

[From Summer 2004]

Assateague Lighthouse a Charming Addition

Assateague Island's lighthouse is visited by a large number of tourists each year, and we are pleased that this local historic treasure is being, partially at least, entrusted to our care. CNHA will have an active roll in the restoration, preservation, and maintenance of the lighthouse and in offering opportunities to the public to view it on a much larger scale than ever before beginning in early July.

Transfer of the lighthouse's title from the Coast Guard to the CNWR was finalized very recently, as part of a national initiative. Although the Coast Guard will still be responsible for maintaining the light itself and the equipment necessary to keep it burning, USF&WS will be responsible for maintaining the lighthouse structure and oil shed. High maintenance costs is one major reason most lighthouses are being turned over to federal, state or local government agencies or nonprofit organizations, according to Coast Guard Chief Wayne Merritt. While lighthouses once were used to caution mariners during the night, to navigate waterways, today boaters use electronic systems that coordinate with satellites. "I'm not saying lighthouses aren't useful anymore." Merritt said. "Let the light go out and see how many phone calls you'll get!"

Refuge Manager John Schroer says, "The transition means that the lighthouse can be more accessible to the public than ever before." He went on to say, "The key to maintaining the lighthouse in the future will be in the public's participation."

Over the past seven months, the light house was only open once a month, but that will now change. CNHA plans to have the lighthouse open year-round. While there will be an admission fee, the proceeds will be used exclusively for the preservation and maintenance of the structure. CNHA will also provide artists, carvers, photographers and authors opportunities to display their work in the lighthouse's adjoining oil shed during special events.

The lighthouse offers a unique opportunity to inform and enhance visitor experiences. If you've never climbed to the top and enjoyed the breathtaking beauty and photo friendly atmosphere there, consider doing so on your next visit. It's a peak experience for all who delight in nature and want a unique aerial view of a special place.

Joyce Maher - President, CNHA

LATE BREAKING NEWS

CNHA has received their first donation for the Assateague Lighthouse from Les States of Maryland, Delaware. Thank you Les! Anyone who would like to send a donation can mail the donation to:

CNHA
P.O. Box 917
Chincoteague, Va. 23336