

[From Winter 2007]

Off Road Vehicle Zone Opens to Tip of Toms Cove Hook

After Labor Day weekend, the ORV zone will be completely open, providing additional recreational access for permitted vehicles and pedestrians. At 12:00 Noon on Tuesday, September 4, 2007, the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) zone at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge will open to the tip of Toms Cove Hook. The ORV zone, an area on the beach designated for four-wheel drive vehicle access has been partially closed throughout the summer season due to the presence of nesting birds.

Assawoman Island is also open to fishing and requires a permit. The fishing permit is free and available at the administrative offices during business hours Monday through Friday. In addition, the Island is open for public use including fishing in designated areas, but does not require a permit.

Visitors of all ages are passionate about collecting seashells. Around this time of year, the beach and especially the ORV zone becomes a virtual treasure trove full of beautiful seashells. Some people collect them for their variety, while others gather them for educational purposes. Here at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, we limit the number of unoccupied shells collected by a single person, to one gallon or less per day.

Additionally, collected shells may not be sold or otherwise used for commercial purposes. Gathering natural resources on a national wildlife refuge for commercial use is prohibited except as may be authorized by special permit. Any person who violates these special regulations shall be subject to penalties as prescribed by law. Staff members will conduct compliance checks while monitoring the area.

Refuge staff would also like to remind everyone that disturbing or collecting plants and animals (dead or alive), or artifacts is strictly prohibited. Please leave the area as you found it for others to enjoy. For more information please contact the refuge at 757-336-6122.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 96-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

The Mission of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.