important.

### Positions on climate change

A majority of respondents to each of the three surveys agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following statements about climate change:

- Future generations will benefit if we address the effects of climate change
- I am personally concerned about the effects of climate change
- I stay well-informed about the effects of climate change
- In the face of sea level rise, I believe that Cape Lookout National Seashore should protect cultural resources in the park
- It is important to consider the economic costs and benefits to local communities when addressing the effects of climate change
- We can improve our quality of life if we address the effects of climate change.

### Ecosystem values of the park

When asked to allocate 100 preference points among 13 ecosystem values for the park, for Summer visitors and Residents the highest average point total was for aesthetic value. The highest average for Fall visitors was for recreation value.