

[From Winter 2004-2005]

Partnerships

Chincoteague NWR received a \$100,000 grant from the Pathway to Nature Conservation Fund. The Fund is a partnership between Wild Birds Unlimited, a retail chain, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Wild Birds contributed \$40,000 (which will be matched with federal funds) while the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation gave \$60,000 which needed a non-federal match. The refuge is grateful to CNHA for its contribution to the non-federal match.

The purpose of the grant is to expand a bike trail along Beach Road trail, refurbish existing educational kiosks, and design new wayside exhibits. As one of the most visited refuges in the country, the bike trail expansion will not only further educate visitors about the critical importance of the refuge system and the Chincoteague NWR, but also provide visitors with a safe way to get to wildlife viewing areas and the beach.

Additionally, the exhibits will be integrated with the Education Center's exhibits and the refuge's environmental education programs. Topics for the new wayside exhibits will include moist soil management, pony management, and conservation and management of migratory birds.

The establishment of the beach road bike trail will also benefit the habitat. Once the beach road trail is constructed, Swan Cove's trail will be allowed to revert to its natural state, providing an additional 25 acres of habitat for wildlife and migratory birds.

The partners involved in this project will be recognized at the trail head exhibits, located at the entrance of the refuge and at the end of beach road. The exhibits will proudly display the logos of Wild Birds Unlimited, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, CNHA, and U.S. F&W Service. They will demonstrate how partnerships can successfully promote responsible use of natural resources.

However, this partnership goes beyond just supporting refuges -it also benefits the American public. Refuges provide areas where families can take their children for outdoor recreation while teaching them about their natural heritage. Wild Birds Unlimited will show other companies that businesses can be advocates in helping their communities and the environment. A company which contributes positively to society will gain respect from the public and promote a good company image beyond the quality of their products and services.

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