

[From Spring 1999]

Local Delegations Lobby for New Refuge Center

Two separate local Chincoteague delegations representing the Committee for the Proposed Chincoteague Refuge Educational and Administrative Center ventured to Washington, D.C. recently to visit House and Senate aides to promote funding for the new facility by 2003, the 100th anniversary of the national wildlife refuge system.

The first delegation made the trip on February 9-10 and was composed of Jim Loeffert and Chincoteague Refuge Volunteers Don Leonard, Civic Subcommittee; Donna Leonard, President, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce; Michael Colopy, Chairman, Environmental Subcommittee; Scott Chesson, Chairman, Economic Subcommittee; and Ted Thomas, Chairman, Publicity Subcommittee. In addition, Scott's daughter, Hillary, accompanied the group representing the First Grade, Chincoteague Elementary School.

This first delegation met with Loretta Boehmont, aide to Representative Ralph Regula (R-Ohio), Chairman of the Interior Appropriations Committee, the source of any funds for refuge construction. Each member of the delegation spoke on a separate aspect of the need for the new center. Hillary presented a packet of refuge drawings by first graders and gave Boehmont her choice of a drawing plus a picture of the class. The delegation continued with meetings with Mike Lawrence, legislative assistant to Senator Charles Robb (D-VA); Erica Feller, legislative assistant to Rep. Wayne Gilchrist (R-MD); Charlie Steck, project director for Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD); Tim Aiken, legislative assistant to Rep. James Moran (D-VA); Jonathon Dean, legislative assistant to Rep. Constance Morella (R-MD); Andy Quinn, legislative assistant to Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD); and Anne McInerney professional staff member for the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

The second delegation traveling to Washington on February 19 was composed of T. Stewart Baker, Chairman of the Committee for the Proposed Chincoteague Refuge Educational and Administrative Center; Wanda Thornton, Accomack County Board of Supervisors; and Keith Bull, Accomack County Administrator.

Both groups were provided guidance and direction by Michael Colopy and key personnel from the National Audubon Society's Wildlife Refuge Campaign. The second group delivered the second of a one-two punch for the refuge center support by meeting with Environmental and Legislative Assistants Joe Greenman, Office of Rep. Herb Bateman (R-VA-1st); Melissa Wojciak, Office of Rep. Davis (R-VA-11th); Amanda Koman, Office of Rep. Pickett (R-VA-2nd); Tom Santanello, Office of Rep. Wolf (D-VA 10th); Rob Ulmer, Office of Senator Barbara Mikulski (DMD); and Interior Appropriations Committee person Leslie Turner, Office of Rep. Dicks (VA-6th).

Both delegations reported that their reception was friendly and supportive. They returned to Chincoteague with the feeling that funding for planning and design of the new Center in FY 2000 was almost certain to be in the final budget.

Bob Wilson
Deputy Refuge Manager

(Compiled from two Chincoteague Beacon news articles written by CNHA member, Ted Thomas.)