

Brush fires result of fireworks activity

① only

By MICHELLE CASSELL

Private fireworks were responsible for at least 22 brush fires on the Outer Banks during the July 4 holiday weekend, with no injuries or property damage reported.

Although airborne pyrotechnics are illegal in North Carolina, glittering sparks have filled Outer Banks skies since early Friday night.

Jockey's Ridge State Park in Nags Head was the location of the most extensive brush fires which were attributed to fall out from the controlled town fireworks display.

According to Nags Head Chief Deputy Fire Marshall Kevin Zorc, "We had several local site fires adjacent to the town's display that involved a total of about one acre." The Nags Head fireworks display was relocated to Jockey's Ridge due to National Weather Service advice. Predicted southeast winds shifted to southwest after dark on July 4.

Kill Devil Hills reported 15 calls related to fireworks. "It's mostly people that don't use their common sense when shooting off fireworks," said Captain Mike Allsbrook of the Kill Devil Hills Fire Department. "All of the brush fires were contained within a small area and no structures

were involved."

Kitty Hawk Fire Chief Lowell Spivey said Kitty Hawk Fire Department was called to one brush fire around midnight on July 4. "It was a very usual fourth. We had no accident calls or injuries due to fireworks," said Spivey.

Roanoke Island Fire Department was busy retaining a marsh fire started by fall out from the Manteo fireworks display on Roanoke Island Festival Park. About one acre of marsh was burned.

Duck Fire Department responded to three brush fire calls on July 3 and none on the fourth. Southern Shores assisted in two of those calls.

Lifeguard Beach Services

Bob Gabriel of Lifeguard Beach Services, covering the beaches of Duck and Kill Devil Hills, reported three ocean rescues on July 4.

"A 14 year-old from Philadelphia was pulled in from about 200 yards out," said Gabriel. Lifeguards used a personal watercraft to assist. He was not injured.

Southeast winds kept waves down, but currents were still strong causing some problems.

A 17 year-old female had to be

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rescued swimming in front of the Cavalier Motel in Kill Devil Hills. No medical assistance was necessary.

A 23 year-old white male was taken to a medical facility after

being pulled from the ocean. He had been attempting to snorkel and was inexperienced. He was treated and released.

Nags Head Ocean Rescue

Bill Ryan of Nags Head Ocean rescue said they had little to no activity to report. "We responded to some missing children reports and there were no injuries over the

weekend," said Ryan.

North Carolina Highway Patrol

The North Carolina Highway Patrol reported heavy traffic, but only nine wrecks between July 1 and July 4 in Dare County. No serious injuries were reported.

There is no cosmetic for beauty like happiness.

—Anonymous

Coast land Times, July 7, 1998

July fourth perfect for tourism

By KRISTEN BERTICKER

July fourth weekend was ushered in with blue skies and warm weather, the perfect ingredients for a busy holiday weekend on the Outer Banks.

"We reached capacity, capacity being upwards of 150,000 people," said Dare County Tourist Bureau Director Carolyn McCormick. "Every place I've talked to had no vacancy. Last week we were flooded with phone calls from people looking for accommodations, but there were no accommodations to be had."

The four tourist centers located in the county reported a total of 12,889 visitors from Friday to Sunday.

The majority of these, about 10,700 people, came through the Aycock Brown Welcome Center in Kitty Hawk.

"We usually have around 2,000 a day on busy weekends, so that was more than usual," said center manager Ginny Heinrich.

Outer Banks roadways were dense with holiday traffic and lined with hotels lit with signs declaring, "No Vacancy."

"We had a great weekend," said Jody Sherman, assistant manager at Nags Head's Best Western Ocean Reef motel. "Since the fireworks were next door, that was an added bonus. People could watch the fireworks from their porch. They liked that. But when you're full, you're full; you can't get any better than that."

And business owners throughout the area seemed pleased with the weekend turnout.

travel on the Fourth of July."

But visitors did their share of travelling to local points of interest.

On Saturday alone, almost 12,000 people climbed the large sand dunes at Jockey's Ridge State Park.

"We're averaging about 8,000 per day, so we were a little bit higher than usual," said park Superintendent George Barnes.

And approximately 6,000 gathered on the dunes Saturday night for the town of Nags Head

fireworks show, moved to the park from its usual location at the Bonnett Street Beach Access because of expected high winds.

Approximately 2,000 more visitors than last year climbed another Outer Banks landmark over the weekend. Andrew Kling, district interpreter for the Cape Hatteras National Seashore said that the famed lighthouse received roughly 6,500 visitors. And these numbers would have been higher, except park officials were forced

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"Business was excellent," said Gray's Department Store co-owner Ronnie Gray.

"The weather was so pretty I think people were probably enjoying what they like to do on vacation."

Janice Farr, vice president of property management at Sun Realty in Kill Devil Hills, said that this year was a particularly good one in rental cottages.

"The week that includes the Fourth of July is typically not 100-percent occupancy," Farr said. "But it's higher this year than it's been in the past. Farr said the company reached 94-percent occupancy in the rental cottages for the week.

"I think it was a strong weekend for us," agreed Jon Summerton, vice president with Twiddy and Company Realtors in Corolla. "The numbers were up from last year. Summerton added that the numbers would have been higher if Independence Day had not fallen on Saturday, a changeover day for the rental cottages.

"I think that moderated our regular growth a little bit," Summerton said. "Some people decided they just didn't want to

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to close the lighthouse on Sunday until around 2 p.m. because heavy rainfall and high winds that morning threatened the safety of visitors climbing the metal stairs to the top.

The number of visitors attending presentations at the

Wright Brothers National Memorial was somewhat lower than its neighboring parks to the south, a circumstance first-year park Interpreter Bernadette Ramesdorfer attributes to the lure of the nearby sandy shores.

"I was expecting a lot more people," Ramesdorfer said. "It was pretty steady, but there weren't a lot of big groups. There

was a little bit here and a little bit there. I guess most people were at the beach."

Fourth of July celebrations on the Manteo waterfront seemed to draw the majority of travelers to Roanoke Island over the weekend. Ft. Raleigh National Historic Site reported only 675 visitors for the holiday.

"The numbers were down a little bit over here," said park

guide and historian Jon Bender. "But I think that's because of the goings on the waterfront."