



South Carolina Department of
Parks, Recreation & Tourism

Nikki Haley
Governor

Duane N. Parrish
Director

July 20, 2015

Ms. Cheryl Trottier
7115 Castlesteads Drive
Aiken, SC 29803

Dear Ms. Trottier,

Your recent letter to SC Office of Ombudsman Director, Jim Casserly, was forwarded to my attention.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to send us your concerns regarding your recent visit to Hunting Island State Park. I was glad to read that you are a frequent visitor to the park, for it is our goal to provide quality destinations and the highest level of customer service.

I apologize that you did not receive information concerning the shark bite from our welcome station employee. Please know, the Hunting Island staff in no way was attempting to keep information concerning the shark bite from the public. In fact, the rangers and lifeguards were on the beach informing visitors of the incident and advising them to take extra caution if the visitor still wanted to enter the water. I am unsure why this information was not relayed to the welcome station staff, however we have discussed this matter with Hunting Island Manager, Daniel Gambrell. Manager Gambrell is taking steps to ensure that significant information is relayed to all staff in a timely manner in the future.

Again, I want to thank you for bringing this matter to our attention, for it is through visitor feedback that we are best able to monitor our level of service. I trust that you will return to take advantage of the many opportunities that Hunting Island State Park has to offer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Elswick", written over a horizontal line.

Matt Elswick
Operations Manager, SC State Park Service

C: Mr. Jim Casserly, Director, S.C. Office of Ombudsman

7115 Castlesteads Drive
Aiken, SC 29803
June 27, 2015

Mr. James Cassidy, Director
Governor's Office of Ombudsman
Wade Hampton Building
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

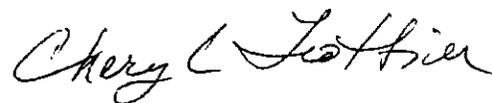
Dear Mr. Cassidy:

I am writing to you today to bring to your attention a serious safety issue that needs to be addressed. Yesterday we made one of our frequent visits to Hunting Island State Park. On entering the park I noticed that the purple and red flags were out. I asked the person in the ticket booth if there were sharks present at the beach. While I cannot remember her exact words, she did not ever say that sharks were spotted or, more importantly, that someone had been attacked by a shark at South Beach that very morning. That would have been useful and truthful information. Instead, she said something like it was just there so we would be cautious.

After we settled at the beach I learned that there had been a shark attack a few hours earlier. It would be far more helpful to the residents and guests who visit SC state parks to know about the hazards promptly. I think all that was needed was to have the park ranger inform the individuals staffing the ticket booth to at least answer visitor questions correctly. Let's hope it is not policy to put revenue collection above public safety.

To say the least, I am very disappointed in the park ranger, or whoever else made the decision to not inform the public in a prompt manner. We can all be thankful that the situation was not any worse due to their negligence.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Trotter