



**The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce**

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February 3, 2012

**VIA U.S. MAIL and ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: [warrenj@darenc.com](mailto:warrenj@darenc.com)**

Warren Judge, Chairman

Dare County Board of Commissioners

PO Box 1000

Manteo, NC 27954

**VIA U.S. MAIL and ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: [Mike Murray@nps.gov](mailto:Mike.Murray@nps.gov)**

Mike Murray, Superintendent

National Park Service, Outer Banks Group

1401 National Park Drive

Manteo, NC 27954

Re: Support for Fourth of July Fireworks Display on Hatteras Island

Dear Chairman Judge and Superintendent Murray:

I am the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce (the "Chamber") which represents over 1000 business members in Dare, Currituck and Hyde Counties, North Carolina. On behalf of the Chamber and its members, I am writing to express the Chamber's support for a safe and professional Fourth of July fireworks display on Hatteras Island in the Village of Avon performed by a duly licensed and certified pyrotechnics company.

The citizens and visitors to Hatteras Island celebrated this great nation's independence on July Fourth with a fireworks display in the Village of Avon for many years. Since the unfortunate and horrific accident that occurred on Ocracoke in 2009, there has been no fireworks display for the citizens and visitors to Hatteras Island. Hatteras Island's economy is driven by tourism and families who come there to vacation. Vacationers expect to be able to take their families to a fireworks display on the Fourth of July. The economy of Hatteras Island has been devastated by Hurricane Irene and cannot withstand an additional reason for visitors to choose another place to vacation, particularly during the busy Fourth of July vacation week.

A group of business owners has been working with the Promotional Affairs Committee of the Hatteras/Ocracoke Island Council to arrange a safe and professional Fourth of July fireworks display in the Village of Avon during the summer of 2012. The group has already obtained the permission of the owner of the Avon Fishing Pier to use the pier for the display. They have also begun arranging for funding through donations from local businesses, including a large donation from the Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative, and by preparing applications for

grants from the Outer Banks Visitors' Bureau. Safety and professionalism will be of the highest priority and only a duly licensed and certified pyrotechnics company will be used for the proposed fireworks display.

In order to bring the project to fruition, permission for the fireworks display will need to be obtained from the National Park Service and, potentially, from Dare County. Initial conversations with local NPS officials indicate that the NPS may oppose a fireworks display in Avon without regard to whether or not sufficient safety precautions and planning are incorporated into the display. Presumably, this position is a defensive response to avoid dealing with an accident such as the one that occurred in Ocracoke. However, it fails to take into account the State's greatly increased regulation of pyrotechnics companies and the fact that local businesses, residents and vacationers expect safety to be paramount and certainly do not desire to ever see a repeat of the situation that occurred in Ocracoke. If appropriate precautions are taken and a professional, certified and licensed pyrotechnics company performs the display, the NPS concerns should not be issues. Similarly, neither the Chamber nor the parties planning an official fireworks display have any interest in changing Dare County's stance on the legality of individual personal fireworks activities on Hatteras Island.

The Chamber's Board of Directors sincerely hopes that you will support the efforts of local Hatteras businesses and citizens to facilitate an official Fourth of July fireworks display on Hatteras Island in the Village of Avon. The families of the Outer Banks have a long and patriotic history of service to the U.S. Armed Forces, especially the U.S. Lifesaving Service that has evolved into the present day U.S. Coast Guard. Not to mention the fact that the first English Colony in the Americas was located on the Outer Banks. Considering the patriotic history of the Outer Banks, the residents and visitors to Hatteras Island should not be denied the opportunity to reconnect with family and friends and to celebrate our nation's birthday as they have done for years. Please take whatever action is necessary to ensure that a safe and professional fireworks display may be planned and permitted in a timely manner for July Fourth 2012. If you have any questions regarding the position of the Chamber on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,



Robin Mann, Chair  
Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce  
Board of Directors

cc: Senator Kay Hagan  
Senator Richard Burr  
Rep. Walter Jones, Jr.  
OBX Chamber Board of Directors  
Hatteras/Ocracoke Island Council