



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site Wright Brothers National Memorial

Cape Hatteras National Seashore
1401 National Park Drive
Manteo, NC 27954
252-473-2111



IN REPLY REFER TO:
A3821 (CAHA-S)

January 13, 2014

Honorable Walter B. Jones
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building
Room 2333
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Jones:

Thank you for your interest in the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse foundation stones at Cape Hatteras National Seashore (Seashore) and what this site means to the heritage of North Carolina. The National Park Service (NPS) understands that the lighthouse and the circle of stones have come to symbolize the efforts of the hundreds of individuals who kept the lights burning along America's coasts and are important to local residents many of whom are descendants of these lighthouse keepers. I appreciate the opportunity to reply to comments expressed by the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and Genealogical Society in your December 20, 2013 letter.

As background, the present Cape Hatteras Lighthouse was constructed in 1870 when the Atlantic Ocean was over 1,600 feet from the base of the lighthouse. Because of shoreline erosion and deterioration of the lighthouse's wooden foundation, the lighthouse was moved 1,500 feet from its original location in 1999. A stone circle comprised of foundation stones from the lighthouse were engraved with the names of lighthouse keepers who served at the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and erected on the original lighthouse site in 2001.

Now, much like when the lighthouse stood in its original location, the sea, shoreline erosion, and dune migration are threatening the circle of stones. The NPS has routinely uncovered or raised and re-established the stone circle several times each year. At a time when the country, the NPS, and the Seashore are experiencing significant budgetary constraints, the NPS must evaluate the best use of its limited funds. Continuing to maintain the stones, as well as, other facilities and providing necessary services have become problematic due to budgetary reductions.

The Seashore's annual operating budget has been reduced by nearly \$2M since 2010, which has led to a loss of staff. The NPS must reassess our maintenance priorities and focus on required activities such as maintaining bathrooms, campgrounds, roadways, and more. Other fund sources such as the Seashore's Off-Road Vehicle Beach Driving Permit or Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act funds either cannot legally be used to maintain the stones or cannot

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be used to pay the salary of the permanent employees who are responsible for this task. We simply no longer have an ability to hire and pay for the staff that we once had and we do not see that being resolved in the coming years.

We examined multiple alternatives to address the stones issue given the shortage of staff, difficulty in keeping the stones uncovered, inability to continue the current level of maintenance, and the current objectives of the Seashore's long range interpretive plan. These alternatives included continuing how we have historically managed the stones, leaving the stones in place and allowing natural processes to cover and uncover the stones, working with community partners who would be responsible for maintaining the stones, relocating the stones to locations near the lighthouse, or relocating the stones to locations outside the park such as the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum where an extensive lighthouse exhibit exists that includes the original Hatteras Lighthouse lens and light. The NPS reached out to certain local community leaders, community members, and the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society, who paid to have the stones engraved and organized the Hatteras Lighthouse Keepers Reunion, to solicit their input on the alternatives.

Once the NPS is able to hire the appropriate personnel, we have chosen to uncover the stones one last time and leave them in place rather than relocate them. The project is to be completed before the visitor season begins this spring. This alternative will provide opportunities to interpret the coastal processes of shoreline erosion, dune migration, sea level rise, and climate change; however, the stones will periodically be covered and uncovered by these same processes and at times may not be entirely visible to the public. In the event that a volunteer organization expresses an interest in assisting with maintenance of the circle of stones, the NPS is willing and open to discussing what opportunities may exist.

I hope that this information is helpful. If you would like additional information regarding this issue, please feel free to contact me at (252) 475-9032.

Sincerely,



Barclay C. Trimble
Superintendent