

To: Town of Holden Beach Board of Commissioners, Mayor, and Town Manager

From: Holden Beach Property Owners Association

Subject: Personal property left on the beach overnight

Over the last several years, an issue that repeatedly comes up for discussion among HBPOA members is that of personal items left on the beach overnight. At the May 2010 HBPOA Membership meeting, a motion was made and passed directing the HBPOA leadership to ask the Town Council address the issue. This issue stretches beyond the HBPOA and resonates with owners, visitors, residents, and turtle patrol members. This issue affects the safety of humans and of our endangered sea turtles in this protected nesting habitat. This issue is shared by our neighboring towns and almost all of our sister beach towns have addressed it in their ordinances. This issue will not go away until our town leaders make a final resolution of some sort.

HISTORY and BACKGROUND

The subject of personal items being left overnight on the beach has been debated for years and years. You may recall that with the advent of cheap cabanas becoming readily available, the topic of cabanas left on the beach overnight intensified in 2007. The Star News ran this headline in September 2007: **“Ocean Isle bans cabanas on beach.”** During the same timeframe, the HBPOA started to hear concerns from our membership on this subject.

In early 2008, the HBPOA responded with a plan of action to address concerns by creating a Public Educational campaign making visitors aware of the goal of keeping our beaches clean and safe. The campaign included distributing a **Safety Letter** to all realtors for inclusion in each rental package. The Safety Letter included the following text.

“The Holden Beach Property Owners Association members WELCOME you to the beach. We hope you have a pleasant stay and especially a SAFE one. Our beach is kept clean and safe for everyone. It is enjoyed at all hours of the day including nighttime. After dark, because cabanas, umbrellas, tents, volleyball nets, horseshoe stakes and other structures left on the beach create safety hazards, we request that you remove all of them at Sunset each evening.”

We also created a **“Help Beach Safety” awareness magnet**. The Holden Beach realtors were kind enough to distribute and ensure these magnets were placed on all rental property refrigerators.



The HBPOA also conducted an **online survey of our membership** in August 2008. The results of our Cabanas Survey were significant. We received responses from over half of the recipients (i.e., 330 out of 636 valid addresses). It showed a clear mandate. Two thirds of respondents agreed Cabanas should be allowed on the beach during the day, but not overnight.

The following results were shared with the Town Council in September 2008.

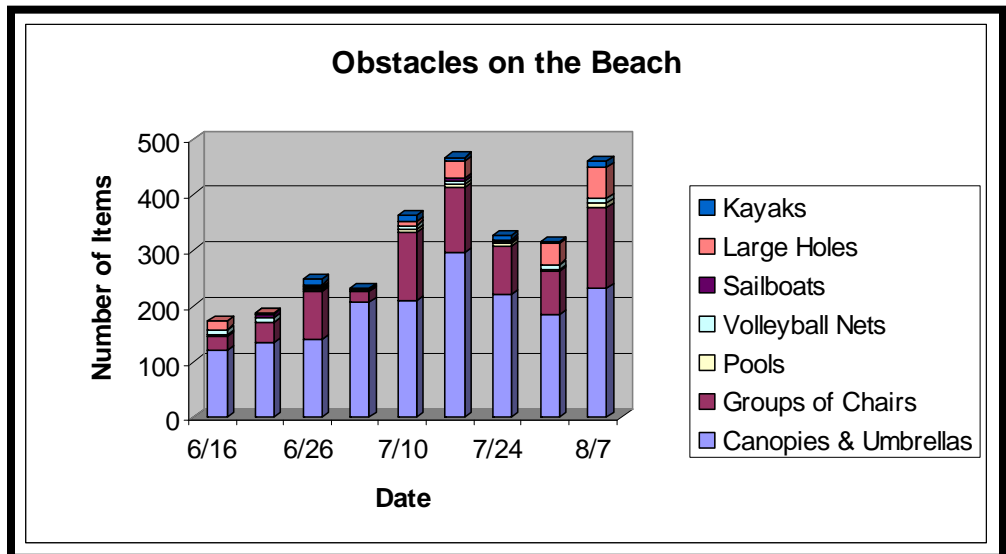
○ Cabanas should be allowed on the beach at all times, including overnight.	60	18.18%
○ Cabanas should be allowed on the beach during the day, but not overnight.	224	67.88%
○ Cabanas should not be allowed on the beach at any time.	46	13.94%
	Total	330 100.00

Holden Beach has been designated a **Turtle Sanctuary**. Everyone who crosses the bridge is welcomed by the view of our beautiful ocean and with a proclamation of this island as a Turtle Sanctuary. The safety issues for people who walk the beach particularly at night are shared by endangered turtles who come to Holden Beach to lay their eggs.



In 2009 the turtle patrol tracked the number of items found on the beach each morning. Here are the results from June-August 2009 timeframe:

This trend has continued in 2010.



Here are four examples of turtle tracks, demonstrating mother turtles being obstructed by items left on the beach. The tracks show an immediate return to the ocean without successfully laying a nest.

Chances are that the female sea turtle dumped the eggs in the ocean when she could not find a suitable nesting place quickly.



Tracks obstructed by cabana leg and umbrella.



Some additional photos of a cabana "Hotel" left on the beach.



SUMMARY and CALL to ACTION

The HBPOA Membership acknowledges that there are many good reasons to bring personal items to the beach. Reasons include: protection from skin cancer, fun activities, convenience and comfort, and overall enjoyment of the beach. The HBPOA encourages people to continue to pursue all of these, and at the end of the day, to leave the beach clean. There is credence to the phrase, "*Leave nothing but your footprints.*"

The HBPOA respectfully requests that the Town of Holden Beach Board of Commissioners address the issue of personal items being left on the beach overnight by adopting an ordinance at an upcoming BOC meeting, resolving this issue fairly to all parties involved. We request that this ordinance take effect prior to the 2011 beach season.

Respectfully Submitted by



John Lytvinenko
President, HBPOA