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To: <sturdevantm@caller.com>
cc: <PAIS_public_comments@nps.gov>
Subject: Endangered Sea Turtles and Gas Wells

Letter to the Editor

What a tragic headline I read today in the Corpus Christi Caller Times (November 28, 2004) that the Padre Island National Seashore may be the site of five more gas wells. As a long time worker for the recovery of the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle (23 years), I am angry but I am also saddened by this news. After long years of work and waiting, a number of Kemp's ridleys have returned to nest at the Padre Island National Seashore. For those who are not familiar with this project to re-establish a nesting population on the Texas coastline, millions of dollars of taxpayer money have been spent to save a species decimated by egg collection in Mexico and shrimp fishing in U.S. waters. Just as success seems within our grasp, there is a new and threatening challenge, development of the National Seashore with more trucks, more traffic, more noise, more pollution, etc. I am aware that a number of sea turtles nested last summer in spite of traffic and accompanying distractions, but we are now talking about greater development in this place set aside first for humans to find peace and quiet.

The average reader must be as confused as I am. The article states that the Texas General Land Office sees this drilling project as salvation for Texas school funds. We heard that promise years ago when the Texas lottery was voted in. With billions of dollars being spent to scratch off tickets, we still have overcrowded classrooms with underpaid teachers, crumbling buildings and lack of equipment. At the federal level, President Bush admirably signed the Marine Turtle Protection Act last year but his Secretary of the Interior approves permits for the desecration of the same beaches where endangered Kemp's Ridley hatchlings were imprinted in the 80s.

Enough is enough. People who visit the Padre Island National Seashore to hear the surf, smell the sea breezes and witness tiny hatchlings scrambling to the water need to speak up now. The alternative is hearing heavy equipment, dodging huge trucks, breathing gas fumes and saying goodbye to the sea turtles. We may feel helpless and betrayed, but we have another chance to voice our objections. The National Park Service is requesting comments at PAIS_public_comments@nps.gov. SEND THOSE COMMENTS TODAY!

Carole H. Allen, Gulf Office Director

Sea Turtle Restoration

Founder of HEART (Help Endangered Animals-Ridley Turtles) in 1982

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