

Owner attempts to protect north end

But trespassers still wreaking havoc on beach environment

By Trista Talton
Staff Writer

Evelyn Williams is attempting to protect the land passed down to her from earlier family generations.

On Monday, she had no-trespassing signs posted on 177 acres of sandy real estate at the northern end of Carolina Beach.

By Tuesday, they were gone.

The north end has for years been a popular spot where thousands will turn out on a summer weekend to fish, camp and hang out.

When the crowds clear out, the white

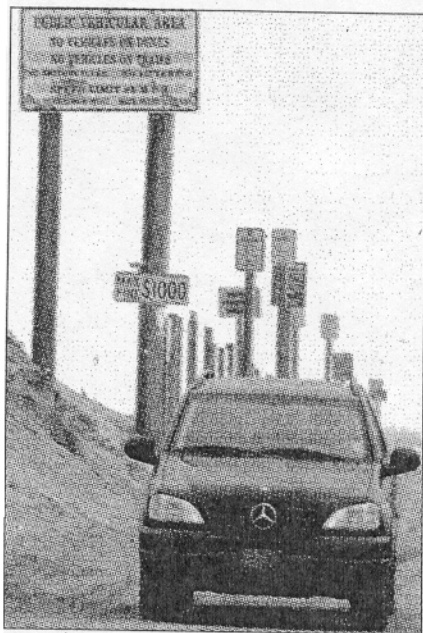
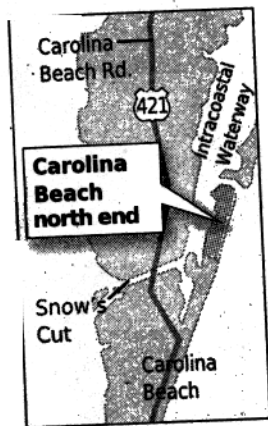
sand beach is dotted with trash, residents say. "It's terrible," Ms. Williams said of the public use of her property. "That's why I thought I would try to prevent the repetition of that. I think if the vehicular traffic can be prohibited it will help."

In recent years, the County Commissioners and Carolina Beach have tried to mitigate problems by placing restrictions on land use, including prohibiting all-terrain vehicles and reducing the speed limit. Carolina Beach owns the first 1,000 feet leading onto the north end.

The rest of the public property runs between the ocean and the mean high tide line.

The County Commissioners will consider next month adopting an ordinance prohibiting overnight camping and open fires. Some overnight campers put their

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STAR-NEWS FILE

A four-wheel drive vehicle passes the entrance to the north end of Carolina Beach.

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tents in the dunes, destroying the natural habitat, said Sgt. John Murray, environmental officer with the sheriff's office. Firewood is left behind, a hazard for drivers on the beach, he said.

Posted private property may help the situation, Sgt. Murray said, but it will be challenging to enforce.

"If we can catch them at the time we're there, then by all means we'll charge them with second-degree trespassing. It's one of these things where you've basically got to be there," he said.

Sgt. Murray is one of only two officers assigned to patrol not only the north end but also other areas of the county where the environment is a concern. He's patrolled the north end for more than a decade and is familiar with recurring problems.

"The no trespassing signs are just going to be ripped down," he said, without knowing they already had been.

It's a reality Ms. Williams' father dealt with for years. He posted his property almost daily in the summer, replacing torn-down signs, she said.

She's sought the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which noted in a letter to Ms. Williams earlier this month that

it's aware of the harm vehicular traffic does to nesting water birds and shorebirds. Fish and Wildlife is working with the Audubon Society to try to minimize such impacts.

The Audubon Society's Walker Golder said beach sites for nesting water birds are disappearing. "In past years, the north end has supported fairly large colonies of birds," he said. "What we at the Audubon could do is monitor the area."

If vehicular traffic is prohibited, Mr. Golder said, nesting water birds will return to the shores of the north end.

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