

[From Winter 1999]

## **CREAC Update**

Movin' like a locomotive.. CREAC is literally tearing up the tracks! Due to aggressive positioning by the committee for the proposed Chincoteague Refuge Educational and Administrative Center (CREAC), \$2 million has been secured. One million dollars is derived from the Department of Transportation TEA-21 fund and the other one million dollars is part of the Department of the Interior appropriations bill.

According to Refuge Manager John D. Schroer, refuge staff are on the fast track to open CREAC's doors by March 2003, the 100th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System. "We have selected an architectural and engineering firm and plan to have a contract negotiated with the company by mid-January," said Schroer. After that, Schroer and his staff will begin the planning and design of CREAC, including all of the exhibits. Schroer also emphasized that this project will include planning designing, fabricating and installing new trail heads, kiosks and wayside exhibits. "We have designed three exciting interpretive hubs, or places for concentrated interpretation, on refuge trails. The hubs will compliment the messages and information in the CREAC and will enhance visitor experience.

In addition to the fast-moving planning and design phase, Schroer lauded CNHA for its key role on the CREAC committee. "The association has literally led the way," stated Schroer. To date, CNHA has donated more than \$5,000 to support the CREAC and has an aggressive fund raising campaign aimed at raising money for the CREAC's interpretive and educational exhibits. "Under the leadership of John Golden, the CNHA has agreed to donate profits from the sales of T.R. Bear toward the educational component of the new facility," said Schroer. Schroer emphasized that these private donations will be used to augment federal funds and are critical to the success of the project. "Congress has told the CREAC committee that they will only appropriate funds for construction of the facility if the committee is successful in raising a significant contribution toward the overall cost of the interpretive and educational components."

With that in mind, the committee has made a lot of progress. Most recently, committee chairperson Donna Leonard and Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner Angela V. Tracy were invited by State Delegate Bob Bloxom to brief John Paul Woodley III, Secretary of the Virginia Department of Natural Resources, on the project. As a result of the meeting, committee members Wanda Thornton and Keith Bull traveled to Richmond to brief Virginia Commerce Secretary Barry Duvall on the project as well. According to Tracy, Virginia is considering a \$300 thousand to \$550 thousand contribution to the project in support of the educational component of CREAC.

Tracy also stated that the CREAC committee will be launching a corporate fund-raising campaign in 2000 to raise additional funds for the interpretive exhibits. "We are literally

working day, night, and on weekends just to catch up with the fast track this project is on," said Tracy. "We are delighted with the tremendous amount of support the refuge is getting from the CNHA, the community, the county, state and even our own agency."

So ... hang on to your hats. If you would like more information about how you can get involved, please contact Angela Tracy.