

Study findings assist park management planning

By Mary Vavra

The planning committee for Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River incorporated information and recommendations resulting from the 1998 Virginia Tech social science study into the May 2000 final Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. This fundamental planning tool defines the purposes of resource protection and outlines preferred experiences for living within and visiting the river corridor. The Great Egg Harbor River is managed by the National Park Service in cooperation with the State of New Jersey, four counties, and 12 municipalities.

The social science study compiled information about river users, which gave the National Park Service a profile of park visitors and an understanding that most live within 20 miles of the river corridor. The Great Egg Harbor River is clearly a close-to-home recreational resource. Recognizing that the river was already overcrowded in 1998 and is close to major urban centers, the National Park Service recommended limiting additional public access. Moreover, information gathered from the surveys showed support for increased law enforcement on both the tidal and nontidal sections of the river.

The information gathered through the study also supports limiting the size and design of docks which continues to be a major concern in the tidal section of the river. The National Park Service used the information to work with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to develop state regulations regarding dock designs to ensure that structures do not adversely affect the river's outstandingly remarkable resource values.

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There is a concern that development pressures may adversely affect this scenic section of the Great Egg Harbor River.