



## **A G E N D A**

**TOWN OF CHINCOTEAGUE**  
Regular Meeting of the  
Chincoteague to Assateague Beach Access Committee

**Rescheduled to April 29, 2015 – 9:00 AM**

Town Hall Council Chamber

1. Call to Order
2. Introduction and CCP Update – Kevin Sloan
3. Report on Meeting with USFWS (January 14, 2015)
4. Report on Request for USACE Feasibility Study
5. Community Review and Comment
  - Review Draft of the Beach Access Newsletter
  - Review of Final CCP/Draft GMP Schedule
6. Discussion and Comments



## STAFF REPORT

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To: Chincoteague-Assateague Beach Access Committee  
Through: Robert G. Ritter, Town Manager  
From: Bill Neville, Director of Planning  
Subject: Preparation for Release of Final CCP/EIS  
Date: April 29, 2015

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- ❖ Report on Meeting with USFWS (January 14, 2015)
  - ❖ Report on Request for USACE Feasibility Study
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### Meeting with USFWS

In the interest of maintaining good communications between the Town of Chincoteague and the USFWS regarding the Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the Town requested and the Service agreed to meet on January 14, 2015 with the purpose of reviewing the Town's substantive comments and discussing how the CCP may be revised to respond to those comments prior to publication of the final CCP/EIS in the Federal Register.

Regional Director Wendi Weber expressed the belief 'that with honest, open, and regular communication, we will reassure our visitors and local businesses that we are working together to provide long term beach access and to plan wisely and responsibly for the future.' (letter of March 19, 2012 to Mayor Tarr)

Topics of concern were narrowed to see what questions the FWS may have about our submitted comments, and where the FWS has the flexibility and intent to reach agreement about future management actions and the text of the CCP. Joe McCauley suggested to focus on the following:

- How to manage the beach area south of the parking lots along Toms Cove to build and maintain a low storm berm at the high tide line?
  - Existing facilities will be maintained until a relocated beach can be constructed
- How best to coordinate the design and layout of the new visitor use facilities at the recreational beach?
  - When challenged on providing storm protection for beach recreations, FWS suggested a strategy to 'ask the experts'
  - A design team approach was suggested after the CCP is approved
- How the National Park Service 'assigned area' will be defined (1 mile, 4 miles or more to accommodate access to the USCG Station, and transition areas)?

- The requested removal of terms such as 1 mile beach, and 8.5 acre parking area were discussed. FWS had a concern for the ability to complete an EA if the scope was too far beyond what was described in the general EIS.
- Assigned area needs a clear definition that could allow it change over time. FWS stated that more recent refuge legislation in 1997 supersedes the 1965 seashore law.
- Request to revise the FWS/NPS memorandum of agreement was not answered
- What is the intended solution behind community comments promoting the use of sand fence, vegetation and maintaining a dune line versus managing for a ‘dynamic beach and overwash system’?
  - A reasonable approach to managing for a combination of overwash and naturally forming dunes was discussed
- What will be the timing of and next steps for the planning process, and what will happen in the interim if Alternative B is selected in the final CCP?
  - A NEPA Environmental Assessment/FWS step down plan will be completed for the proposed recreational beach relocation if Alternative B is selected. This will provide an opportunity for the Town, County or others to participate as a ‘cooperating agency’
- What is the intended use and disposition of the \$1.5M grant currently being held in escrow for alternative transportation?
  - The Sarbanes Alternative Transportation Grant (\$1.5M) is still available and could be passed through to the Town if it was still used for land acquisition to support alternative refuge access.
- Other topics
  - Request to remove the proposed wilderness management policies (Appendix A) was discussed as an unnecessary limitation on future management actions
  - Flexibility in keeping Beach Road open for certain types of beach access/education at the NPS visitor center and possibly OSV off season

FWS Tom Bonetti stated that the final CCP Chapter 1 will highlight changes made in response to public comments. A summary list of comments (400 received) will be included as an appendix with contact information removed. This information is not available prior to release of the final CCP.

Since the meeting, FWS officials have indicated support for several modifications to the CCP without any detail as to which topics of concern will be addressed. The projected release of the final CCP/EIS is in June 2015.

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### **Request for USACE Feasibility Study**

In order to gain the support and assistance of the US Army Corps of Engineers, Section 7001 of the WRRDA 2014 requires that the Secretary of the Army annually submit to Congress a report that identifies potential future water resources development through completed feasibility reports, proposed feasibility studies, and proposed modifications to authorized projects or studies.

We are happy to report that the Chincoteague Island Feasibility Study, as submitted by the Town of Chincoteague, was included in the Secretary’s annual report that was recently published. This project is the only project from Virginia, and is one of 19 projects which meet the required criteria out of 114 proposals submitted nationally.

State	Name of Proposal	Sponsor (s)	Type: Proposed Feasibility Study, Proposed Modification, and Feasibility Report	Purpose	Benefits	Letter (s) of Support Received? Y/N
VA	Chincoteague Island Feas Study	Town of Chincoteague, VA (support anticipated from Accomack County and the Commonwealth of VA depending on scope of study)	Proposed Feasibility Study	To assess the current and future function of the barrier island/inlet/coastal bay system surrounding Chincoteague Island, develop an array of options for resource management, and evaluate the feasibility and cost associated with sustainable protection and restoration areas.	Protection of human life and property; maintain critical navigation routes and transportation; restore ecosystems; and improve national security.	Y

We asked that Congressman Rigell’s staff work with the Town of Chincoteague to move this project along and ensure that it is included in the next WRRDA and that federal funding for the project is appropriated as well. This process will take several years.

In the meantime, the Norfolk District USACE indicated that they will be able to attend USFWS project meetings in the next year by allocating annual administrative funds. A letter requesting this support along with a proposed schedule and a clear problem statement is necessary.



# Beach Access News

Town of Chincoteague  
Assateague Beach Access Committee

May 2015

## Final CCP to be released in June

**The US Fish & Wildlife Service will publish the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan in June for a 30 day public review.**

The final CCP/EIS will be released for a 30-day review period for individuals and organizations that commented on the draft document to have the opportunity to review the USFWS comment responses.

This period also allows federal and state agencies with jurisdiction or expertise to review the plan. Only new substantive information may be evaluated and incorporated at this point prior to completing the approval process.

At the close of the 30-day review, USFWS Regional Director Wendi Weber will determine if the final CCP/EIS is adequate to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. She will then select an alternative to implement as the final CCP and then approve a Record of Decision (ROD). With release of the signed ROD, work may begin to implement the proposed management actions.

Welcome to our new  
Refuge Manager  
Kevin Sloan



Photo: USFWS

*He can be reached at  
Kevin\_Sloan@fws.gov or  
at 757-336-6122*

## Town of Chincoteague requests USFWS to make changes in the CCP

Representatives from USFWS, Town of Chincoteague met on January 14<sup>th</sup> to review the Town's primary substantive comments and gain further clarification prior to developing responses in the final CCP/EIS. These topics may be highlighted during the final 30-day review period:

- **Exceptional Visitor Experience**
- **Public Safety/Resiliency Plan**
- **Management Area for Beach Recreation**
- **Wilderness Designation**
- **Dune and Coastal Management**
- **Environmental Impact Statement**

Successful management practices were discussed and also recognized in a letter from Mayor Tarr to National Park Service Superintendent Debbie Darden regarding the low sand berm that was placed in front of the four Beach parking lots. This provided protection through the winter from high tides and erosion from storm wave action.

# Beach Access News

## Assateague celebrates 50 years

Assateague Island National Seashore was established by an Act of Congress on September 21, 1965 for the purpose of protecting and developing Assateague Island in the States of Maryland and Virginia for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment.

Thanks to State Senator Lewis and Delegate Bloxom for co-sponsoring a bill in the 2015 General Assembly session commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Seashore.



## US Army Corps of Engineers publishes the North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study



The NACCS was published in January 2015 with the goal to promote Coastal Resilient Communities with sustainable and robust coastal landscape systems, considering future sea level rise and climate change scenarios, to reduce risk to vulnerable population, property, ecosystems, and infrastructure. The NACCS is available at: <http://www.nad.usace.army.mil/CompStudy>.

The Town of Chincoteague recently requested assistance from the USACE so that their expertise can inform the long range management plans being prepared by the USFWS and NPS on Assateague Island and recommendations of the Study can be applied to the Chincoteague Island environs.

## What can happen next after a final CCP is approved? Prime Hook NWR in Delaware is a good example. *(Delaware Public Media's Tom Byrne interviews Prime Hook restoration project manager Bart Wilson.)*

More than five years after the dunes near Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge were first breached by waters from the Delaware Bay, a massive effort to restore the preserve and hold back rising seas from a vulnerable area of the southern Delaware coast is about to begin. The federally funded \$38 million project, now awaiting its final permits, is expected to swing into action in July.

The goal, as described in a detailed Environmental Assessment published by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) in February, is to recreate conditions in which wildlife, especially migratory birds, can thrive, in keeping with the original aims of the 10,000-acre refuge when it opened in 1963.

While the project is focused on restoring wildlife habitat, it will also benefit nearby local communities which have suffered years of flooding because of the breached dunes.

To read the entire story, follow this link: <http://delawarepublic.org/post/prime-hook-plan-restore-marsh-nearing-start>



*Objective 5.3 Community Resilience – “Identify partners, which may include the town of Chincoteague, Accomack and Northampton counties, Commonwealth of Virginia, NPS, NASA, FEMA, USACE, etc. who may wish to work together to develop plans and strategies toward community resilience in the face of climate change impacts. Participate in a study, which would be led by others, to determine potential impacts/ vulnerabilities of the coastal communities and identify protective methods for hazard mitigation.”*  
Draft CCP – Chapter 2 / Page 2-62