

[From Spring 2002]

A Time of Transition

The face of public use on Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is about to undergo a major overhaul with the construction of the Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center (BEAC). Big things are in store; however, we will all have to bear with a few temporary inconveniences until the project is finished. What does this mean for our visitors?

Well, if you wish to speak with a particular staff person, don't look for him/her in the headquarters or sub-headquarters buildings. Those buildings will soon be gone. Refuge staff will be located in trailers next to the maintenance compound. The auditorium building will also be demolished; therefore, auditorium programs will be put on hold until the new facility is completed. Refuge Academy, a week-long summer youth camp, will not be offered this year because the auditorium will not be available for lunch breaks, indoor activities, and inclement weather.

International Migratory Bird Celebration (IMBC) in May and National Wildlife Refuge Week Celebration in October will have to find a new location. This year, IMBC will be a one-day event held near the lighthouse. And you can expect a little traffic in the spring while Beach Road is being realigned to provide a turning lane into the new facility. Additionally, new outdoor exhibits will be installed this summer on the Woodland Trail, Lighthouse Trail, and Wildlife Loop.

So what will become of the current visitor contact station? For now, it will continue to operate until the new facility is opened. After that time, it will be demolished and trees will be allowed to reclaim the area. However, the parking lot will remain to provide access to the Wildlife Loop and overflow parking for the Center.

During this time of change, some activities will proceed as usual. This spring, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge will continue to work with the National Park Service to offer environmental education (EE) programs to local school groups. The EE season starts April 1 and runs through May 24. (Yes, a shameless plug for EE)

Thank you in advance for your patience. And let me remind you that, upon completion of the BEAC in the spring of 2003, it will instantly become the most-visited facility in the National Wildlife Refuge System and a facility that the whole community and the country can be proud of.

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