

[From Summer 2001]

New Center Progressing

After more than 30 years of hard work, and over four years of intensive effort, I can finally say that I see the light at the end of the tunnel. All clichés aside, the next two years are going to be one of the most exciting times in the history of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge's Public Use Program.

The construction documents for the building component of Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center (Bateman Center) were completed by CUH2A (an architectural and engineering firm from Princeton, New Jersey) in early June. The Bateman Center's exhibit galleries are phasing into the construction document stage as well, with completion scheduled for mid-September.

What does this all mean? Beginning in early fall a contract to begin construction of the Bateman Center will be issued. Demolition of the current headquarters will soon follow (January/February 2002). Staff is gearing up to move their offices into two temporary trailers which will be located near the maintenance compound. Our current sub-headquarters, refuge auditorium pole shed and other buildings associated with the sub-headquarters compound, are also scheduled to be demolished during 2002 so that construction crews can ready the area for the Bateman Center parking lot.

President Bush's Fiscal Year 2002 budget request includes \$2.9 million for the Bateman Center and Senators John Warner and George Allen, as well as Representative JoAnn Davis, have requested an increase in that appropriation to \$3.5 million.

I am both excited and proud that the opening of the Bateman Center will likely be a pinnacle for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Celebration in the year 2003. Currently grand opening ceremonies are scheduled for the International Migratory Bird Celebration and National Wildlife Refuge Week in 2003. Additionally, we are planning for a groundbreaking ceremony in the fall of 2001.

For more information about the Bateman Center, its exhibit galleries or its sustainable design elements, do not hesitate to call me or Refuge Manager John D. Schroer. And of course, stay tuned for more detailed information on the groundbreaking ceremony. We hope to see all of our partners, including you, at this momentous occasion.

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