

COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING

A G E N D A

TOWN OF CHINCOTEAGUE

September 22, 2011, 5:00 P.M. - Council Chambers - Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER

INVOCATION BY COUNCILMAN T. HOWARD

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS AND ADOPTION:

1. Presentation – Chincoteague to Assateague Beach Access Committee
 - a) Draft Town response to FWS August 2011 Newsletter Alternatives
2. Public Comment period regarding the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge CCP Newsletter and Preliminary Alternatives
3. Request for Additional Christmas Decorations and Lighting
4. Resolution for Gymnasium Deed of Conveyance
5. Council Member Comments

ADJOURN:

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Update

August 2011

Progress to Date

Since our last planning update in May 2011, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has made considerable progress in developing preliminary alternatives for the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated Environmental Impact Statement for Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges (the refuges). During the week of June 20, our planning team – including representatives from the Town of Chincoteague, Accomack County, Commonwealth of Virginia, and the National Park Service (NPS), as well as FWS – met to draft the preliminary alternatives. The results of this effort appear in this newsletter. Meetings will be held to present and discuss the preliminary alternatives on August 22, 2011. Public comments are welcome until October 1, 2011.

Upcoming Public Meetings

Monday, August 22, 2011

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

(Open House)

Chincoteague

National Wildlife Refuge

(Near Beach Parking Lot # 2)

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

(Open House)

7:00 PM – Presentation by
Refuge Manager

The Chincoteague Center
6155 Community Drive
Chincoteague Island, VA
23336-2731



Youths at the refuge

USFWS

Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) Basics

A CCP describes management actions that bring a refuge closer to its vision and help achieve its identified goals. The May 2011 newsletter presented the refuge draft vision and goals, which are reprinted here. The draft vision and goals will be revisited based on comments received. The draft vision and goals informed the development of preliminary alternatives and will be used in the

future to further develop and assess alternatives.

Alternatives (including a no-change alternative) are required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). CCP alternatives represent approaches to management options that FWS could reasonably undertake to achieve refuge purposes and goals, help fulfill the National Wildlife Refuge System mission, and respond to challenges.

Common to All Alternatives

The following proposed projects and programs would occur regardless of the alternative chosen for implementation.

Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

Each alternative anticipates future conditions as they pertain to climate change and anticipated sea level rise over the next 100 years and proposes a range of adaptation measures. A guiding principle is that sea level rise is a continuous, ongoing process, which along with coastal storms and other natural and man-made processes, reshapes coastal landscapes. Each alternative would provide for data gathering to measure and monitor the effects of climate change and sea level rise.

Focus Area

As indicated in Goal 5, Partnerships, the refuge plans to work with partners to explore how best to establish a regional conservation network for the southern Delmarva Peninsula. This area is recognized globally for its remarkable estuarine, coastal, and marine habitats and substantial populations of migratory and breeding shorebirds, colonial waterbirds, landbirds, and raptors. Unfortunately, several real and growing challenges threaten the area's rich and diverse natural heritage and the many benefits humans derive from the region's intact habitats and natural systems. This partnership would seek to expand a resilient, productive, and connected network of protected lands to facilitate adaptation of native species, natural communities, and ecological systems and processes across a full range of representative habitats from tidal salt marshes to upland forests.

Resource Protection

Current enforcement of all Federal and State laws applicable to the refuge to protect all known archaeological and historical sites would continue, including any efforts to increase resource protection through education.

Certain mandated responsibilities, such as protection of Federal trust species and wetlands and prevention and control of invasive species, would be accomplished under all alternatives.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Each alternative would provide protective conservation measures for federally listed species and their habitats on the refuge as indicated in recovery plans and other relevant regulation.

Bilingual/Multilingual Material

All alternatives would include the development of bilingual/multilingual information for regulations and environmental education.

Facilities and Infrastructure

In all alternatives where new facilities are being proposed, such as the relocated parking in Alternatives B and D, universal access, including standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act, would be incorporated, and safety considerations, such as shelters, would be made. In addition, impacts on resources and visitor services would be considered in design and construction to minimize any adverse effects.

Actions Considered but Not Developed

During the scoping period, the public provided many comments; a summary was provided in the February 2011 newsletter. These comments were used to inform the preliminary draft alternatives. This section identifies topics identified in those comments that are not included in the preliminary alternatives.

Beach Nourishment and Installation of Snow Fences and Jetties or Groins

Several public comments indicated a desire to maintain the current recreational beach and parking locations through

beach nourishment activities and engineering solutions like jetties and groins. Such activities are costly, may have adverse impacts on habitat and wildlife, and are incompatible with FWS and NPS management policies, namely the NPS Management Policies section 4.8.1.1 and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. These policies support allowing natural shoreline processes to continue without intervention. An ongoing sand bypassing program to restore the beach at the northern end of Assateague Island is being conducted by NPS and US Army Corps of Engineers to mitigate long-term erosion caused by the jetties at Ocean City Inlet. Consistent with current policy, the recreational beach will not be replenished and dune habitat will not be actively maintained.

Elimination of Hunting

Refuges provide habitat for the conservation and protection of all species of wildlife. Harvesting surplus animals through hunting is one tool used to manage wildlife populations at a level compatible with the environment, provide wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, and permit the use of a valuable renewable resource. Hunting is a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Therefore, hunting will not be eliminated.

Exclusion of Transit

Some of the public comments requested that transit not be considered in any of the alternatives. Alternative C does not include transit, but the others do include transit because it would provide supplemental beach parking when the beach parking is at capacity and would provide access after catastrophic storm events that may temporarily eliminate or restrict beach parking.

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Vision and Goals

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Next Steps

In addition to the public meetings at the recreational beach and in Chincoteague on August 22, the refuge will schedule two additional public meetings within the region. Comments received would be used to update and refine the alternatives. The refuge will then conduct the analysis necessary to compare and contrast solutions; each alternative would be assessed for potential environmental effects on the physical, natural, and human environment. The refuge would continue to keep the public informed with periodic updates throughout the process.

Contact Information

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

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

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

Those with hearing disabilities should contact the Federal Relay number 1 800/877 8339 and supply the operator with the refuge phone number above

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

Please put "Chincoteague NWR" in the subject line



Boardwalk / Mike Dyer; Volpe Center

Alternative A – Existing Conditions

Alternative A is the status quo (current management) alternative as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. This alternative continues current management strategies as established by the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Master Plan approved in 1992. Under this alternative, the refuge would protect and maintain all lands it administers, primarily focusing on the needs of threatened and endangered species, with additional emphasis on the needs of migratory birds and resident wildlife. The refuge would continue to preserve approximately 2,650 acres of wetland impoundments based on priority species needs. Natural coastal processes would continue to be the primary force that shapes habitat on the southern barrier islands. The refuge would continue to protect and enhance the wilderness character of the proposed area through actions to eliminate incompatible features and activities. There would be no change in the size or location of the proposed 1,300-acre wilderness area within the refuge.

Consistent with the 1992 Master Plan, the refuge would allow NPS to maintain 961 parking spaces (8.5 acres) at the recreational beach. As sea level rise and natural forces reduce the land base capable of supporting current parking, the refuge would identify and pursue alternative Chincoteague Island parking opportunities and institute a shuttle service with stowing capacity for beach cargo to the current recreational beach to supplement remaining beach parking.

Refuge staff would continue to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reduce the non-migrant Canada goose population. The refuge would continue existing partnerships with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the U.S. Navy for monitoring and recovery of trust species.

The refuge would allow grazing of the current pony population (125-150 ponies), consistent with the pony management agreement in partnership with the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Department.

Existing public uses, including wildlife observation, environmental education, walking and bicycling access, fishing, wildlife photography, and hunting of sika elk, white-tailed deer, and off-island migratory birds, would continue with the current facilities, programs, and policies. The off-road vehicle (ORV) closure schedule and vehicle limits would continue. The refuge would continue to manage opportunities for recreational shellfish and crab harvest.



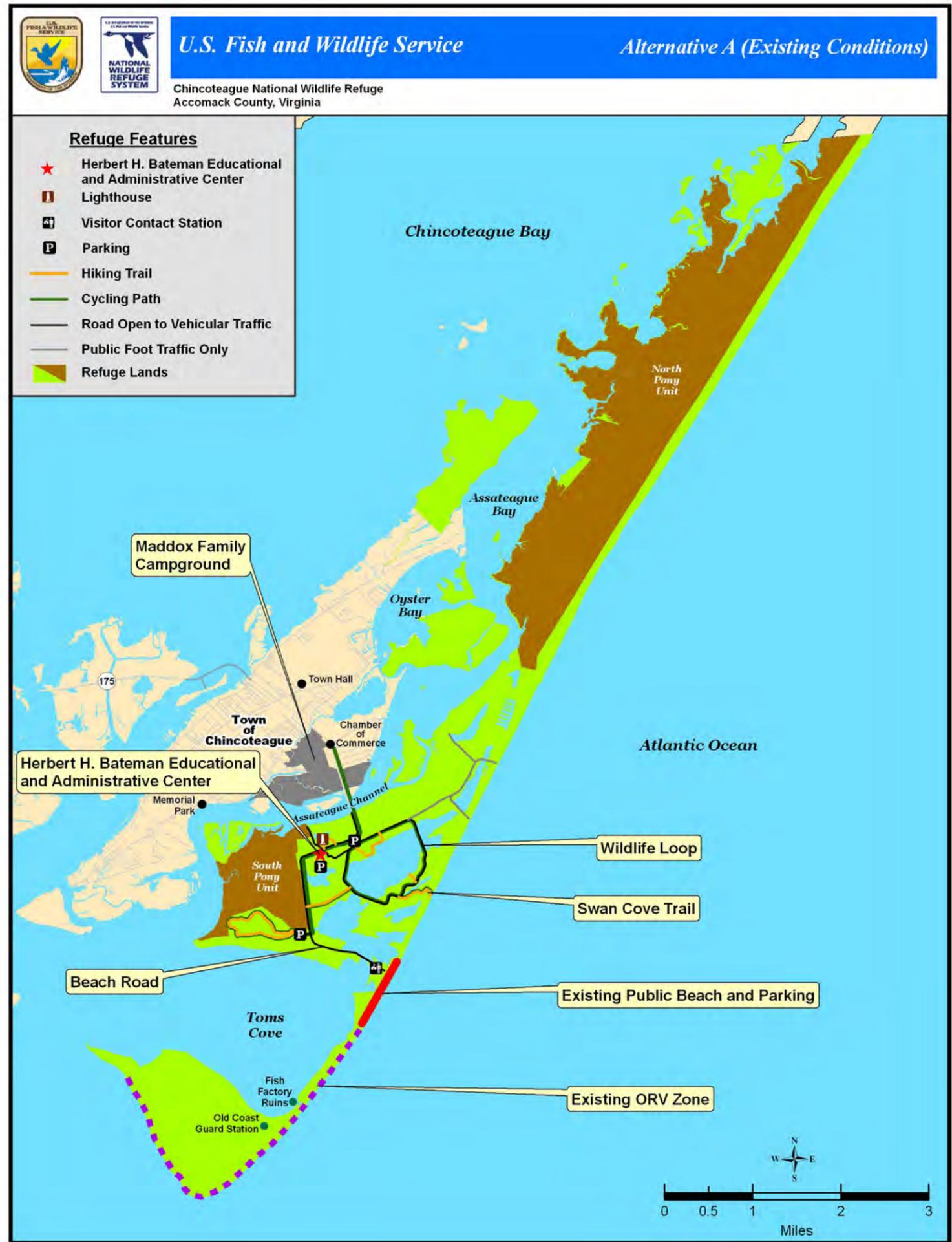
Youths kayaking

USFWS



Assateague Lighthouse

Lindsey Morse, Volpe Center



Alternative B

Alternative B would continue established habitat and wildlife management strategies but focus them in light of the new goals and vision established by this CCP and pursue additional management activities of resources and public use.

Natural Resource Management Under this alternative, the refuge would protect and maintain all lands it administers, primarily focusing on the needs of threatened and endangered species, with additional emphasis on the needs of migratory birds and resident wildlife. The refuge would continue to preserve approximately 2,650 acres of wetland impoundments, but make adjustments in accordance with a new impoundment management plan that takes into account various factors, such as the habitat needs of black ducks and monarch butterflies, climate change and natural coastal processes, and relocated beach access and parking. Natural coastal processes would continue to shape habitat on the southern barrier islands. If Toms Hook or Assawoman Island meet the minimum criteria for wilderness within the time period of this CCP, the refuge would evaluate their potential for wilderness designation at that time.

Beach Access and Parking Consistent with the 1992 Master Plan, the refuge would allow NPS to maintain 8.5 acres of land for parking at the recreational beach. In recognition of the vulnerability of the current parking, the refuge would develop and implement a site design plan for parking and access to a new beach location, approximately 1.5 miles north of the existing beach. The new recreational beach would offer accessible spaces near the beach, pedestrian and bicycle connections, and safe shelters for visitors. In addition, the refuge would identify and pursue alternative Chincoteague Island parking opportunities and institute a shuttle service with stowing capacity for beach cargo to supplement the beach parking.

Visitor Use and Experience Existing public uses would continue with some exceptions. All public access on the Service Road north of the new recreational beach parking would be restricted. A joint NPS and FWS Visitor Contact Station would be developed near the new recreational beach and the Beach Road causeway across Toms Cove would be demolished, thus restricting public access to Toms Hook. A vehicle turn-around area and launch point for non-motorized boats would be constructed at the new terminus of Beach Road. Assawoman Island would be completely closed to all forms of public use during the breeding season, consistent with the closure on Toms Hook. The refuge would eliminate recreational horseback riding. Swans Cove Bicycle Trail would be replaced by an alternative bicycle trail from Wildlife Loop north to the relocated recreational beach.

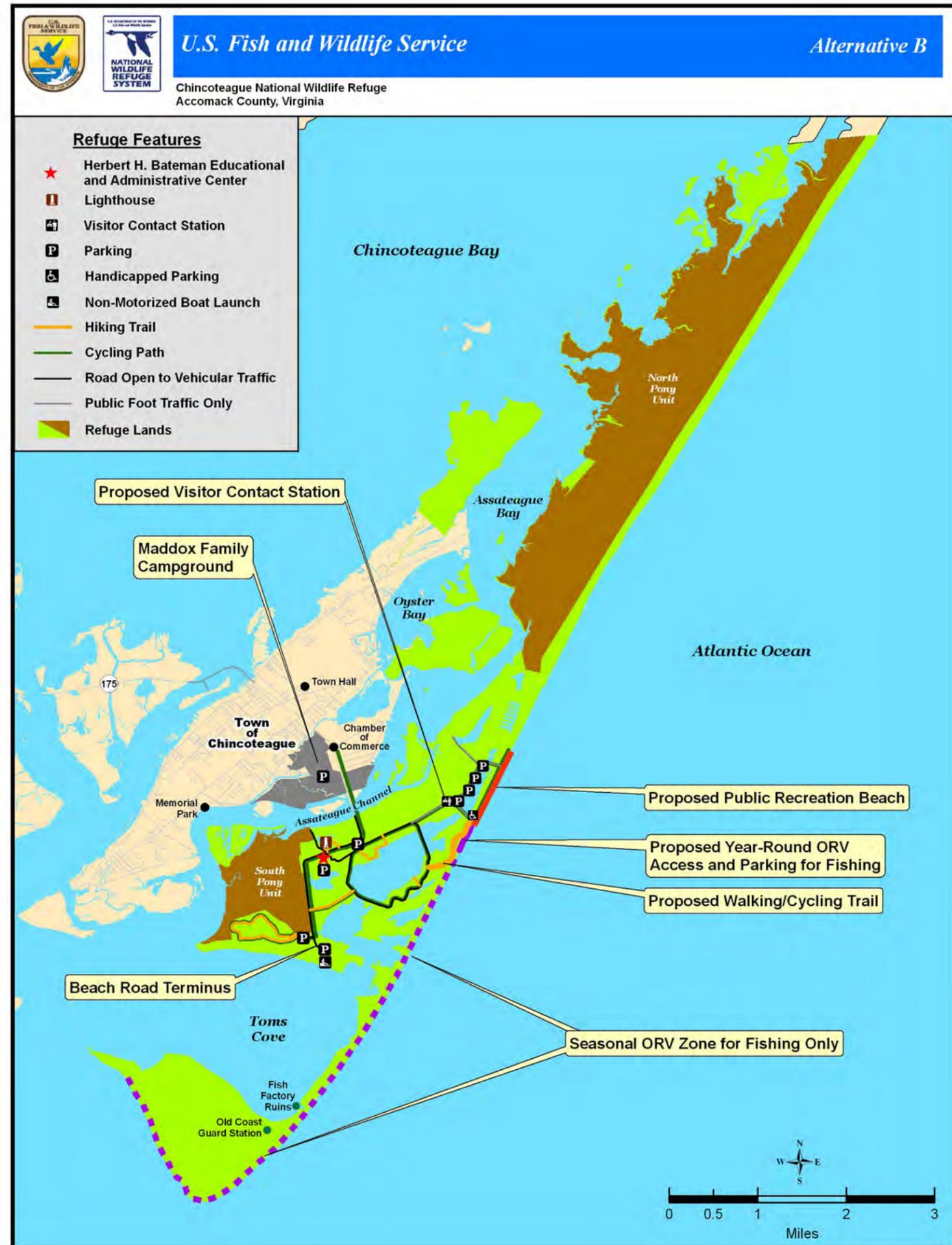
The refuge would maintain and where possible expand current hunting opportunities by including additional species, extending hours, and providing special events and opportunities for youth and women. The refuge would add mourning doves and light goose to the migratory bird hunting program and allow migratory bird hunting on Federal holidays. The refuge would also increase non-migrant Canada goose and light goose hunting opportunities in FWS wetland impoundments. The refuge would also add turkeys to the big game hunting program and pursue development of a trapping program for furbearers. The refuge would continue sika elk hunting and would conduct research to identify a desired population size. The refuge would continue to manage opportunities for recreational shellfish and crab harvest, but would phase out harvesting of horseshoe crabs within the intertidal zone. The refuge would request that the Commonwealth of Virginia restrict shellfish leases within identified areas.

ORV use would be permitted for fishing only. The ORV zone would be expanded from C dike to Toms Cove from approximately September 1 to March 14. For the rest of the time, the ORV zone would be closed to all public access. A new ORV beach parking area south of C dike would be accessible year-round for fishing.

The refuge would implement a pony management plan that meets multiple objectives: visitor viewing, habitat management, and pony health. The refuge would provide north and south units as long as the land base allows for safe pony management.

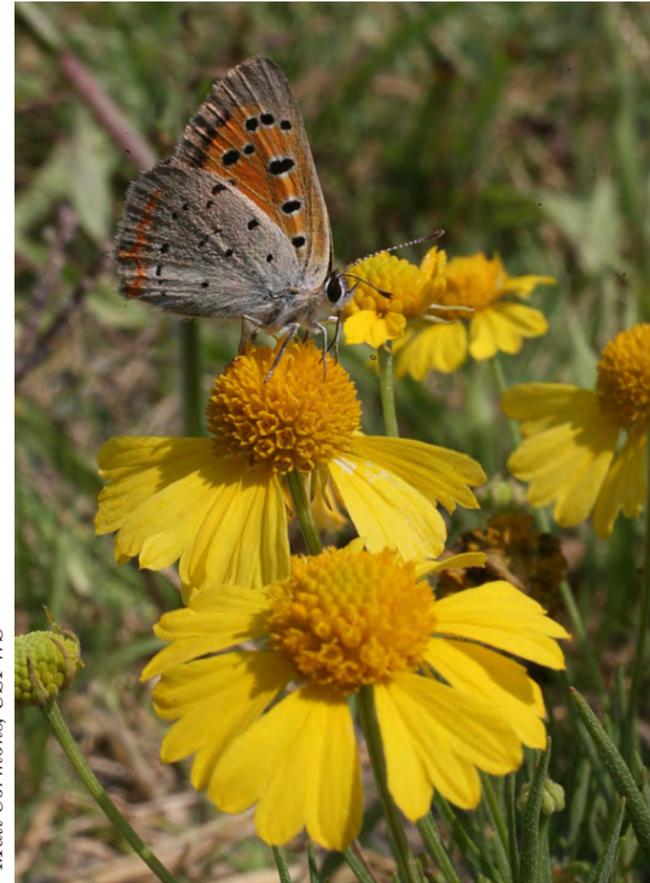
Partnerships The refuge, in conjunction with NPS, would work with the states of Maryland and Virginia to establish a marine sanctuary that ranges from the Atlantic Ocean into Chincoteague Bay. The refuge would pursue partnerships to enhance environmental education and interpretation on the Delmarva Peninsula.

Cultural Resource Management With partners, the refuge would restore the light keeper's house and historic landscaping at Assateague Lighthouse and develop new cultural resource and interpretation amenities, including a virtual tour of the lighthouse. The refuge would allow access to the cemetery near Beach Road and develop tours and controlled access opportunities for Assateague Village. Within Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuge, the refuge would work with NASA to develop a boardwalk and kiosk from the NASA Visitor Center.



Alternative C

Alternative C would utilize a habitat management strategy in which management actions and strategies would allow for natural succession and coastal processes to take place on the refuge with little intervention. Refuge administration of programs would be minimized primarily through reduction of activities, partnership, and use of volunteer staff.



Matt Cormons, USFWS

Natural Resource Management Under this alternative, the refuge would protect and maintain all lands it administers, primarily focusing on the needs of threatened and endangered species, with additional emphasis on the needs of migratory birds and resident wildlife. Existing management actions would continue as long as infrastructure (dikes, pumps, water control structures, etc) function as intended. Mandated monitoring of Federal trust species would continue, but other wildlife and habitat management actions would largely be performed on an incidental basis. Habitats would not be actively managed. The refuge would allow natural disturbances to occur. The refuge would continue to protect and enhance the wilderness character of the proposed area and there would be no change in the size or location of the proposed 1,300-acre wilderness area within the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

Beach Access and Parking Consistent with the 1992 Master Plan, the refuge would allow NPS to maintain 8.5 acres for parking at the recreational beach as long as the land base exists. As natural forces reduce the land base capable of supporting the current parking, feasible repairs would be made but the number of spaces would be reduced accordingly. Beach users would be able to use all parking available on the refuge but no new parking would be pursued by the refuge on Assateague or Chincoteague Islands. The refuge would not develop a shuttle system.

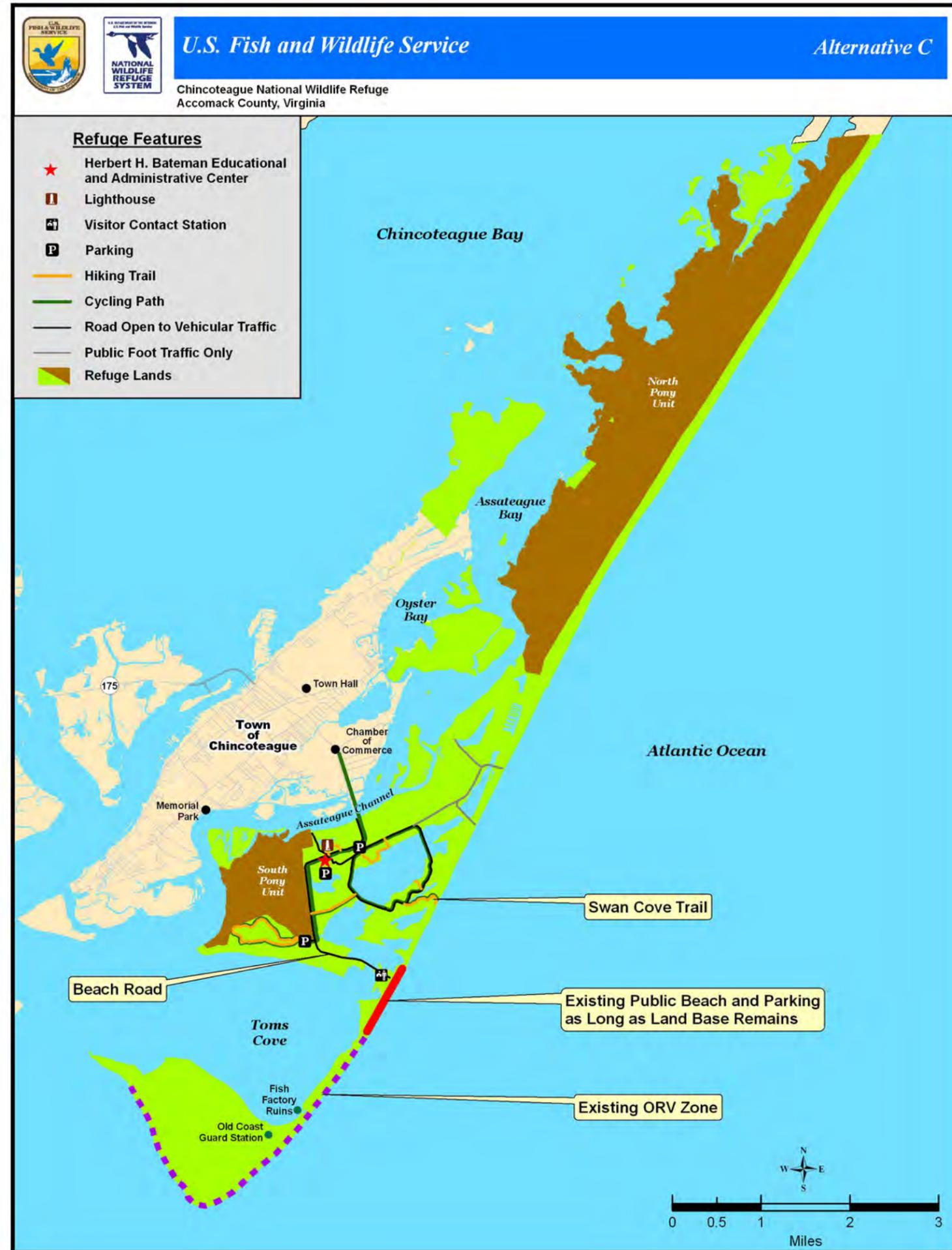
Copper butterfly on Sneezeweed

Visitor Use and Experience Existing public uses would continue with some exceptions. The NPS Toms Cove Visitor Center would only be maintained as long as the land base allows. ORV management would continue as is. The refuge would maintain current hunting opportunities, but with limited or no refuge check station and a streamlined permitting process. Refuge staff would increase non-migrant Canada goose and light goose hunting opportunities in FWS wetland impoundments and institute a Canada goose harassment program. The refuge would continue to manage opportunities for recreational shellfish and crab harvest.

The refuge would implement a pony management plan that meets multiple objectives: visitor viewing, habitat management, and pony health. The refuge would provide north and south units as long as the land base allows for safe pony management.

Partnerships The refuge would shift to teacher and partner-led environmental education and interpretation activities.

Cultural Resource Management The refuge would complete restoration of Assateague Lighthouse and maintain current access to cultural resources as resources allow.



Alternative D

Alternative D would direct staffing and funding towards maximizing habitat and wildlife management strategies. As a result of prioritizing habitat and wildlife management, public use activities and access may be reduced.

Natural Resource Management Under this alternative, the refuge would protect and maintain all lands it administers, primarily focusing on the needs of threatened and endangered species, with additional emphasis on the needs of migratory birds and resident wildlife. The refuge would continue to preserve approximately 2,650 acres of wetland impoundments, but make adjustments in accordance with a new impoundment management plan that takes into account various factors including the habitat needs of black ducks and monarch butterflies, climate change and natural coastal processes, and new beach access and parking. The refuge would work with partners to protect comparable freshwater habitat on the Delmarva Peninsula. Natural coastal processes would continue to be the primary force that shapes habitat on the southern barrier islands.

Beach Access and Parking The refuge would work with NPS to relocate the recreational beach, as indicated in Alternative B. The capacity of the parking area would be less than that of Alternative B. The refuge would pursue alternative Chincoteague Island parking opportunities and a shuttle service with stowing capacity for beach cargo to supplement the beach parking.

Visitor Use and Experience Existing public uses would continue but with several exceptions. All public access on the Service Road north of the new recreational beach parking would be restricted and public access to the beach south of the new recreational beach would be restricted from March 15 to August 31. A joint NPS and FWS Visitor Contact Station would be developed near the new recreational beach. The Beach Road causeway across Toms Cove would be demolished, thus restricting public access to Toms Hook. Assawoman Island would completely close to all forms of public use during the breeding season, consistent with the closure on Toms Hook. The refuge would eliminate recreational horseback riding. The refuge would phase out all ORV use over time. The refuge would prohibit smoking on the recreational beach. These actions are intended to reduce adverse impacts on wildlife.

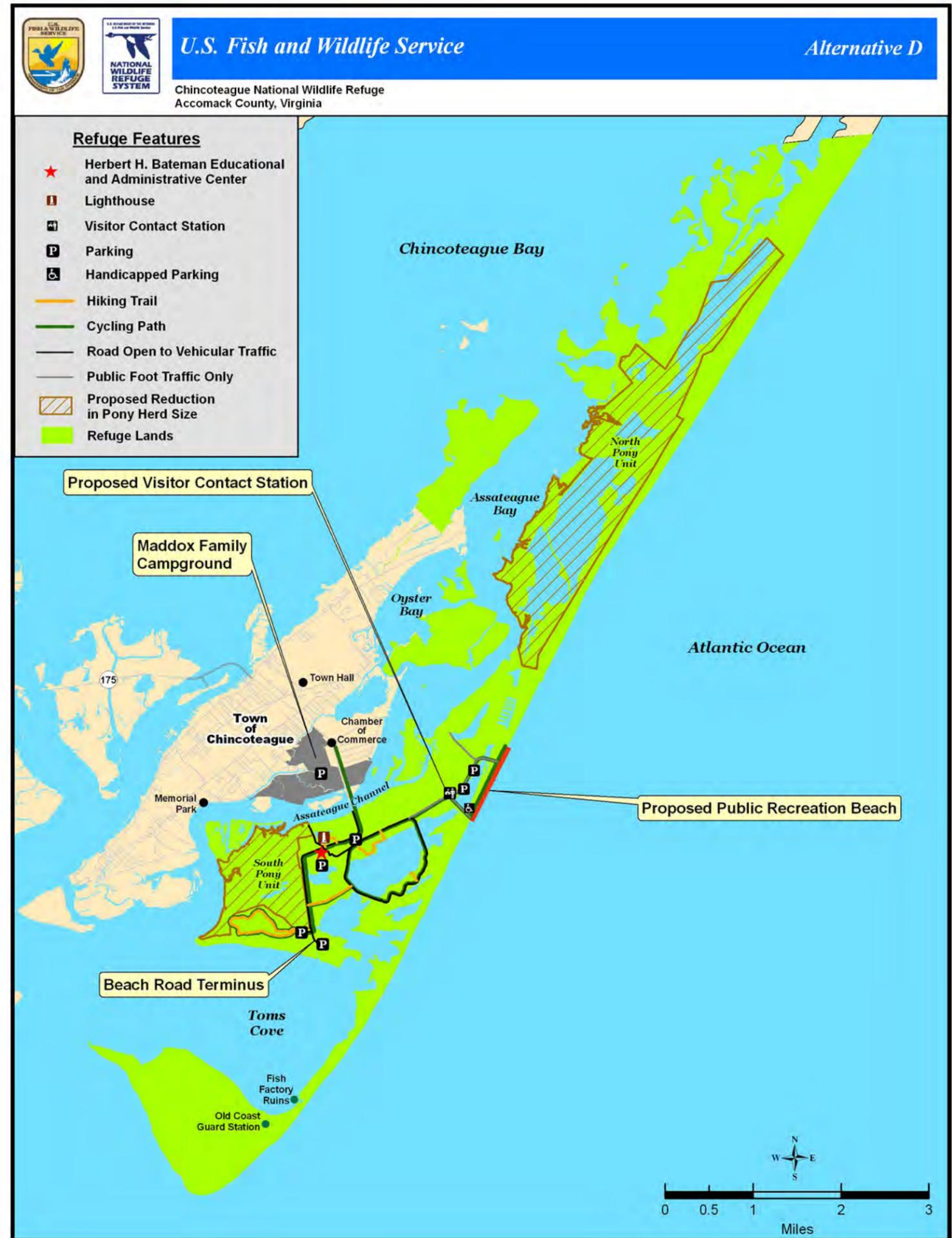
The refuge would maintain recreational hunting opportunities with a focus on local, regional, and state wildlife priorities like sika elk, light goose, and non-migrant Canada goose. The refuge would work to eliminate the sika elk population through continued recreational hunt and professional contracts within five years. The refuge would expand non-migrant Canada goose and light goose hunting opportunities to other refuge properties where feasible and work to reduce the populations. The refuge would continue to manage opportunities for recreational shellfish and crab harvest, but would phase out harvesting of horseshoe crabs within the intertidal zone. The refuge would request that the Commonwealth of Virginia restrict shellfish leases within identified areas.

The refuge would limit the number of ponies allowed to graze on the refuge within 15 years to maximize habitat health and biodiversity. The refuge would reduce the size of the north unit and maintain a minimal viewable herd in the south unit as long as the land base allows. Once the south unit is no longer feasible, the refuge would develop a new small viewing area near the relocated recreational beach.

Partnerships The refuge, in conjunction with NPS, would work with Maryland and Virginia to establish a marine sanctuary that ranges from the Atlantic Ocean into Chincoteague Bay. The refuge would pursue and enhance off-refuge environmental education and interpretation partnerships with an emphasis on wildlife and habitat issues. The refuge would also work with partners to manage exotic, invasive, and nuisance species outside of refuge lands.

Cultural Resource Management The refuge would complete restoration of Assateague Lighthouse and maintain current access to cultural resources.

Wilderness The refuge would continue to protect and enhance the wilderness character of the proposed area through actions to eliminate incompatible features and activities. The refuge would pursue wilderness designation for the proposed 1,300-acre wilderness area and for Toms Cove and Assawoman Island within the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.



Chincoteague NWR
P.O. Box 62
Chincoteague Island, VA
23336



Draft Copy

September 22, 2011

Lou Hinds, Refuge Manager
Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 62
Chincoteague Island, Virginia 23336

RE: CNWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan
August 2011 Newsletter

Dear Mr. Hinds:

On behalf of the Town of Chincoteague and the Chincoteague to Assateague Beach Access Advisory Committee, I am presenting a brief list of comments, concerns and ideas regarding the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) Alternative Concepts for the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge that are included in your August 2011 Newsletter. We appreciate your efforts to allow community participation in the CCP planning process and sincerely hope that you will work with us on the Alternatives before one is selected.

In a letter from Congressman Scott Rigell, dated May 27, 2011, the USFWS received a comment that 'public access to the beach' should be added as a Vision and Goal for the CCP. We are surprised that this suggestion was not honored in the published August newsletter of alternatives. Since the draft vision and goals inform the development of preliminary alternatives according to the newsletter there should be another opportunity to review a revised set of alternatives that respond to this important goal of over 80% of the visitors to the Refuge¹. As you move forward to select a preferred management strategy, please consider the following recommendation:

An Alternative Plan for the next 15 to 20 year period based on 'Current Management' modified to 1) eliminate the acquisition of land on Chincoteague Island, 2) eliminate the use of transit to replace existing beach parking, 3) continue to permit current compatible uses, and 4) revise the 1992 Master Plan to allow a USACE Storm Damage Reduction Study/Plan/Project that will protect and restore the existing recreational beach and 961 space parking lot infrastructure from the effects of erosion and storm damage. We believe that this is a responsible solution to "make the most of what we have" in a time of economic constraint.

Everyone agrees that the CCP for the future should be built on a foundation of good principles and best information. The simplified format of the newsletter gives the impression that certain information is not being considered, beginning with not presenting a record of success for the 1992 Master Plan. This makes people think that change is being proposed for the wrong reasons. The following reasons and

¹ Town of Chincoteague 2010 Visitor Questionnaire

Draft Copy

principals are offered in support of the Town position defending the exceptional combination of Beach and Wildlife at CNWR for another 20 years.

- **NPS Assigned Area** – The ‘assigned area’ described in the Inter-Agency Agreement between USFWS and NPS pertaining to the administration, development, and use of the Toms Cove Hook area is the result of years of negotiated agreements and Congressional review by Senate and House of Representatives committees.² Relocation or change in the area provided for the purpose of public recreation use must include more than 1 mile of beach and 8.5 acres for parking lots offered in the alternatives. Public review of a draft inter-agency agreement is requested.
- **Barrier Island Shelter** – The approved 1992 EIS and CNWR Master Plan have provided for the repair and maintenance necessary to protect developed facilities including the recreational beach and parking areas adjacent to Toms Cove. This is consistent with Public Law 89-195 Section 8 that requires a plan for erosion control and hurricane protection of the seashore. The Town cannot support a change in FWS/NPS management strategies that would allow an inlet or breach to remain without repair between the Atlantic Ocean and Toms Cove. This would expose an ‘at-risk’ population located on Chincoteague Island to over 4 feet of base flood elevation and storm damage.
- **Exceptional Visitor Experience** – The current seashore destination at Toms Cove provides Refuge visitors with an exceptional sequence of views, activities and the freedom to enjoy the outdoors in the convenience of their own mode of transportation. Toms Cove is a 360 degree experience that is worth fighting for. A plan for the protection and nourishment of the land base necessary for beach and parking areas must be one alternate strategy.
- **The Local Economy** – Alternative management actions have been proposed by the FWS that would change the cost, convenience and accessibility of the Refuge to the average visitor. The Town is concerned that these changes would cause serious and lasting harm to the local tourism based economy, and a loss of jobs as a direct result of proposed changes in the CCP.
- **The Local Culture** – Coordinated strategies between FWS and NPS regarding water/shoreline access, commercial boat permits, fishing and aquaculture uses that are included in the alternatives appear to significantly impact traditional water based income, jobs, businesses and industries. Any restriction on the Chincoteague Pony herd will cause direct harm to the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company and our Community identity. The Town cannot support increased Federal regulation of everything that defines our local culture and economy.
- **Protect Existing Infrastructure** – The Town supports the protection and maintenance of current infrastructure and facilities for the next generation to enjoy. Beach Road access to the Seashore, convenient parking areas, the Bateman Visitor Center/Lighthouse, the NPS Visitor Center/Coast Guard Station, and even the freshwater impoundment system are all high value public investments that are placed at risk in the proposed alternatives by a change in management strategies.
- **Gateway Town and Wildlife Refuge** – Aside from issues of alternative transportation, the potential purchase of Maddox Campground using federal tax dollars raises significant issues about the wise use of public investment, loss of Town tax base and unfair competition, as well as

² US Code Title 16/Ch.1/SubChLXIII/Section 459f-11, Final EIS for the CNWR Master Plan, 1992, Compatibility Determination – NPS Activities approved 2004-2014.

Draft Copy

NPS control over interstate commerce and restricted marine access along the Assateague Channel waterway. The Town is concerned about the increased encroachment of Seashore/Refuge boundaries on Chincoteague Island and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

- **Transit at all cost** – Selection of the Volpe Center acting as a consultant to prepare the EIS and Master Plan for CNWR is a conflict of interest that only results in the FWS promoting an expensive, unsustainable urban form of transit services at any cost. Public comment representing over 16,000 visitors to the Refuge in 2010 indicated that 82% would not return for another visit if direct beach parking was not available and a trolley/bus from a remote parking lot in Chincoteague was available instead.³ The Town supports a strategy that maintains at least 961 parking spaces at Toms Cove with reserve parking areas on the Refuge for an interim post-storm response.
- **No Cookie Cutter plan** – CNWR is a unique and treasured landscape that has worldwide recognition. The Town does not support FWS alternative strategies as presented to reduce or eliminate the famous Wild Chincoteague Ponies, to replace individual outdoor experience with a Disney-like group experience, and to apply uniform national policies that further reduce limited public access to the Seashore with EE zones.

Beyond the next 20 years, you make a strong case for an alternate strategy to relocate the recreational beach and associated infrastructure to the north. We can agree that a contingency plan should be prepared for the next 20 years; however, we cannot support proposed Alternative B in its current form. Alternative C which would reduce USFWS program activities below current levels is not desirable. Alternative D contains exclusive ‘wildlife only’ goals that are adequately provided for in other areas of the CNWR (Wallops Island, Southern Barrier Islands unit, Eastern Shore VA NWR) and do not belong within the National Seashore boundary.

Without a viable alternative to support, the Town of Chincoteague chooses to advocate a continuation of the current management strategies. Ongoing modifications that balance recreational and wildlife values with deliberate actions to protect existing public investment over the next 20 years is the preferred solution.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the people who visit the Refuge and Seashore, and those who work in the surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

John H. Tarr
Mayor

cc. Trish Kicklighter, NPS
Elected Representatives

³ Town of Chincoteague Beach Access Questionnaire, 2010

After participating in several meetings of the FWS Planning Team, and providing detailed comments on the issues that concern the Town of Chincoteague, we were hopeful that 4 good alternative concepts would be presented. Unfortunately, only one alternative has been developed in enough detail to allow full consideration. The following list is provided to clearly identify those elements of the draft CCP that we hope the FWS will work on in more detail with Town of Chincoteague representatives.

Strongly Oppose

- A. Oppose the current direction of refuge management that favors the use of alternative transportation systems and treats the idea as a Fundamental Value.
- B. Oppose NPS/FWS policies (or local manager's interpretation) that do not allow for beach and dune preservation and the protection of existing infrastructure from natural forces.
- C. Oppose the nomination or management of Toms Cove Hook and Assawoman Island as 'wilderness'. Both locations would be unlikely to meet the criteria necessary for designation and would unreasonably limit NASA and Town activities at Wallops Island and Chincoteague Island.
- D. Oppose new Federal regulation of commercial or recreational fishing, shellfishing, aquaculture and crabbing that would duplicate the permitting authority of State and other agencies already regulating these activities. Oppose public 'buy back' of existing commercial leases.
- E. Oppose any options that abandon the public trust and allow existing visitor use facilities and infrastructure, specifically recreational beach parking areas, to be subjected to natural coastal processes without maintenance, repair or replacement.
- F. Oppose the Marine Sanctuary concept that would further limit public access and use in favor of exclusive environmental research that could be conducted in the Southern Barrier Island unit of the Refuge where public access is already restricted.
- G. Oppose the use of 100 year estimates for potential Sea Level Rise to determine the Alternatives for a 20 year CCP.
- H. Oppose the purchase of land within the Town of Chincoteague for the purpose of expanding Refuge or Seashore boundaries, or to establish parking/transit facilities that would lead to a reduction of 1,000 spaces provided for recreational beach parking on the Refuge.

Support

- A. Support for the current adaptive management plan that has been successful for the last 20 years.
- B. Support for the description of a pony management plan that permits up to 150 ponies as contained in Alternative A. Request that same language would be repeated in Alternate B and C. Request that the reference to 'current population' be deleted from Alternatives B and C to eliminate an unintended constraint on the herd size if there is a reduction in any one year.
- C. Support for Recreational Horseback Riding to remain a permitted use. The proposed elimination of this use in all areas of the Refuge is not justified in any way and raises the question of whether the CVFC can even conduct their annual roundup for Pony Penning.
- D. Support for entrance fees to be allocated for necessary beach and parking lot repair and maintenance.
- E. Support for providing access to the USCG Station for interpretive use and educational programs.
- F. Emergency Post-Storm Response Plan for Access to the Beach that provides interim parking on the Refuge.

Request for more Information

- A. Request that the FWS cooperate with a study by FEMA and USACE of the Tom's Cove shoreline to determine the best means (including beach nourishment and/or 'land base replenishment') to continue recreational beach use, and protection of the public health and safety for residents of Chincoteague Island from the potential effects of natural hazards that are currently provided by the existing management of Assateague Island.
- B. Request cost information to be provided for each Alternative and to be included as criteria for selection of a preferred alternative.
- C. Request that any communication between FWS and VMRC regarding shellfish leases and commercial fishing to be shared with the Town of Chincoteague.
- D. Requested updated SLAMM model results based on LiDAR topography information.
- E. If FWS is the intended owner of a future campground facility in the Town of Chincoteague, please provide more information in the CCP alternatives to describe proposed management actions for the next 20 year planning period.
- F. Request FWS to provide written confirmation that proactive measures will be taken to maintain and restore existing recreational beach and parking areas until the CCP process is complete and the approved management plan is fully implemented.
- G. Request that FWS provide a newsletter update to include major topics of comments and areas of agreement in order to assure the public that their concerns have been heard and will be included in the preparation of the draft EIS over the next year.



RESOLUTION

Be it RESOLVED pursuant to the provisions of §15.2-1803 of the code of Virginia of 1950, as amended, as follows:

1. That the Town of Chincoteague accept the Deed of Conveyance dated August 12, 2011 from Accomack County to the Town of Chincoteague conveying to the Town certain real estate located in the Town known as the Chincoteague Elementary School Gym Property.
2. That the Town manager execute such acceptance on behalf of the town and causes a certified copy of this Resolution to be attached to said Deed.
3. That this Resolution shall be effective upon passage.

AYES: _____

NAYS: _____

Approved this 3rd Day of October, 2011

Mayor

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of the Resolution duly passed by the town Council of the Town of Chincoteague this 3rd day of October, 2011.

Town Manager