

[From Fall 2001]

Staff Goes Back To School

Schools are back in session and we're busy pounding the pavement to get the word out to local schools about our free, Virginia Standard of Learning-based programs.

Concentrating on Accomack County schools, refuge staff will be educating teachers and students about the natural resource treasures that are found in their own backyards. The programs, conducted in the classroom by refuge staff, focus on wildlife and conservation.

Last year, refuge staff reached out to more than 1,300 students in Accomack County. The refuge hopes to build on this success and continue to enhance its relationship with the schools, teachers, and students again this year.

"The effects of our environmental education outreach program can already be seen with increased participation in refuge-related environmental education programs and workshops," said Refuge Manager John Schroer. "Our goal was to bring the mission and identity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the schools. Now the students and teachers know who we are, what we do, and how we can help them meet their educational needs. This is especially important as we prepare for the grand opening of the Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center. The Center will house a teacher resource room, educational exhibits, and a classroom/wet lab. Building a strong relationship with the teachers and students now will ensure that they will utilize the Center in the future."

To inform local teachers about the up-and-coming outreach season and other educational opportunities available at the refuge, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner, Angela Tracy, and I participated in the Governors Best Practice - Eastern Shore Instructional Academy on August 9. Approximately 100 teachers were actively engaged in this lively and hands-on demonstration regarding the various topics and programs offered at the refuge. In fact, due to popular demand, the public use duo made a repeat performance of their presentation on September 17 for a professional sorority of teachers.

Indeed, the public use staff at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is proving that it's never too late to go back to school! To learn more about the refuge's environmental education programs, please contact me (at 757-336-6122).

Alison McGuire, Recreation Assistant, Chincoteague NWR