

[From Spring 1995]

Toms Cove Beach Update

Since last spring, representatives of both the Refuge and Assateague Island National Seashore have had several meetings with a Town Committee to address the question of sustaining a first class visitor experience at the beach. Storms this winter have focused a considerable amount of discussion in recent meetings on what is the best way, to manage the dune line adjacent to the beach parking lots. A Christmas Eve northeaster flattened the dune line from just south of Bathhouse #2 in Parking Lot #3 to an area north of Parking Lot #4. The dune line in front of the bathhouse and parking lot has been rebuilt; however, if you have been to the beach lately, you probably noticed a "hole" in the dune line. This area is being left open as part of an intentional plan to protect future parking and allow the beach area to do what nature intended - build a wider, more beautiful beach.

As you visited the Refuge and Seashore over the years, you have witnessed the dramatic movement of the beach. The pilings which held the restaurants of the 1960's are now several hundred feet out in the ocean. Those familiar with the washover area have seen a tremendous amount of land buildup to the west; the washover area has no dunes and therefore received the sand being lost to the north. Unfortunately, there have only been a few instances of land building to the west of the beach parking; these instances have come during major storms such as the January 1992 storm.

On January 17, a meeting of the Town Committee and representatives of the Refuge and Seashore was held. Refuge and Seashore staff presented the Committee with a plan to protect future parking and to enhance the widening of the beach by allowing a portion of the dune to move more naturally.

Coincidentally, the Town Committee had prepared a similar plan. More specifically, visitors to the Refuge and Seashore can expect the following:

1. Bathhouse #2 will be shifted back (pending funding) and the Amphitheater removed.
2. Parking Lot #3 will be reduced in size with the dune being shifted back and made lower.
3. Lost parking will be gained near Parking Lot #4.
4. The area currently without a dune between Parking Lots #3 and #4 will remain open to catch sand during the winter. A small dune will be created along the road in the spring.
5. The two wheel drive road will be reopened and the recreational beach zone will be shifted several hundred feet to the south into the off-road vehicle zone.

The above actions are in accordance with the Chincoteague Refuge Master Plan. They are also in line with all of our efforts to develop a strategy that leads to the long-term enhancement of the visitor experience on the island.

*John D. Schror,
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