

[From Spring 1999]

Teachers Got WILD at Chincoteague NWR

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planners Ray Paterra and Jill Van Scoyoc conducted two teacher workshops February 20 and 27. The teachers, primarily from Chincoteague High School, spent two Saturdays at the refuge participating in Project WILD and Wild School Site workshops, respectively.

The goal of these environmental education workshops was to provide area teachers with a variety of interdisciplinary resources via Project WILD and Wild School Sites that will assist them in utilizing the refuge as an outdoor classroom. The ultimate goal is to have the teachers return to Chincoteague Refuge and participate in environmental education programs that will help them meet the state's Standards of Learning.

Both workshops consisted of catered breakfasts and lunches, afternoon lectures, discussions, and group activities. Following completion of the workshops, teachers were provided with a resource packet, recertification points, and a certificate of completion.

Chincoteague Refuge is on the forefront of reshaping its environmental education program. Environmental education is a top priority at the refuge. The staff has put in painstaking hours to assess the needs of teachers that use this refuge as an outdoor classroom. The refuge's future goal is to meet with state and county school administrators to try and make environmental education a required subject for elementary school students. This would be combined with a mandatory visit to a national refuge or park. It is also the goal of this refuge to develop kits that contain activities and displays that can be loaned to schools for environmental education purposes. CNWR also plans to develop kits that will allow teachers to come to the refuge and conduct self-guided programs. These programs would be designed to vary in length from a half to whole day lessons with various topics covered. All necessary equipment would be included as well as teacher editions and handouts.

It is our hope that once school curiosity is peaked some schools may be interested in developing their own wildlife habitat for outdoor study on school grounds. It would be the role of refuge staff to give guidance in such projects.

Ray Paterra
Outdoor Recreation Planner