

[From Spring 2000]

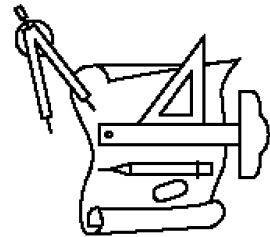
## **CREAC Status**

Progress on planning, designing, and building the Chincoteague Refuge Educational and Administrative Center (CREAC) has been tremendous! Indeed, 1999 included: two visits to Capitol Hill to brief Congressional aides on the Interior Appropriations Committee as well as staff members from both Virginia and Maryland; two visits to Richmond to brief the Governor's staff; a variety of media stories about the unprecedented support (both financial and written) from a myriad of sources; monthly CREAC meetings to identify priorities and to develop work plans; and, an intense awareness campaign that included stuffing 30,000 "Paradise Found" brochures with CREAC-related information and distributing them to every hotel, motel, and campground on the island to garner support from the more than 1.4 million annual refuge visitors.

These efforts resulted in the refuge receiving \$2 million to begin planning and design of the CREAC and interior exhibits as well as Phase I of site preparation which will include building demolition, parking lot development and road realignment. At the eleventh hour, the Honorable James Gilmore, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, recommended that \$500K in state funds be directed to support the educational components of the CREAC.

Supervisory ORP Angela Tracy and Refuge Manager John Schroer and I barely had time to catch our breath before we and a technical evaluation team comprised of regional personnel and Larry Points, Chief of Interpretation, Assateague Island National Seashore, evaluated 26 Requests for Qualifications from A&E firms across the midAtlantic. In an accelerated and highly unusual effort, the technical evaluation team narrowed the A&E firms down to five, invited them to the refuge to provide oral presentations, and then selected one A&E firm, CUH2A, as the firm best suited to meet our needs for the CREAC.

During February, refuge staff and members of the community (including a special panel of folks who used to live in Assateague Village as well as educators throughout the Eastern Shore of Virginia) met with CUH2A to develop the Site Master Plan. As a result of the three-day meeting, CUH2A will develop three design alternatives and present them at a public meeting in Chincoteague at the end of March.



The President's budget for fiscal year 2001 also contains \$3.5 million to begin construction on the CREAC. Please note that the budget is far from being signed, but nonetheless, the CREAC has made it to the White House. Stay tuned for more details ... the best is yet to come!

Angela Tracy  
Supervisory ORP, CNWR

(Editor: Better yet, plan to attend the CNHA Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 20, 2000, and the accompanying special CREAC presentation which will provide an overview of the design alternatives and the latest status of this vital project.)