



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

MAR 01 2007

N16(2301)

Mr. Jeff Ruch  
Executive Director  
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility  
2000 P Street NW  
Suite 240  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Ruch:

Thank you for your December 2006 letter, in which you expressed concern with the National Park Service's (NPS) proposal to rebuild the park roads on Santa Rosa Island at Gulf Islands National Seashore with hard-structure armoring. As you know, these roads include the Fort Pickens Road, which formerly provided park visitors with access to historic Fort Pickens, and J. Earle Bowden Way, which formerly provided access between the communities of Pensacola Beach and Navarre Beach.

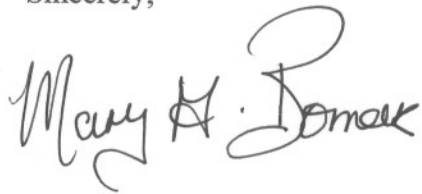
After reviewing your letter and other comments submitted by individuals, organizations, and other government agencies during the public review process, the NPS has concluded that the impacts of adding the above-listed structures to the Fort Pickens Road require us to take a new and more in-depth look at alternatives. As a result, the NPS will evaluate other options before proceeding with actions for accessing the Fort Pickens Area. Ultimately, we will select an alternative for this area of the park that provides visitors and the general public with reasonable access, consistent with NPS Management Policies and protection mandates, and that minimizes the cost to the American taxpayer.

The NPS is continuing to examine available information to ascertain the potential impacts of replacing J. Earle Bowden Way with an armored design. Again, we will select an alternative that is consistent with NPS Management Policies, protection mandates, and that minimizes the cost to the American taxpayer.

The NPS recognizes that these highly-valued areas of Gulf Islands National Seashore have been essentially closed to most park visitors since Hurricane Ivan, of 2004. We are concerned about this situation and are working with our partners at the Federal Highway Administration to provide access as soon as possible to these two areas of Santa Rosa Island via designs that are most compatible with the realities of natural barrier island dynamics.

Mr. Ruch, I very much appreciate and value the input of your organization. Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention, and we hope to work further with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary A. Bomar". The signature is fluid and connected, with a large initial "M" and a distinct "A" and "B".

Mary A. Bomar  
Director