Beach Access News

Town of Chincoteague
Assateague Beach Access Committee August 2012

Mayor Tarr sends letter of appreciation to the National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service for restoring our beach access.

Following repair of last season's storm damage, the recreational beach at Tom's Cove has been better than ever this summer. Parking areas have been moved further west providing a nice wide open seashore that may even allow for natural sand dunes to be established.

Assateague Island National Seashore Superintendant Trish Kicklighter describes the ongoing success of their management strategy and offers to work together for a viable and sustainable solution.

"Our parking lot management plan for the past several years has been to create a small berm in front of the parking lots and to set the berm and parking lots at an elevation that prohibits overwash during normal lunar, high tides but allows for overwash during larger storms … In front of parking lot four, we are even seeing some naturally forming dunes. Because we are seeing new land on the west and naturally forming dunes, we believe our management approach is working." Trish Kicklighter in Letter to Mayor Tarr, May 31, 2012 **(visit www.chincoteague-va.gov/beach-access)**

Will the investment of $700,000 tax dollars be protected from damage this winter? Take a look at what a partnership with the National Park Service can do:

BALLSTON BEACH BARRIER DUNE COMMUNITY RESTORATION PROJECT – Cape Cod National Seashore

Safe Harbor has developed an innovative restoration model, which uses storm winds to restore eroded coastal habitat. This low-tech system uses specific patterns of 24" sand fencing, to duplicate the wind resisting performance of beach grass. This passive strategy stabilizes eroded areas while collecting new sand, often raising elevations up to two feet a year. The fencing system can be quickly installed, using a rubber mallet to tap each slat into the sand. No excavation or posts are required. New layers of fencing can be placed to create a form compatible with adjacent dune profiles.**(Read more at *www.*SafeHarborEnv.com)**

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NASA Wallops Flight Facility has a new beach…and a partnership with the USACE!

The beach is the centerpiece of the Wallops Island Storm Damage Reduction project. Built in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the beach serves as a buffer between the ocean and Wallops' critical launch assets. Paul Bull, program manager for the beach replenishment project said "Multiple programs rely on our launch assets each year, not to mention upcoming commercial space station resupply missions, and this beach will help mitigate against natural threats."

Engineers designed the sea wall and beach to withstand everything from estimated potential sea-level rise to the proverbial 100-year storm. Now, with the completion of the beach, workers are in the process of **installing sand fencing to help protect the beach from erosion, and in the fall beach grass will be planted**. (Emphasis added to article - http://www.nasa.gov/centers/wallops/news/beach.html)

The Town of Chincoteague has proposed a more affordable solution for protection of the shoreline at Tom's Cove (1-2-3 Common Sense Plan) however the principles are the same: partnership with our Federal agencies --- and install sand fence and plant beach grass to maintain a natural dune system!

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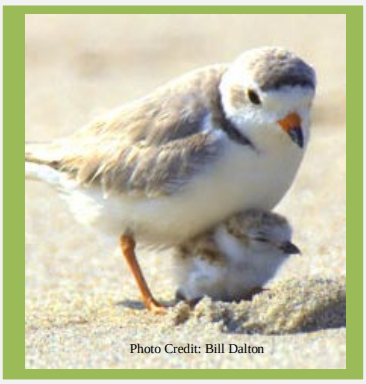
Photo Credit: Bill Dalton

Congratulations to the US Fish and Wildlife Service! Regional refuge employees were recognized as 2011 Recovery Champions for their work to recover piping plover populations. "Recovery Champions are helping listed species get to the point at which they are secure in the wild and no longer need Endangered Species Act protection" said Service Director Dan Ashe. According to a report by the Center for Biological Diversity (www.esasuccess.org) the U.S. Atlantic coast population has reached its overall recovery goal in 3 of the last 5 years …***all while allowing public beach recreation for over 1 million visitors per year at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge!***

USFWS Northeast Region has issued a Newsletter describing possible changes in the CCP

The Town of Chincoteague hopes to reach a firm agreement on several key issues so that we can return to a role of support and cooperation with the FWS to achieve the best Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the future. The Town of Chincoteague has made suggestions to be considered within the CCP process…the August FWS newsletter starts to check off on progress:

- ☐ **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 resolving issues of local tax revenue loss, priority of local law enforcement, local land use control, expansion of Refuge/Seashore boundaries, and approval of CCP/GMP management plans. The resolution of Town Council has been supported by Accomack County and the Virginia General Assembly.**
- ☐ **Completion of a Storm Damage Protection Plan for the Toms Cove/Atlantic Ocean Shoreline by the USACE in cooperation with DOI Secretary Salazar will be incorporated into the EIS and CCP preferred option for implementation.**
- ☐ **The 1-2-3 Common Sense Plan principles prepared by the Town to adapt the current management plan for the future will be incorporated in the draft CCP.**
- ✓ **The CCP Planning Team will communicate and work with Local and State government regularly during the CCP/EIS preparation.**

Note: This list only represents a few of the many important public comments that have been made.

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"The Plan has to acknowledge what could happen at the beach. Beach recreation was completely left out of the Wildlife Refuge goals. 'Swimming' should be part of the permitted recreation and included in the CCP"
Mayor Tarr, August 2012

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service August 2012 Newsletter provides a bridge between the last public comment period and the publication of a draft CCP in December.

On August 23rd, the Chincoteague Town Council and Beach Access Committee had the opportunity to meet Joe McCauley, the new regional lead of the refuge CCP core team. His style of quiet, considered communication was well received. The newsletter shows that ideas and issues important to the community may be reflected in the draft CCP, however, there is still more work to be done.

Prime Hook NWR in Delaware has recently issued a draft CCP/EIS for comment that gives a preview of what Chincoteague can expect in several months. The comment period was extended and people have supported filling the breached shoreline and requested a plan for rebuilding dunes. USFWS planners have stated that each Refuge will have a different CCP … let's hope that is true for Chincoteague NWR!

"Swimming and sunbathing are not priority public uses, but are general uses. They do not, as standalone activities, contribute to the fulfillment of refuge purposes, and would detract from the refuge staff's responsibilities to protect and manage fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats, as well as detract from administering priority uses. The refuge does not have the facilities or staff to manage these uses. These uses are not consistent with Service policy on secondary uses and are not consistent with any approved refuge management plan. Safety is also an issue. The general uses of swimming and sunbathing are, **therefore, determined to be inappropriate."** (Prime Hook CCP Appendix E)

Prime Hook plan may become a model for dealing with rising seas

By Jon Hurdle www.delawarefirst.org

'Rising sea level is the main threat to the refuge and the main driver behind the federal agency's long-awaited Comprehensive Conservation Plan.'

Actions Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis - **Shoreline Stabilization**

"All oceanfront and bay shorelines erode over time, in part as a natural process and in part as a process exacerbated and accelerated by human activity… Human activities and alterations on the coast can also be as catastrophic as hurricanes. .. An ecologically ideal and sustainable management response is to allow natural retreat. ..Shoreline stabilization using on-site material can also be accomplished by mechanically moving sand that has washed landward from the dunes back onto the dune line. The material can be reconfigured to create berms and dunes and provide shoreline stabilization … **this approach has been dismissed from further consideration."** (Prime Hook CCP Chapter 4)

Comments or Questions may be sent by mail to the Town of Chincoteague, 6150 Community Drive, Chincoteague, VA 23336 or by email to: wneville@chincoteague-va.gov.