

[From Spring 2004]

Refuge Gets Pumped Up For Spring

You may have noticed some new construction on the Wildlife Loop recently. The Chincoteague refuge is in the process of adding two permanent pumping stations to help with water management. Construction of the pumping stations is a combined effort between the refuge and Ducks Unlimited to help solve the age old problem of springtime water removal on two of the moist soil management units on the refuge.

B Pool South (inside the Wildlife Loop) is one of five connected impoundments and one of the best feeding areas for spring migrating shorebirds. Until now, all the connected pools were drawn down through gravity flow (D Pool > C Pool > B North > B South > A Pool and F Pool). With the addition of the new pumping station, the refuge will be able to lower the water level in the B Pool South unit without having to wait for A Pool and F Pool to be drawn down first. This should help make management for spring migrating shorebirds much more effective.

The other pump station is located up the service road at the North Wash Flats management unit. The Flats is managed as a wintering waterfowl area and a nesting area for piping plovers in the spring and summer. When the weather cooperates and no water is on the impoundment during the spring and early summer, piping plovers have had excellent success in the North Wash Flats area.



In the past, refuge maintenance staff personnel spent countless hours pumping water from the impoundment using portable pumps to help keep water off the impoundment. Precipitation during the previous two springs has prevented any piping plovers from nesting in the area. With the addition of the new pump, water can be removed from the impoundment much quicker, giving piping plovers a much better chance to nest in a highly productive area.

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