

[From Winter 2005-2006]

## President's Message

The 2005 year has been a busy and productive one. As we look back over the many activities CNHA has participated in over the past year, we realize how hard our member/volunteers work for the Eastern Shore and Chincoteague Natural Wildlife Refuges. Thanks to all of our members for giving your time, contacting legislators, offering ideas, sharing your creativity, giving financial help, working on myriad other things, working in the gift shop, giving tours in the lighthouse and on our bus, paying dues and shopping in our outlets. All the hard work has never been needed more. I also want to extend a big warm welcome to the new board members who have filled some empty slots in the past year. We feel very fortunate to have had you join us.

As you all know, budget cuts to The Department of the Interior programs have been very deep for the past several years and there is no relief in sight. Many of the projects and employee positions are under funded and volunteers continue to fill the wide gaps. We have been told that our new refuge manager, located primarily in Chincoteague, will manage both of our refuges with two deputies so the structure has changed definitively and the need for extra helpers will continue unabated.

Sadly, we have been informed that the National Wildlife Refuge Association lacks the money to host its annual conference in Washington, yet the work goes on. Therefore, each of you needs to continue contacting budget allocation committee members and other representatives on your own.

The bike path needs to be finished, there are still exhibits planned for indoors and outdoors and, of course, the lighthouse desperately needs a bright new paint job to preserve the structure and enhance the visitation. We've been surprised and delighted with the number of visitors so far and it will be fun to see it spruced up. Final details on that event are not yet made.

Our artists from the oil shed have done well this year, we hope to add some carvers, and we're always looking for new talent. If you or a friend want to exhibit, just let someone at the center know and we can discuss the details.

Last, but not least, 2006 marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of CNHA and we mean to have a celebration. We plan a pictorial presentation, followed by a buffet luncheon at our annual meeting on May 20th, 2006, in the Herbert H. Bateman Center. It will be our chance to look back and also to recognize so many of our long-term members, past presidents, past refuge managers and many others. We hope that we'll be able to reach a great share of the fine people who helped make our refuges and our organization the busy, productive entities they are today. If you know of anyone whom you particularly want to be remembered at the meeting, please write to me, at [joyce\\_maher@surfbest.net](mailto:joyce_maher@surfbest.net) and give me all the contact information. I'll follow up and hope that we get a good turnout to honor our 20 years of effort, to pat each other on the back and maybe inspire some of our newest members to help in the transitions of a small organization staffed by a handful of visionary leaders to the large organization staffed by 3 full-time employees which we have evolved into today.

I look forward to seeing you and joining in our anniversary celebration and again thanks and keep up the great work.

Joyce Maher, CNHA President

