

Outer Banks area may be losing its charm

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A National Geographic Society official says the Outer Banks areas off North Carolina are in danger of losing their charm.

The Outer Banks, long renowned for its history, culture and environment, is in danger of being spoiled, Jonathan Tourtellot, geo-tourism editor for National Geographic Traveler magazine, told a Wednesday meeting sponsored by the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau at Kill Devil Hills, N.C.

Tourtellot, who is also director of the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations, noted a global survey published in March 2004 gave the Outer Banks a score of 52, with 100 being the best, the Virginian-Pilot reported.

A 2005 survey produced similar results, with both evaluations looking at such factors as ecological quality, condition of historic buildings, and quality of tourism management.

But he said many tourist destinations are being overtaken by housing, with chain restaurants and stores replacing quaint mom-and-pop establishments, the newspaper reported.

"The problems are not at all restricted to the Outer Banks," he said with a slide showing a close-up of a Civil War cannon at Gettysburg, Pa. The view was then widened to show an ordinary-looking housing subdivision behind it.

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