



Your New Beach Experience:

A project to support and sustain the local tourism-based economy, Chincoteague, VA

PROJECT BACKGROUND

+1 Million Visitors
Annually

\$200 Million
In Economic Activity
on Virginia's Eastern
Shore

~1,000
Space Parking Lot in
Unsustainable Location
Being Reclaimed by
Ocean

\$3.5 Million
In Repairs Since 2006



Each year over one million visitors enjoy the wildlife, the famous Chincoteague ponies, the historic lighthouse, and the recreational beach at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Located on the Mid-Atlantic Coast of Virginia's Eastern Shore, the Refuge is situated on the southern one-third of Assateague Island.

Problem:

Since 2006, hurricanes and nor'easters have taken their toll on the beach parking lots. In that time, major repairs have been required 7 times at a cost of nearly \$3.5 million. During any given storm, the likelihood of losing the land base supporting the parking lots and access roads is high. This underscores the need to relocate the Refuge's recreational beach and parking lots to a more sustainable location. Without relocation, the Town of Chincoteague and Accomack County could suffer huge economic losses as tourism spending would lessen and businesses would have a smaller customer base (more on next page).





Project Proposal Highlights

- Relocate beach parking to a new, sustainable location with approximately 1,000 vehicle parking spaces.
- Construct restrooms and other visitor facilities near the beach.

Cost and Funding

- Preliminary cost estimate: \$15-20 million
- Committed funds:
 - » \$1 million National Park Service Funds
 - » \$2.4 million Fish and Wildlife Service Sandy Recovery Funds



Our Vision

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Complex encompasses extraordinary and ever-changing lands at the edge of the sea, a place where unique habitats and wildlife flourish. In partnership with others, the refuge is a vital part of a larger system of protected lands and waters on the Delmarva Peninsula critical to migratory birds. People from around the world visit the refuge to learn, recreate, refresh themselves, be inspired by wildlife and wild lands, and renew their connection with nature.

CONTACT

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Economic Impact

\$200 Million in Economic Activity on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Tourism at the Refuge generates an estimated \$50 million for the Town of Chincoteague and \$200 million for Virginia's Eastern Shore annually. Interruptions in visitor use caused by storm damage are costly to local economies, largely dependent on beach-related tourism. In 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Economics reported that a reduction by one-half of the current parking capacity, which is approx. 1,000 vehicles, occurring from Memorial Day to Labor Day could result in a \$38.4 million annual loss in local tourism revenue.



Crowds enjoying Pony Swim





May 2017 Update

Your New Beach Experience

Planning is Underway

A third collaborative, recreational beach planning workshop was held with local, state and federal partners in May 2017 to continue refining design concepts at the new recreational beach location, 1.5 miles north of the current recreational beach.

The concepts will be used to craft design alternatives to be analyzed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The public will have an opportunity to provide input on alternatives starting in mid-summer 2017.



Important Design Elements Considered by Partners

- Visitor Experience** » Provide a great visitor experience at the new beach for the same number of visitors who use the current beach.
 - » Deliver a design that is suitable to support visitors who wish to hike and bike to the beach as well as those who wish to drive.
 - » Deliver a design that offers beach related recreation in the warmer months as well wildlife-oriented recreation during the rest of the year.
- Walking Distance to the Recreational Beach** » Place parking lots and facilities far enough away from the ocean to account for sea-level rise, storms, and westward island migration while also taking visitor walking distance into consideration.
- Resiliency** » Incorporate sustainable design concepts such as (1) a dune accommodation zone that limits construction related disturbance to the existing dunes and associated vegetative cover at the site and (2) an adaptive capability that allows for future alterations as the barrier island continues its westward movement.
- Environmental Compatibility** » Design roads, parking lots, and facilities that limit disturbance to wildlife habitat and blend into natural surroundings.

A Collaborative Effort

Planning partners include National Park Service, Federal Highway Administration, the Town of Chincoteague, Accomack County, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

