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September 23, 2015

Mr. Karl Burgess
Marsh and Shore Management Program
Coastal Resources Division, DNR
One Conservation Way
Brunswick, GA 31520

Re: Westin permit to drive on Jekyll Island's beach

Dear Mr. Burgess:

Consistent with past comments made to the Jekyll Island Authority, the Center strongly opposes the renewal of The Westin Jekyll Island's permit to use motorized vehicles on the beach for providing guest services. We are assuming that a renewal will be requested, and if it is, I am writing to be sure our opposition is well understood and part of the official record.

In general, unless there are no other options for providing essential services, the Center opposes beach driving. Such use of motorized vehicles degrades the experience of beach recreation and poses a threat to a variety of species dependent on undisturbed beach ecology.

No other businesses are currently permitted to use motorized vehicles on Jekyll's beach. The Days Inn, the Jekyll Island Club Hotel and the Holiday Inn Resort provide beach services without using motorized delivery vehicle, yet these hotels are farther from the beach than the Westin. The examples provided by these three hotels clearly negate the Westin's claim that there is no feasible alternative to motorized delivery of the hotel's beach services. Surely it is reasonable and appropriate to enforce a consistent policy based upon current and past practice on Jekyll Island that prohibits beach driving for commercial purposes.

By deviating from such a policy in renewing the Westin permit for motorized beach access, a troublesome precedent would be set, having consequences likely to produce a long-term degrading impact on Jekyll's renowned natural amenities. The intrusion of motorized vehicles is especially disruptive during periods of high tide, when there is relatively little dry beach for public use along the vehicle's route. Compromising public enjoyment of Jekyll's beach for the Westin's convenience clearly is not in the public interest.



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Using a commercially available hand-cart would readily accommodate the need for providing beach equipment at the Westin. To make that option even more convenient, in accordance with the advice given by the Jekyll Island Citizens Association, we also suggest widening the Westin dune crossover ramp [or an adjacent one] to the dimension of the Great Dunes Park crossover, which is 76 inches wide.

I respectfully request that you take each of these reasons for discontinuing the Westin's unjustified practices into full account if their application for a beach driving permit is renewed.

Sincerely,

David Kyler, Executive Director

cc: C. Jones Hooks, Jekyll Island Authority