

[From Spring 2002]

## **At Long Last ... Progress!**

The long-awaited and much anticipated official groundbreaking ceremony for the CNWR's Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center was held on Saturday, January 26, 2002. And what a day it was!

Dignitaries, including family members of the late Honorable Herbert H. Bateman, the Honorable JoAnn Davis (1st Congressional District of Virginia), the Honorable Ed Schrock (who will be taking over the 1st Congressional District of Virginia), Northeast Regional Director Mamie Parker, Chief of Refuges for the Northeast Region Tony Leger and many others gathered on that beautiful winter day to celebrate what will instantly become the most-visited Fish and Wildlife Service facility in the country.

And, just in case you haven't visited the refuge since that fine day, Mid Eastern Builders (MEB) has not only broken ground, they have finished driving pilings and have begun to lay the foundation. "Now folks are really getting excited," said Refuge Manager John D. Schroer. "We've been talking about this facility for more than three decades and now we are watching it take form." According to Schroer, the facility is expected to be completed in spring 2003 with the grand opening scheduled for Mother's Day weekend.

In addition to the rapid progress being made on the construction of the Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center, a group of volunteers, which includes members of the Chincoteague Natural History Association, are launching a grant-writing campaign to help secure the final funds necessary to construct the educational and interpretive components of the new facility.

Currently, the construction documentation for the 5,000 square-foot exhibit gallery has been completed. "We plan to issue a solicitation for the fabrication and installation of the exhibits on the street in early March," said Schroer. Schroer further added that a contract should be awarded sometime in April.

Indeed, it is an exciting time not only for refuge staff, but also for the more than 1.3 million visitors who will soon be fully engaged and understand that the National Wildlife Refuge System is the only place in the world where the needs of wildlife come first.

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