

December 11, 2006

Ms. Mary Bomar
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Bomar:

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) is distressed by National Park Service (NPS) plans to heavily armor the road on Santa Rosa Island in Gulf Islands National Seashore, Florida. Most disturbing is the planned use of 2.2 miles of sheet pile to armor the road.

The NPS plans ignore decades of scientific study and consensus. Sound science concludes that road armoring will interfere with natural barrier island processes, resulting in accelerated erosion, narrowing of the island and increased susceptibility to breaching during storm overwash. The NPS plan advocates hard-structure engineering, utilizing an untested design, with a non-scientific justification, that will cause environmental degradation. The plan to armor the road is scientifically flawed, unsustainable, economically unjustifiable and most importantly, will impair park resources – the island itself.

The NPS plan is so suspect that the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) of the State of Florida wrote a letter of protest to the Federal Lands Highway Division in the U.S. Department of Transportation on October 25, 2006. In that letter DEP Secretary Colleen Castille urged the consideration of more effective and less damaging alternatives to armoring the road on Santa Rosa Island.

As NPS Director, you will be the ultimate arbiter of the plan to armor the roads on Santa Rosa. For this project to proceed, it will be necessary for the Director to waive Management Policies (2006) at 4.8.1 and 9.1.1.5. It will also be necessary to ignore the NPS Development Advisory Board (DAB) which, in March 2006, rejected the recommendation of rebuilding the road with hard structures.

PEER urges you not to waive the new Management Policies for this destructive project. Should you have any questions about our concern, please call me at 202 265-PEER.

Sincerely,

Jeff Ruch

Executive Director