

[From Winter 2001]

New Educational and Administrative Center Update

With the need for a visitor facility for the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge being identified in 1969, reality of such a facility is about to come true, as a contract for construction was awarded in early December 2001. The contract was awarded to Mid Eastern Builders Inc. which is headquartered in Chesapeake, Virginia. The duration of the contract should be approximately 14 months, with a planned completion date for the completed buildings being January or February of 2003. Earlier in the year, a separate contract was awarded to S. Powell Construction Co. of West Virginia; this company will be doing all of the parking areas and access roads to the new facility, and the contract will run concurrently with that for the buildings.

The exhibit planning and design is nearing completion. Comments have been made on the 100% construction documents and the final touches should be made on those by the time this newsletter reaches you. The contract for the exhibits should be awarded sometime in February with an installation date of either March or April of 2003.

At the current time, plans are to have a Grand Opening during Mothers Day weekend in 2003 which also coincides with the International Migratory Bird Celebration and more importantly also takes place during the Centennial Year of the National Wildlife Refuge System, not to mention the 60th anniversary of the refuge. The bottom line is that you should be prepared for a great 2003 and plan to celebrate all of these occasions with us.

Your Association has been a major factor in the success of funding and building this facility, a facility which will instantly be the most visited facility in the entire National Wildlife Refuge System. The CNHA was the first to provide \$5,000 of seed funding to help a local committee begin their efforts to secure support and funding. Your Associations President also served on that committee, and another member is assisting with a corporate fund raising campaign. CNHA has also pledged the profits from both T.R. Bear and the Refuge video to support this facility, and has worked closely with the Refuge in maintaining a Set Aside fund to help defray the cost of exhibits for the facility. That support is greatly appreciated by the Refuge Staff. Thank you!

John Schroer, Refuge Manager