

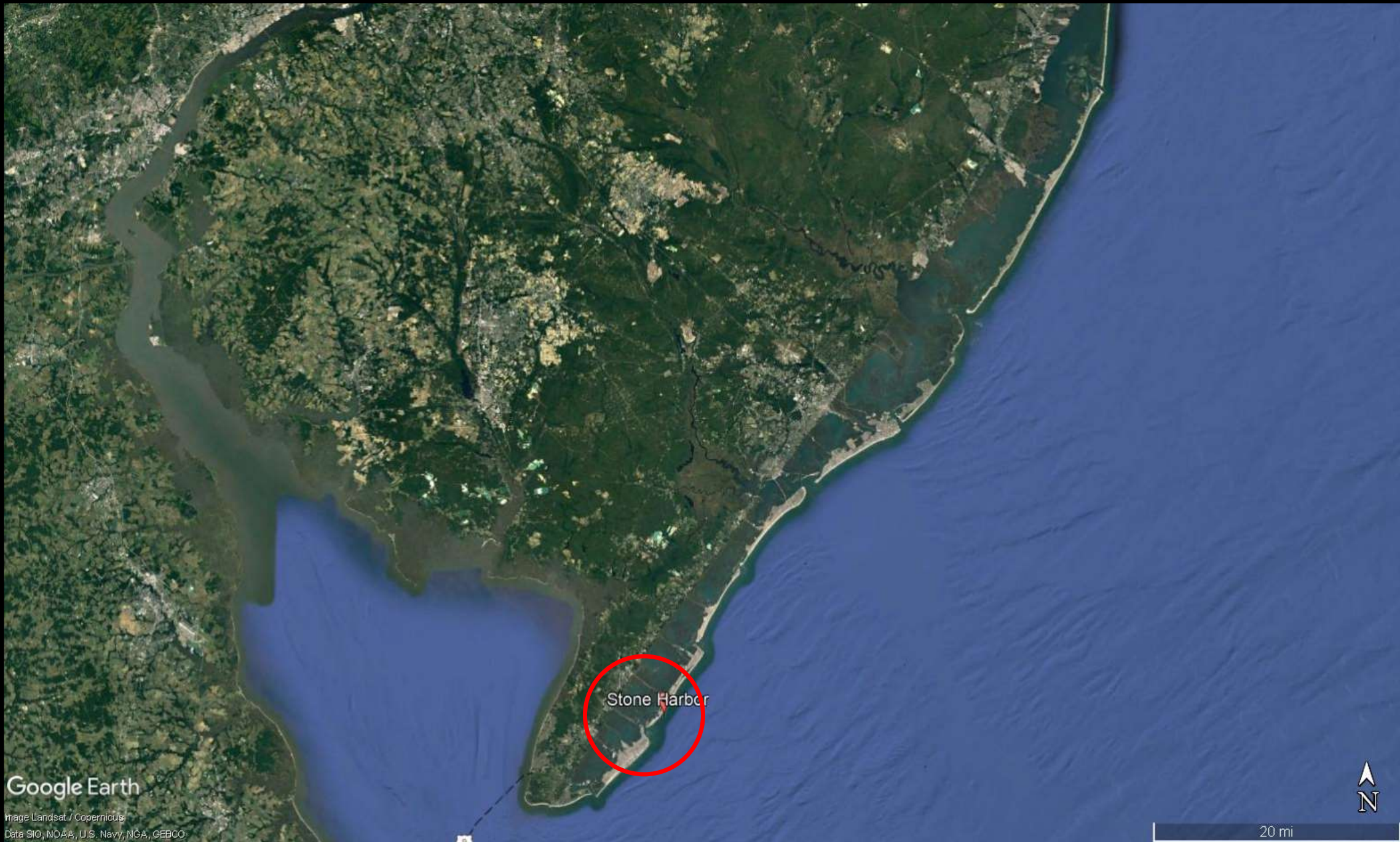
Human Disturbance at Stone Harbor Point, New Jersey

Meghan Kolk, Conservation Scientist



American Oystercatcher Working Group Meeting

December 7, 2022



Google Earth

Image Landsat / Copernicus
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO



20 mi

The Wetlands Institute



Stone Harbor



Stone Harbor Point



Google Earth

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO



1 mi

Importance of Stone Harbor Point Conservation Area

- Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Business Plan 2018
 - Priority breeding and wintering site for AMOY
- Average of 23 breeding pairs per year (10 years)
- Top 3 AMOY breeding sites in NJ
 - Other 2 are Federal sites (Forsythe NWR and Sandy Hook NRA)
- Staging/Wintering



American Oystercatcher with chick at Stone Harbor Point



Flock of American Oystercatchers staging at Stone Harbor Point



PIPL: Average of 4 breeding pairs
Migratory stopover



Colonial beach-nesters: BLSK, COTE, LETE
Important staging area

AFSI Priority stopover site for REKN

Migratory stopover for so many species!



Management: Borough



Sign at Stone Harbor Point

PERMITTED

- Nature walking
- Fishing
- Bird watching



Entrance to Stone Harbor Point

NOT PERMITTED

- Dogs at any time
- Swimming
- Kites, Ball-playing, Frisbee
- Kitesurfing or kite buggies
- Landing of personal watercraft or boats
- Alcoholic beverages
- Feeding of wildlife
- Drones
- Entering protected areas

Management: State and TWI



Symbolic fencing and signage at Stone Harbor Point



NJDEP Fish and Wildlife
Symbolic fencing
Predation management
Monitoring

TWI
Monitoring
Banding
Steward Program



Monitoring beach-nesting birds at Stone Harbor Point



Shorebird Steward at Stone Harbor Point

Steward Program Goals

- Reduce disturbance to shorebirds and BNBs
- Record disturbance events
- Intervene/engage when disturbance or violations occur
- Educate visitors about migrating shorebirds and BNBs
- Educate visitors about shorebird management and conservation
- Monitor perimeters of closed area for violations
- Partner with Stone Harbor Borough Police and Beach Patrol



GET THE POINT
Stone Harbor Point Beach Stewards Program

Red Knot and Ruddy Turnstone

SHARE THE BEACH WITH BEACH-NESTING AND MIGRATORY SHOREBIRDS

Human disturbance is a major threat to birds and their young on our beaches.

Stone Harbor Point is a protected conservation area, and an important place for birds year-round. Beach uses are restricted to protect sensitive species, but ample space is available to enjoy beach combing, shell collecting, walking, jogging, nature observation and fishing.

To protect rare and sensitive birds:

- Stay out of protective fencing.
- Never bring dogs or pets to the beach.
- Do not disturb feeding or resting flocks of birds.
- Landing of boats or water craft is prohibited at all times.
- Observe and obey all posted signs.

Piping Plover K. Killdeer Black Skimmer

Steward Program Details

- Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day
 - Weekends 8-10 hours
 - Weekdays 4-5 hours
- Extra coverage on weekends and holidays
- Police patrol shifts on weekends (escorted)
 - Memorial Day weekend
 - July through Labor Day



Shorebird Steward



LE receiving training on bird identification



Entrance to Stone Harbor Point

Data Collection

Stone Harbor Point Beach Stewards Program

Uploaded

Initials _____ Date _____

Entered

Initials _____ Date _____

Steward Name _____

Volunteer Name: _____

Date _____

Start Time _____

End Time _____

Total Hours _____

Weather _____

Estimate of Number of People on Beach _____

start shift: _____

mid shift: _____

end shift: _____

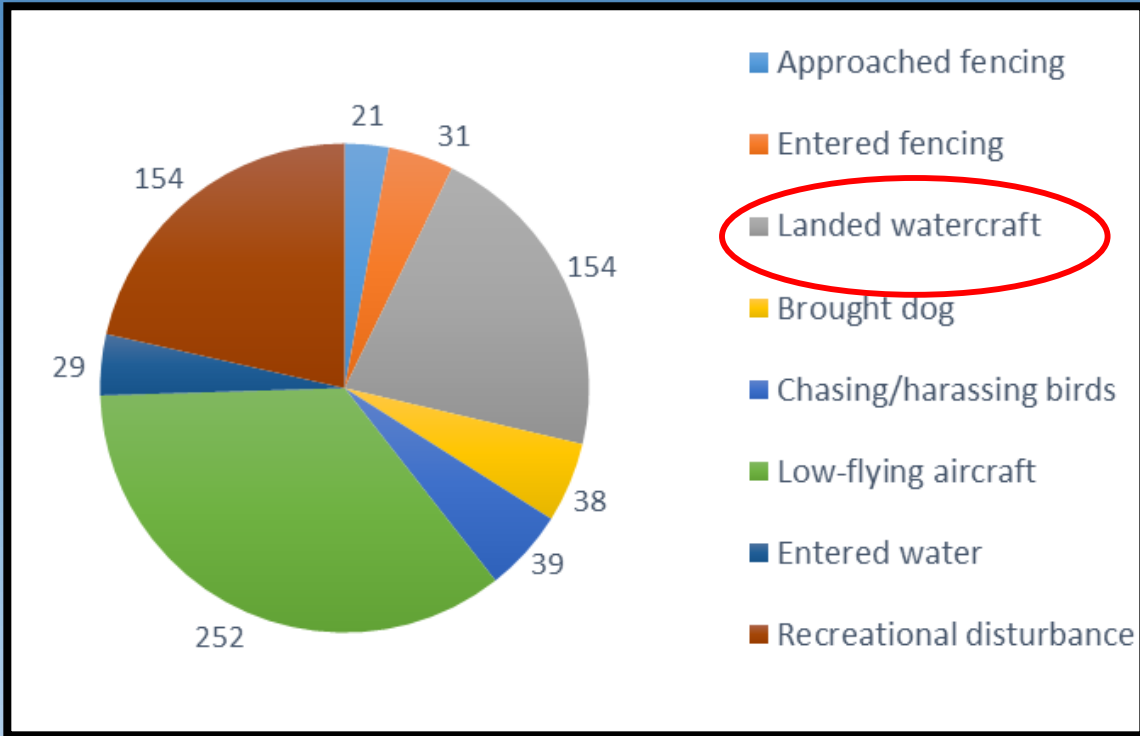
Number People Engaged: _____

Total Incidents: _____

Event #	Time	Incident Type	Disturbance Type	Disturbance Outcome	Intervention	Comment
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						

Incident Type	Disturbance Type	Disturbance Outcome	Intervention	General Comments/Observations
Approached Fencing	Walker/jogger	Paddleboard	Not Applicable (N/A) - no birds in area	Observed Anything that does not fit in above
Entered Fencing	Dog	Plane	None - birds in area but no response	Intervened/Engaged
Landed Watercraft	Shell Collector	Banner plane	Walked/Ran through flock	Left on Own
Brought Dog	Swimmer	Drone	Flushed Birds	Called Law Enforcement (LE)
Chasing/Harrassing Birds	Angler	Helicopter	Disrupted Feeding	<i>include which Law Enforcement agency</i>
Low-flying Aircraft*	Boat	Jet	Disrupted Roosting	
Entered Water	Jet Ski	Ball or frisbee	Disrupted Incubation/Chick Brooding	
Recreational Disturbance	Kayak	Kite flyer		

The season at a glance



Incidents at Stone Harbor Point detailed over the season, 2022. n=718



Accessing the beach via watercraft at Stone Harbor Point

- 154 Incidents documented
- 370+ Watercraft documented
- 137% Increase over 2021

Watercraft landings/Accessing beach via watercraft

Why is it a problem?

- High level of disturbance in remote location/inlet
- Chairs/umbrellas/tents
- Parties
- Loud music
- Alcohol
- Ball-playing
- Dogs



Why is it a problem?

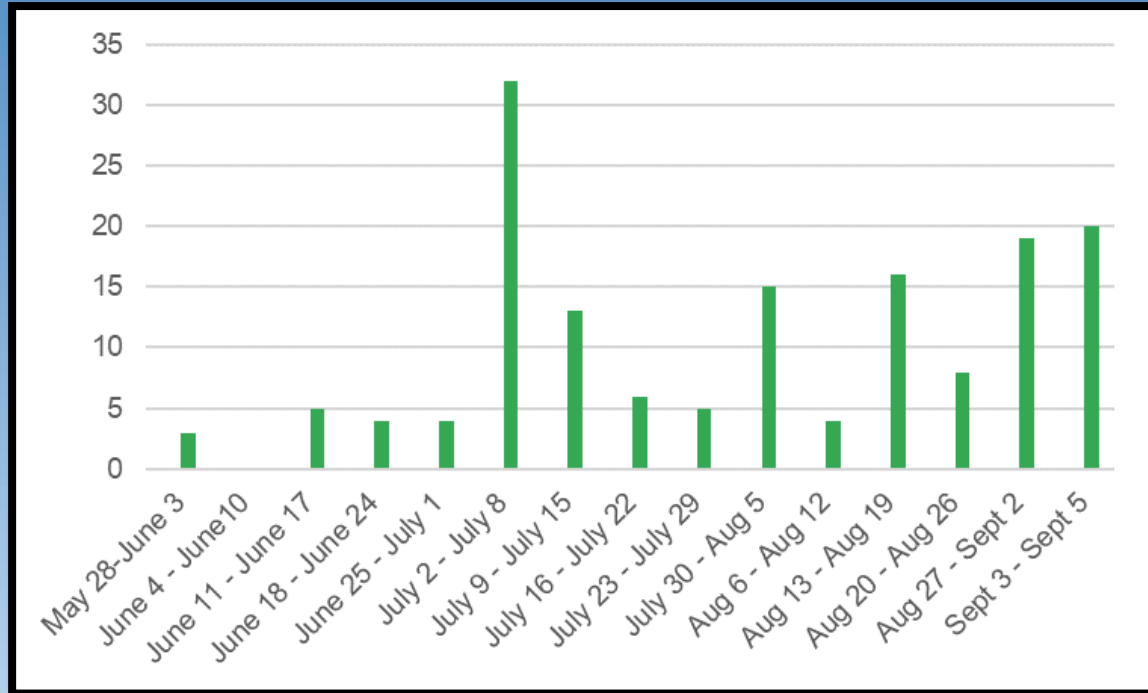
- Nesting birds in close proximity
 - AMOY
 - BLSK/COTE colony
- Competition for intertidal zone
- Concern not only for birds, but for public safety due to limited access by emergency vehicles.



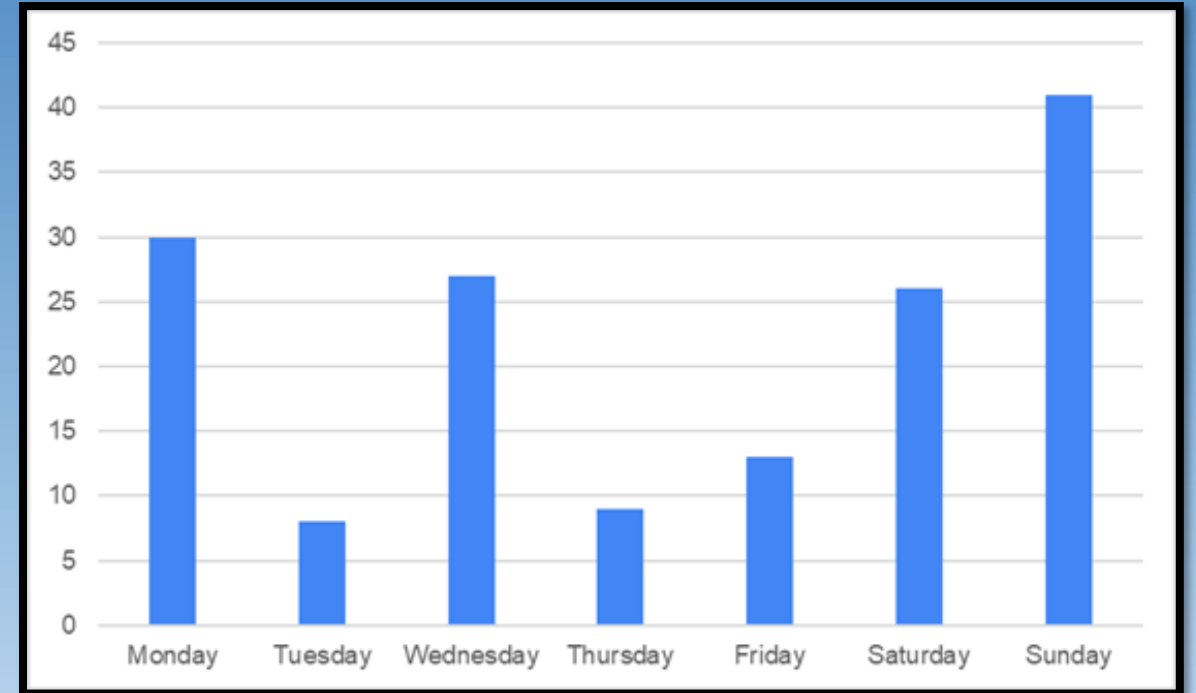
AMOY nest attempts at Stone Harbor Point in 2022. Map retrieved from NestStory.



Timing of watercraft landing



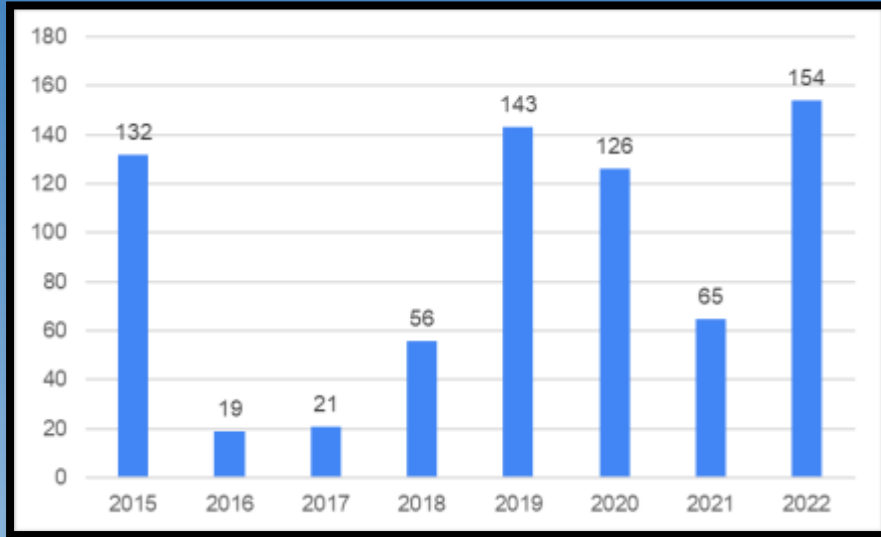
Watercraft landing incidents documented by week over the season, 2022 (Saturday-Friday).



Watercraft landing incidents documented by day of the week over the season, 2022.

Rising/high tide for ease of access to Stone Harbor Point and lack of access to Champagne Island.

Problems specific to 2022 season



Number of watercraft landing incidents documented by year over the duration of the program.

1. May/June/July 4th: no Police beach patrols due to access road damage
2. Limited marine patrols due to staffing shortages
3. Limited/no beach access by vehicle at high tide (when watercraft landings occur)
4. Mooring offshore encouraged by State Marine Police
5. Many in boating community confrontational toward Stewards



Storm damage from May nor'easter that cut off vehicle access to the beach.

The Public Trust Doctrine

- Tidelands are held by the state “in trust” for the benefit of the public
 - Recognizes and protects natural resources as well as recreational uses such as bathing, swimming, sunbathing, and walking along tidal waterways and their shores
 - New Jersey: high water state (MHW)
- Questions concerning messaging from stewards and enforcement by LE



Corson's Inlet State Park, photo credit: Bill Reinert

Title 13 – Conservation and Development – Parks and Reservations

Chapter 1D

2019 Revisions

N.J.S. § 13:1D-155

The Department of Environmental Protection may restrict public access to tidal waters and adjacent shorelines to protect critical habitat areas from injurious uses, or threatened or endangered species or their habitat areas from injury or injurious uses, but only to the extent necessary according to the needs of the habitat areas or species.

N.J.S. § 13:1D-156

The department may adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of P.L.2019, c.81 (C.13:1D-150 et al.).

How was the problem addressed?

➤ Restore Police presence

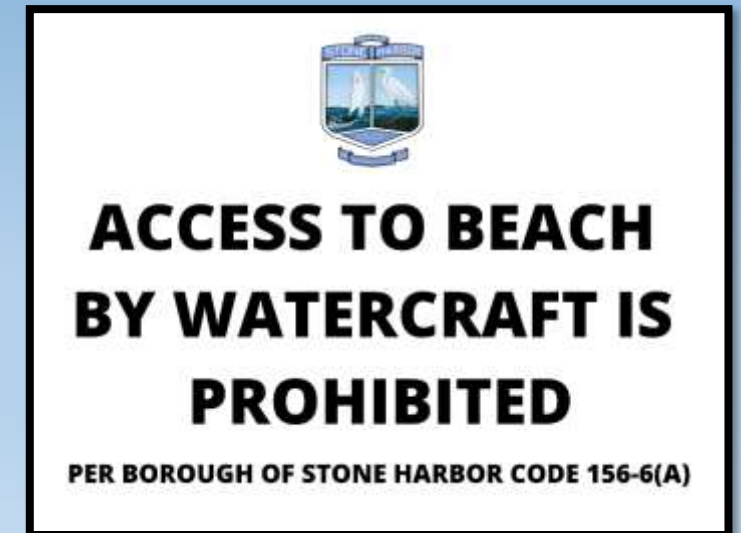
- Repair access road to beach
 - July 10: first Police beach patrol
 - Police can respond to calls

➤ Allow for enforcement

- Adopt additional rule and regulation by Ordinance to Borough Code 156-6(A)
 - July 19: Resolution 2022-S-145 passed prohibiting access to beach by way of watercraft
 - Additional signage added
 - Mooring offshore permitted
 - Feet must remain in water (above waist considered swimming)



Repaired vehicle access ramp to Stone Harbor Point



New sign provided by Stone Harbor Borough

Stone Harbor Point/Marine Patrol Summary 2022

Month	Beach Patrols	Marine Patrols	Quad Vehicle Access	Emergency Vehicle Access	Warnings Issued	Summonses Issued
May	0	2	0	0	1	0
June	0	0	0	0	0	0
July	14	11	11	0	71	0
August	21	1	8	1	11	3
Sept	8	1	4	0	0	0

- **July Warnings:**
 - 58 Accessing beach by boat
 - 12 Swimming
 - 1 Bringing dog

- **August Warnings:**
 - 10 Accessing beach by boat
 - 1 Landing vessel

- **August Summonses:**
 - 1 Accessing beach by boat
 - 1 Swimming
 - 1 No beach badge

- Initial backlash by boating community (social media)
- Some boater defiance/opposition even to Law Enforcement
- Boaters returning after Law Enforcement leaves
- Overall improvement after adjustment period

Conclusions and Next Steps

- Strong partnership with Borough of Stone Harbor is key
- Too late for 2022 season
 - Collapse of BLSK/COTE colony
 - AMOY: 21 pairs/46 nests – 0 productivity
- Looking toward 2023 and beyond
 - Early/frequent enforcement next season
 - Better signage
 - Engagement with local marinas
 - Education/outreach
 - stewards and social media
 - Hope for new Rules and Regulations to enforce tidal lands closures for T&E species



AMOY chicks at Stone Harbor Point

Acknowledgements

Funding

Stone Harbor Borough



2022 Shorebird Stewards

Erin Oswald

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Nicolina Ferraro

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Harrison Hepding

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Questions?

