



October 21, 2015

Preserving Georgia's Coast. Forever.

Mr. C. Jones Hooks  
Executive Director  
Jekyll Island Authority  
100 James Road  
Jekyll Island, GA 31527

Dear Mr. ~~Hooks,~~ *Jones,*

As you know, One Hundred Miles supports Jekyll Island redevelopment activities that provide balanced economic opportunities and protect wildlife habitat. Allowing driving on the beaches for commercial enterprises tips that delicate balance and threatens to diminish wildlife habitat on the island. One Hundred Miles does not support the issuance of an extension of the Letter of Permission (LOP) to The Westin Jekyll Island to use motorized vehicles on the beach, nor do we support any future permissions to use motorized vehicles on the beach for commercial operations.

Driving on the beach for commercial operations unnecessarily threatens Jekyll Island's wildlife and habitat.

- Beach driving poses significant threats to nesting sea turtles and hatchlings. Studies have shown that vehicle ruts on the beach can serve as obstacles to hatchlings trying to reach the ocean after emerging from their nests. In addition, sand compaction by vehicles can hinder nest construction and hatchling emergence. Vehicle lights and movement on the beach after sundown results in reduced habitat suitability, which can deter females from nesting and disorient and injure hatchlings.
- In addition to the threat to wildlife habitat, automobile traffic on beaches contributes to beach erosion. Automobile weight and tire treads place pressure on loose or unstable sand. This can be especially harmful during a high tide, after a storm event and on narrow beaches where driving is concentrated to a smaller area.

Allowing beach driving for any commercial entity sets a bad precedent for conservation efforts on the island. The research and information collected by Dr. Kimberly Andrews' Applied Wildlife Conservation Lab, Ben Carswell's conservation program, and Mark Dodd's sea turtle conservation program at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are critical to inform decisions that can balance protection of wildlife habitat and commercial development. We understand that Dr. Andrews and Mr. Carswell are communicating with The Westin to identify solutions to the potential habitat impacts their operations may have. The Westin, however, will not be the only business to request permission to drive on the beach. With the addition of new hotels and residential units near the beach, it is reasonable to expect any new operations will request similar activities to provide services for their guests and residents.



Understanding that the LOP issued in March 2015 expired in September, we strongly encourage the JIA and the DNR to deny any additional requests for beach driving. Should the JIA and DNR continue to allow The Westin to use vehicles on the beach, it will be difficult if not impossible to deny or condition additional requests from the other commercial operations, compounding the threat to critical beach habitat on Jekyll Island.

As demonstrated by the Days Inn, the Jekyll Island Club Hotel and the Holiday Inn Resort, beach services can be provided without using motorized delivery vehicle. These operations provide such services despite being farther from the beach than The Westin.

Thank you for considering the concerns outlined in this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need more information. I can be reached at (912) 230-6494.

Sincerely,



Alice M. Keyes  
Associate Director

Copy:

Mr. Karl Burgess, Georgia DNR Coastal Resources Division  
Mr. Jason Lee, Non-Game Conservation Section, GA DNR  
Dr. Kimberly Andrews, UGA Applied Wildlife Conservation Lab  
Mr. Ben Carswell, JIA Conservation Director

