

[From Spring 2008]

## Three Successful Workshops

By Lou Hinds

I thought the winter months were the slow months? Well this was not the case during the month of January. During that month "we" (Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Chincoteague Natural History Association) jointly sponsored 3 very successful workshops. The first was held on January 8-10, at Chincoteague NWR visitor center. The Transportation Assistance Group workshop or "TAG" was for the primary purpose of helping to identify the transportation issues for the "Alternative Transportation in the Parks and Public Lands" (ATPPL) study. Many of you are probably asking yourself; "what the heck is he talking about?" If this is the first time you are hearing about the TAG or the ATPPL let me explain.

The Federal Transit Administration awarded a \$270,000 grant to the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service to conduct an ATPPL Study on the Virginia portion of Assateague Island and the neighboring island community of Chincoteague. This will be an in-depth transportation study and may take up to 2 years to complete. Invited to the workshop were federal, state, county and local elected officials and employees, Chincoteague Natural History Association (CNHA) board members, and other interested partners and/or stakeholders. A total of approximately 50 people attended the workshop. Participants had an opportunity to meet one another and to brainstorm. The hope was to identify the majority of transportation issues and challenges that we face during peak visitation periods. These should be studied in the ATPPL. As this study progresses, the general public will be invited to participate and comment on our findings and recommendations. You will hear more about the ATPPL study in future issue of the Piping Plover.

The next two workshops were held consecutively on January 29 & 30. The purpose of these workshops was to discuss historic and cultural preservation issues on Assateague Island and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuge. The primary focus of the Tuesday (29th) meeting was the restoration of the Assateague Island Lighthouse. As some of you already know, it is my desire to begin the restoration of the Assateague Lighthouse sometime in fiscal year 2008 and the Fish and Wildlife Service's primary "Partner" in this challenging undertaking is the Chincoteague Natural History Association (CNHA).

Approximately 35 individuals attended the workshop. Myrna Cherrix gave an excellent presentation concerning the history of the lighthouse followed by a presentation from Joseph Jakubik, Manager of the Historic Preservation Division of International Chimney Corporation. Joe recapped for the group his "Assessment of the Assateague Lighthouse" that was completed in March 2005. Following the morning sessions, a visit to the Lighthouse was conducted so that participants could view first hand the restorations issues/challenges facing us. We wrapped up the day by preparing a "to-do-list" that will keep us all very busy. There is lots of work to do and you will be hearing more about the restoration of the Assateague Lighthouse in months to come.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention that during lunch on the 29th we had a discussion concerning shipwrecks along the coastline of Assateague Island. The primary issue or concern for Federal agencies is what to do with the parts and pieces of historic wrecks that wash up on Assateague Island beaches. Dr. Susan Langle gave a presentation on the possibility of conducting a "tagging" study (sort of like bird banding) that could be undertaken to determine the movement of shipwreck pieces along the Atlantic coastline. It was decided by the workshop participants that this was a very interesting subject and a real opportunity to engage new volunteers or local high school students to conduct the tagging operations. It was decided that a future workshop to discuss this project should be planned.

On Wednesday (30th), our workshop focused on preservation and cleanup of the 4 cemeteries

located within the boundaries of the Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges. Again about 35 individuals attended this workshop. A highlight of the morning session was a presentation by Roy Jones and Frank Williams concerning life on Assateague Island in the early 1900's. Roy lived on Assateague Island for 12 years and Frank (Roy's cousin) spent many-a-day with his cousin exploring the island. Frank and Roy confirmed that there are at least 3 cemeteries on Assateague Island. Following Roy and Frank's presentations John Wilson (Historic Preservation Officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5), gave a presentation concerning graveyard preservation and what volunteers and employees can do to care for and preserve the cemeteries. Following lunch, a field trip to the cemeteries was conducted. While on site, participants provided their thoughts as to how the cemeteries should be cared for. We again wrapped up the day by preparing a "to-do-list" and signing up new volunteers to care for the cemeteries.

The feedback received by Refuge staff to the 3 workshops has been very positive from the community. We have already had one successful cemetery clean-up project at the Wallops Island NWR as a result of that workshop and more cleanup/preservation projects are planned. I look forward to working with volunteers and community leaders to take the "to-do-lists" developed from these workshops and turn them into reality. If you care to learn more about what you can do to help with work at the Lighthouse or cemeteries please contact the Refuge volunteer coordinator at (757) 336-6122.