

Beach, Ponies, Bikes, Wildlife, Fishing, Trails, Kayaks, Rockets, OSV

Beach Access News Alert

Draft CCP comments due!

The US Fish & Wildlife Service released the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan on May 15th for public review. Comments are due by August 15th.

Send Comments to:

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(Please put "Chincoteague" in the subject line).

Plan for moving the Recreational Beach to the North under Alternative B is still not ready...

here is why you need to provide comments by August 15th:

- **Exceptional Visitor Experience**

The site plan for moving the beach to the north is not finished. There are no studies or designs to prove that the visitor experience at the new recreational beach will be the same or better than what we have today. Any change needs to be evaluated in the economic impact report. If the current beach is vulnerable to storms why will the new location be any better if the management plan for overwash areas does not change? These questions must be answered before a move to the north could be accepted.

- **Public Safety**

If the federal management of Assateague Island changes to take down the dunes, Chincoteague Island will be exposed to 8 feet of storm surge and ocean waves according to the recent FEMA Coastal Flood Risk Study. A storm damage reduction plan by the US Army Corps of Engineers study is needed in the CCP regardless of which alternative is selected. USFWS habitat management plans to increase vulnerability must be limited.

- **Mosquito Control**

An effective biting insect control program is required for the new recreational beach and parking areas.

- **National Park Service Management Area**

The assigned area for public recreation should not be limited to 8.5 acres of parking area (exactly) and 1 mile of recreational beach for Alternative B which would adversely limit NPS management options and the visitor experience.

- **Endangered Species/Wilderness**

Major federal programs such as permanent wilderness designation, endangered species and marine reserves will 'unbalance' Alternative B unless the public recreation (assigned) area is set aside from critical habitat & wild lands.

- **Emergency Plan**

A strategy and action plan are needed in the CCP to keep the beach open following a major storm or Government shut down.

USFWS Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Suggestions for Public Comments

Public Safety

- Have a professional group (US Army Corps of Engineers) study the dynamics of the Barrier Island and give a detail report on a Storm Damage reduction plan for southern Assateague Island and the effect it would have on the Town of Chincoteague if the Barrier Island was gone.
- Fill in all breaches that may occur after a significant storm event on the Virginia side of Assateague Barrier Island.
- Maintain a minimum elevation in the center of the Assateague Barrier Island from the Atlantic Ocean to Toms Cove starting from Parking lot # 1 to the old Coast Guard Station.
- Only use emergency shuttle service (Buses) if parking lots get destroyed through a major event and only until parking lots are repaired. Shuttle would pick people up at the Hotels and Town office parking lot.

Beach Experience

- Do not limit the recreational beach to only 1 mile, or the parking area to 8.5 acres. Allow the National Park Service to manage the 'assigned area' to serve the citizens of America with 961 parking spaces close up to the beach like the current beach experience. Additional reserve parking spaces for overflow should also be provided near current service road/ new visitor contact station between C & D dyke throughout the next 15 years or until the next CCP has been completed.
- Manage the recreational beach, to utilize sand fence from October 1 through the week before Easter Weekend on the East side of parking lot or Ocean side to naturally build beach elevation.
- Manage the recreational beach to allow spring planting week were we get volunteers to help plant beach grass each year on the west side of parking lots or Toms Cove side.
- Manage the recreational beach to allow Concessions to be a part of the beach experience by the National Park Service.
- Manage the recreational beach to be exempt from any closure due to any nesting birds.
- Manage the recreational beach to continue having a viewing area for the Wallops Island space launches with the same beach experience as today as long as viewing area is not in the danger zone.
- Allow hiking and biking onto the service road north of D Dyke.
- OSV to open back up the hook area after last fledgling of birds in August and to close the OSV zone when the arrival of nesting birds in May of each year rather than a proposed calendar based closure.

Habitat Management

- Keep pony herd at 150 ponies throughout the 15 years or until the next CCP is completed.
- Do not propose a Wilderness area to the North.
- Use adulticide and other active controls for mosquito spraying to control risk for outbreak of an infectious disease.
- Keep the Sika Deer population at the level of 10 year ago instead of eradicating the species.
- Provide habitat for the Snowy Owl to migrate to, on the Barrier Island.
- Create artificial barrier for the butterfly, so that it does not get swept out into the ocean.
- Manage barrier island habitat for stability and resiliency rather than rapid environmental change.