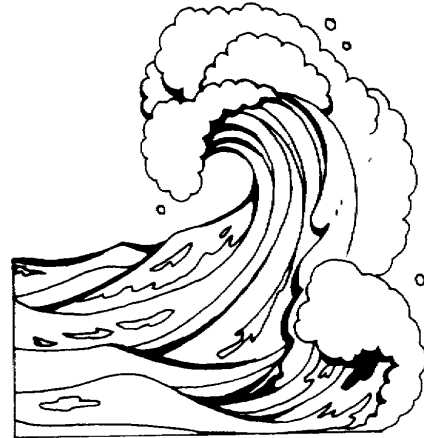


[From Spring 1998]

Winter Nor'easters Damage Refuge

Two successive nor'easters on January 28 and 29, and February 4 and 5, caused considerable damage at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Particularly hard hit was the recreational beach where the dune was leveled and all parking lots and the road south of Parking Lot #1 were washed out or over-topped with up to five feet of sand. The Toms Cove Visitor Center was surrounded by sand. However, no water damage occurred. The National Park Service (NPS) has requested over \$900,000 in emergency funds to repair the damage.



On other parts of the refuge, Swan Cove Bike Trail was washed out in one spot and covered with sand for approximately 200 yards. A temporary dune, that was erected following the January storm to protect this trail, was flattened. A number of the refuge's walking and hiking trails were closed due to high water and debris.

The influx of salt water into Swan Cove impoundment caused a rise in the water level, and subsequent wave action eroded about 600 feet of the shoreline along Beach Road. In addition to the loss of the dune adjacent to the bike trail, the dune was breached in a number of places north of that location; salt water intrusion caused erosion of some dikes and water control structures. The Fish and Wildlife Service(FWS) has estimated approximately \$100,000 will be needed to repair and relocate the Swan Cove Bike Trail and repair and replant the adjacent dune; remove downed trees; and repair eroded dikes and water control structures.

NPS and FWS staff have met with local leaders regarding the repairs. Of particular concern was the potential loss of parking at the beach for the summer season. The refuge Master Plan allows NPS to replace parking as long as there is a land base available for the parking. The extensive over-wash of sand has provided this base and NPS has begun repairs. Oyster shells will be used for parking lots and roads. Depending on funding and no more storm events, it is anticipated that most of the parking will be restored by Memorial Day, or shortly after.

Support from all Congressional Offices has been strong and it is hoped that funding is imminent for both agencies to make these repairs.

*Bob Wilson,
Deputy Refuge Manager*

