



Beach Access News

Town of Chincoteague
Assateague Beach Access Committee

June 2014

Draft CCP is released!

The US Fish & Wildlife Service released the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan on May 15th for public review. Comments are due by July (August*) 15th.

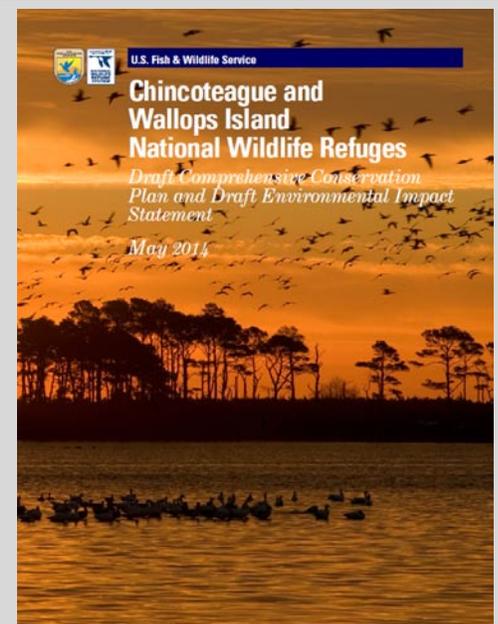
The draft CCP/EIS can be considered a great success for both the USFWS and the Town of Chincoteague because of the way that public comment has been acknowledged and incorporated.

The draft CCP explains how 3 alternative strategies would continue the current management, or would propose changes along with the selection of a **preferred alternative** that FWS supports. Opportunities to learn about the Plan and provide comments are identified below:

Open Houses (meet with refuge staff one on one)
Date: Monday, June 23, 2014
Time: 5 PM to 8 PM
Date: Thursday, June 26, 2014
Time: 1 PM to 4 PM
Place: Refuge Visitor Center

Public Hearing (present verbal comments to the refuge staff/public and submit written comments)
Date: Thursday, June 26, 2014
Time: 6 PM to 9 PM
Place: Chincoteague Center

Comments (Accepted through July (August*) 15, 2014, *extension requested) Tom Bonetti, Refuge Planner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035 Fax: 413/253 8468 Email: northeastplanning@fws.gov (Please put "Chincoteague" or "Wallops Island" in the subject line).



Almost 1,000 pages describe 3 alternative management strategies for the future.

View the document here:

<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/chincoteague/>

"In order to comply with what we believe was the intent of Congress in passing P.L. 85-57, the US Fish & Wildlife Service has conveyed primary jurisdiction for beach use and recreation within the 'assigned area' to the National Park Service. Language from P.L. 85-57 makes it clear that Congress intended for a recreational beach to be constructed and maintained on the refuge. It is also apparent that Congress believed or anticipated that 'traditional' beach recreation could be compatible with refuge purposes..." Draft CCP – Chapter 1 / Page 1-33

USFWS allows for many public concerns to be checked off the list

- ✓ **Recreational Beach ACCESS** (no reduction) will be assured by more than a Refuge Manager's Compatibility Determination (i.e. Beach Road from Chincoteague Island to the Atlantic Ocean Seashore)
- ✓ **Recreational Beach USE** (no reduction) will be assured by more than a Refuge Manager's Compatibility Determination (i.e. Over 4 miles of shoreline set aside and assigned for public recreation on the southern end of Assateague Island)
- ✓ **An assigned area for NPS** management of the public recreational beach and the inter agency agreement will be a part of the draft and final CCP document.
- ✓ **The Pony Management Plan** will be a part of the draft and final CCP document.
- ✓ **1,000 Parking Spaces** (no reduction) will continue to be maintained in close proximity to the recreational beach.
- ✓ **Transit shuttle service** to the public recreational beach will only be provided in addition to the minimum 1,000 spaces of convenient individual vehicle parking.
- ✓ **Federal purchase of land** within the Town of Chincoteague will not proceed without local support

Beach Access News

Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) – What is Inside?

The CCP/EIS document includes a detailed description of three alternatives considered for managing and administering the refuge over the next 15 years. The document also looks at how the alternatives may affect the surrounding natural and human environments.

Alternative B, the proposed Service-preferred alternative, will serve as the foundation for a final, stand-alone CCP document. Modifications made to alternative B between the draft and final CCP/EIS will be described in a “Comments” section.

A ‘record of decision’ by the Regional Director will approve the document 30 days after the final CCP is published.

Chapter One-Purpose and Need
Chapter Two-Alternatives
Chapter Three-Affected Environment
Chapter Four-Impacts of Alt. A,B,C
17 Appendices

CCP – What is Missing?

- How do you know that Alternative B will provide the same exceptional visitor experience?
- What happens if the USFWS uses a destructive ‘Let it Go’ policy for managing the island both north and south of the recreational beach?
- What about the NPS General Management Plan that may create greater restrictions on water use?
- Will critical habitat designations and biological opinions for endangered species shut down the recreational beach use and access?
- What protection from storm damage will be used for visitor facilities?
- How much new land will be placed in conservation use over the next 20 years and removed from the tax base?
- What about the public health hazard from biting insects?

Top Town Issues for Chincoteague

It is important for the gateway community to the Wildlife Refuge and Seashore, which provided over 700 comments on the draft CCP Alternatives, to carefully review the CCP/EIS document and work together for the best combination of management plan actions for the next 20 years. The draft CCP includes new information which raises new concerns:

- **Exceptional Visitor Experience**
A master plan and economic impact statement should be prepared for Alternative B to understand the new visitor experience and to comply with NEPA/EIS review.
- **USFWS “Let it Go” Policy**
US Army Corps of Engineers storm damage reduction study is needed for the entire Assateague Island before a change in management policy is adopted in the CCP.
- **Mosquito Control**
The biting insects are horrible in the proposed Alternate B location for the recreational beach.
- **NPS Management Area**
8.5 acres of parking area (exactly) and 1 mile of recreational beach for Alternative B will adversely limit NPS management options.
- **Endangered Species/Wilderness**
Major federal programs will ‘unbalance’ Alternative B unless a public recreation area is set aside from critical habitat & wild lands.
- **Emergency Plan**
A strategy and actions are needed to keep the beach open following a major storm or Government shut down.

Let’s Save the Beach, not the Breach!

The residents of the Delaware Bay area recognized and appreciated the longstanding efforts of the Fish and Wildlife Service ...**and provided lots of public input on their draft CCP last year.**

Save Our Beach Coalition Comments
Prepared by Bill Krause PE
August 16, 2012



FWS considered the comments received on the draft Prime Hook CCP/EIS, and made several changes to alternative B, including revising several management strategies.

- **Clarified that dune restoration is a likely first step in a proposal to restore marsh habitat on the refuge.**
- **Modified the proposed hunting program, to allow waterfowl hunting 4 days per week until 3 p.m. consistent with State regulations and modified hunt areas to minimize disturbance to resources and reduce conflicts between users**
- **Continued to allow year-round access to the western 4 miles of Prime Hook Creek for visitors engaged in uses such as wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and fishing.**
- **Decided to permit the use of adulticides for mosquito control when there is a documented human disease threat, instead of only when a public health emergency is declared.**

For Chincoteague NWR’s Alternative B, similar changes will work best towards achieving the refuge’s purposes, vision, and goals, FWS policies, the goals of other State and regional conservation plans, and will most effectively address key issues raised during the planning process.