

Jekyll Island Citizens Association
P.O. Box 13101
Jekyll Island, GA 31527

September 21, 2015

Mr. Karl Burgess
Manager, Marsh and Shore Management Program
Coastal Resources Division
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
One Conservation Way
Brunswick, GA 31520

Re: Westin Permit to Drive on the Beach on Jekyll Island

Dear Mr. Burgess,

The Jekyll Island Citizens Association objects to any renewal of The Westin Jekyll Island's permit to use motorized vehicles on the beach to provide guest services, and generally to the issuance of similar permits to other businesses or facilities. We do not know if a renewal will be requested, but wish to make our opinion known.

No other businesses are permitted to use motorized vehicles on the beach. That proscription has protected the beach ecology and the enjoyment of the beachgoers. Regular use of motor vehicles has the potential to interfere with turtle nesting and compact the beach in such a way as to affect the ecology. *

In addition, beach goers will be inconvenienced, particularly at times when the beach is reduced by the tides. Furthermore, The Days Inn, The Jekyll Island Club Hotel and the Holiday Inn Resort provide beach services without using motorized delivery vehicle despite being farther from the beach than the Westin. Requiring the Westin and future hotels to do the same is not unreasonable.

Jekyll Island is rightly proud of its beaches and its record of ecological preservation. Granting the Westin the continued right to motorized access so will have far reaching consequences and opens the door to similar permitting for others. The current Westin permit extends as far south as the proposed Jekyll Club Oceanfront Suites, suggesting that use of motorized vehicles is intended there as well.

It is our understanding that the chairs and other items were in fact carried to the beach by the contractor over the walkway during the latter part of the summer. Whether this was done because it was more convenient or for some other reason is not known. Rather than extending the permit for motorized access, we suggest that the crossover ramp in front of the Westin could

be widened from 45 inches to match the width of the ramp at the Great Dunes Park, which is 76 inches. That would make access by hand cart or other device easier and should resolve this issue.

Sincerely,

Franklin Duncan,
President Jekyll Island Citizens Association

*Vehicles driving on the beach can be expected to have a crushing effect upon the burrows and bodies of the infauna of the beach. These include the following important members of the beach ecosystem: talitrid amphipods, ocypodid (ghost) crabs, isopods, haustoriid amphipods, and polychaetes (see the following document from the US Fish & Wildlife Service -- <<http://www.fws.gov/nc-es/ecoconf/Additional%20Documentation/new%20york/CHAPTER2/CHAP2.PDF>>).

CC: C. Jones Hooks, Executive Director
Jekyll Island Authority