

[From Summer 1998]

Support for New EIC Complex Mounts

"There is no doubt about the order of the universe, but when the stars are aligned, some wonderful things begin to fall in place," commented Angela V. Tracy, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner, about mounting support for a new visitor complex at Chincoteague Refuge. According to Tracy, a ground swell of support for an Education and Interpretive Complex (EIC) is beginning to emerge from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Regional Office in Hadley, Massachusetts, to community leaders in the Town of Chincoteague.

"The Refuge hosted a series of meetings to inform interested people about the Service's plans to build this new facility," said Tracy. "The meetings got a lot of people excited and partnerships to make the plans a reality began to form." For example, an EIC Committee, comprised of representatives from the Town of Chincoteague, Chincoteague and Eastern Shore Chambers of Commerce, Chincoteague Natural History Association, The Nature Conservancy, Chincoteague Refuge Volunteers, Accomack County, and private citizens, has formed to devise a plan for obtaining the funds necessary to open the doors to the new facility by the year 2003. According to Tracy, the year 2003 is significant because it marks the 100th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

"The EIC committee has divided the group into several subcommittees which are focusing their attention on specific groups they plan to target for support," said Tracy. The subcommittees are civic, educational, political, economic, conservation & environmental, and publicity.

According to Tracy, each subcommittee has appointed a chair who is currently recruiting people to serve on the committees and assist with various tasks that the EIC core committee has identified on its time line.

Additionally, resolutions from the Town of Chincoteague, Accomack County Board of Supervisors, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Board of Tourism, Assateague Coastal Trust, and Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce have been passed.

Tracy also said that the EIC has been identified by Ronald Lambertson, the Service's Northeast Regional Director, as one of his top priorities. "Plans are currently underway to submit a construction budget for the EIC to Congress for fiscal year 2000," said Tracy. Tracy also noted that she and Refuge Manager John D. Schroer have briefed the Regional Directorate on the EIC and are planning a trip to Washington, D.C. to brief Assistant Director and the Chief of Refuges and Wildlife.

According to Tracy, people who learn about the project have a lot to be excited about. For example, the EIC's exhibit area will be divided into three areas, each with a sub-message representing a time period on Virginia's Eastern Shore: past, present, and future. Each

exhibit hall will have a primary exhibit (something which the visiting public can interact with) and a small number of secondary exhibits, all of which embrace the EIC's theme: Voices of the Past... Wings to the Future: Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Where People and Wildlife Meet.

In addition to exhibits, the facility will house a CNHA sales outlet, an auditorium that seats 150 people, an orientation room, and a "Windows to the Wild" observation area. The facility will also include a 30-seat classroom with a wet-lab, a multi-purpose room (for accommodating another group of 30), and a resource reference library including information about the Service, Chincoteague Refuge management strategies, flora and fauna that occur on the Refuge, and environmental education and interpretation materials. The EIC will also house the Refuge's administrative operations. Space will be provided for 26-30 staff, interns, and volunteers, as well as a conference room and lunch room.

A proposed, conceptual design for the EIC has been completed with an estimated cost of approximately \$7-10 million. If you would like to learn more about the proposed EIC complex at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, call or write Angela Tracy at P.O. Box 62, Chincoteague, VA, 23336, (757) 336-6122.

Angela Tracy - CNWR

See Also:

[*A New Visitor Complex for the Chincoteague Refuge*](#)