

News Release

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

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For Immediate Release

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Comment period extended for management plan proposed for Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is extending the comment period for the draft comprehensive conservation plan/environmental impact statement (CCP/EIS) for Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) in Virginia. The extension period will provide more time for summer residents in Chincoteague and the surrounding communities to learn about and review the draft plan. The comment period will now be open until August 15, 2014.

We will consider all comments before implementing any alternative and completing a final CCP for the refuge. The document can be viewed online at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/chincoteague/what_we_do/conservation.html.

The Service has identified alternative B as the preferred alternative for management of the refuge. Under alternative B, actions that would best meet refuge purposes and goals include:

- **Wildlife and habitat management:** The refuge would continue to manage habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, song birds, and other migratory birds, including bald eagles and piping plovers.
- **Public use and access:** The refuge proposes to build a new 8.5-acre parking lot protected by dunes at a new recreational beach. The National Park Service (NPS) would maintain the new one mile-long recreational beach that would be 1.5 miles north of the current recreational beach. The draft CCP also evaluates use of over-sand vehicles to facilitate priority public uses.
- **Chincoteague ponies:** The Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company would maintain the Chincoteague pony herd up to 150 ponies.

Comments can be submitted via e-mail, mail, and fax. Please send comments to northeastplanning@fws.gov with "Chincoteague NWR CCP" in the subject line of your e-mail. You can mail comments to Thomas Bonetti, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035. You can fax comments to 413-253-8468.

Chincoteague NWR was established in 1943 to provide habitat for migratory birds. Currently spanning more than 14,000 acres, the refuge provides habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, songbirds, and many other species of wildlife and plants. Refuge management programs restore threatened and endangered species such as the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel and the piping plover.

The mission of the Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfwsnortheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwsnortheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws>, and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/usfwsnortheast>.