

# **A G E N D A**

## **TOWN OF CHINCOTEAGUE**

Chincoteague to Assateague Beach Access Committee

**May 25, 2011 - 9:00 AM**

Town Hall Council Chamber

1. Call to Order
2. Review of US Fish & Wildlife Service May 2011 Newsletter to provide comments by June 1<sup>st</sup> on:
  - Draft Vision Statement
  - Draft Planning Goals
3. Update on the CNWR Economic Impact Study status
4. Other discussion items or future committee agenda items

# Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

## *Comprehensive Conservation Planning Update*

May 2011

### **Progress to Date**

Since our last planning update in February 2011, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has made considerable progress in developing the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs). On April 6, 2011 our planning team – consisting of representatives from the Town of Chincoteague, Accomack County, Commonwealth of Virginia, and Assateague Island National Seashore, as well as USFWS – met to draft the vision statement and revise the draft goals for the CCP. The results of this effort are included in this newsletter and we welcome comments by June 1, 2011.

In addition, we have continued work on the parallel efforts described previously, namely the structured decision-making process for determining the best location of the recreational beach. Other efforts in progress or planned that will be incorporated into the CCP include: pony management plan, hunt management plan, and socio-economic study.

### **Background Information**

In our previous newsletter, we gave information regarding the establishment of the Chincoteague NWR and its purposes. The draft CCP and its EIS will also include Wallops Island NWR. The refuge was established on July 10, 1975 with the transfer of 373 acres of land to the USFWS from the National Aeronautics and



*Marshland on the refuge*

Space Administration (NASA). Located in Accomack County, Virginia, Wallops Island NWR is comprised mainly of salt marsh and woodlands and supports a variety of trust species, including upland- and wetland-dependent migratory birds.

Wallops Island NWR was opened to deer hunting in 2002 to reduce the effects of overbrowsing by deer on refuge habitats and reduce the potential of deer collisions with vehicles on the adjacent state highway 175 and neighboring flight facility. No other public uses are allowed on the refuge.

### **Vision Statement and Goal Development**

The vision statement is a synthesis of the refuge's purpose, the Refuge System mission and goals, and other biological, legal, and social concerns in which a refuge has a role. It is intended to be an expression of what the refuge will be like in the future in terms

of natural resources and visitor experience, but is not intended to be comprehensive or focused on facts.

The planning team developed draft goals for the CCP. The goals are descriptive, open-ended, and often broad statements of desired future conditions that work toward achieving the refuge's purpose. The resulting draft goals are presented here, accompanied by descriptions of how each goal will be translated into management objectives and actions, which is the next step in the process.

### **Next Steps**

*May 2011-July 2011*

We will be developing various draft alternatives, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We expect the draft alternatives to be available by summer 2011, and will post them on the refuge website.

## Comprehensive Conservation Planning Goals for the Refuge

**Goal 1: Coastal Habitats.** Provide quality coastal habitats to support wildlife, fish, and plants by managing in concert with natural processes as part of the Delmarva coastal barrier island system.

*This goal emphasizes how natural processes drive all aspects of the refuge, with the acknowledgment that there may be some instances where other management objectives come into consideration.*

**Goal 2: Managed Wetlands (Impoundments).** Manage refuge impoundments to support native wildlife and plant communities, including a diversity of waterbirds, other aquatic species, and species of conservation concern. When an impoundment no longer meets conservation targets or is not viable to maintain, restore its natural hydrology and manage it as part of the natural system.

*This goal addresses a management objective that may require active management but should be conducted in concert with Goal 1.*

**Goal 3 : Upland Habitats.** Manage upland habitats to provide forage, cover, and other essential habitat for wildlife including landbirds, migrating monarch butterflies, and Delmarva fox squirrel as focal species.

*This goal guides many management objectives and actions covered in the Habitat Management Plan, which broadly outlines how the refuge should protect and provide habitat for particular species of concern.*

**Goal 4: Southern Barrier Islands Unit (Assawoman, Metompkin, Cedar).** Perpetuate the long term viability of native avian communities, turtles, and natural habitats on the Refuge's remote barrier islands through a partnership approach.

*This goal reflects how the Southern barrier islands are managed differently, such that all decisions are made in partnership with other entities that have adjacent and joint land ownership.*

**Goal 5: Partnerships.** Working with partners, protect and restore vigorous, viable populations of migratory and resident wildlife, fish, and native plants and their habitats found on the Delmarva Peninsula and identified in state, national, and international treaties, plans, and initiatives. Take a leadership role in collaborative regional efforts to achieve broader conservation goals and serve as a catalyst for achieving a bi-state eco-regional partnership.

*This goal reflects ongoing efforts by the refuge, USFWS, and partners to explore how best to establish a regional conservation network for the Delmarva Peninsula . Broader conservation goals may include improved water quality, ecological functions, environmental education, and regional habitat connections among others.*

**Goal 6: Visitor Services.** People of all ages and abilities develop a stewardship ethic while enjoying their refuge experience and increasing their knowledge of the Service, System, and refuge.

*This goal is intended to help foster an appreciation of the natural world, increase the variety of people accessing the refuge and expand the public perception of the types of activities that are compatible and appropriate to the refuge from the traditional "big 6" (hunting, fishing, wildlife photography and observation, and environmental interpretation and education) to bicycling and enjoying the beach.*

**Goal 7: Refuge Administration.** Maintain and enhance refuge infrastructure and operations responsibly and sustainably for the safety and well being of the wildlife, cultural resources, public, and employees.

*This goal is relevant to future decisions about facilities and visitor experience and emphasizes the importance of planning for sea level rise, access, energy efficiency, and other factors when making decisions about infrastructure that will last beyond the 15-year period covered by the CCP.*

## Vision Statement

*The Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges encompass extraordinary and ever-changing lands at the edge of the sea, a place where unique habitats and wildlife flourish. In partnership with others, the refuges are a vital part of a larger system of protected lands and waters on the Delmarva Peninsula critical to migratory birds. People from around the world can visit the refuges to learn, recreate, refresh themselves, be inspired by wildlife and wild lands, and renew their connection with nature.*

### Contact Information

For additional information on Chincoteague NWR, please visit the refuge website at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/chinco/>

Contact refuge staff at:

Telephone: 757/336-6122  
Fax: 757/336-5273

Please send mail to:  
Chincoteague NWR  
P.O. Box 62  
Chincoteague Island, VA 23336

For more information on the planning process please contact:

Thomas Bonetti, Refuge Planner  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035  
Phone: 413/253-8307

Email: [northeastplanning@fws.gov](mailto:northeastplanning@fws.gov)

Please put "Chincoteague NWR" in the subject line.

## Refuge Events

**June-August 2011**-Children in the Woods- 9 am- 1 pm daily-Week long day camp for kids who have completed 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. Call (757) 336-6122 for more information.

**July 25, 2011**-Sunrise Pony Walk-Saltwater Cowboys move Chincoteague Ponies down the beach at sunrise.

**July 27, 2011**-Annual Pony Swim-Saltwater Cowboys lead ponies across the Assateague Channel to prepare for the annual auction.

**July 28, 2011**-Annual Pony Auction-Chincoteague Ponies are auctioned off to the public.

**September 24, 2011**-Annual Beach Cleanup-Part of both National Public Lands Day and the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup. Entrance to Chincoteague NWR is free all day.

## Natural History Association Talks

**May 14, 2011, 2 pm**-Gardening with Native Plants-Jack Humphries and Clyde Morris

**May 28, 2011, 7 pm**-History of Decoys in North America-Dr. Cynthia Byrd

**June 3, 2011, 7 pm**-Bees, Bugs, and Pollination-Beekeepers' Guild of the Eastern Shore.

**July 1, 2011, 2 pm**-Birds of the Eastern Shore-George Budd



Assateague Lighthouse

Mike Dyer/Volpe

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>



**May 2011**

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
National Wildlife Refuge System  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035-9589

