

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Newsletter



August 2016

From the Desk of the Refuge Manager



Kevin Sloan, Project Leader of the Chincoteague NWR Complex

What does your job entail?

I suppose most of all I'm a problem solver and a leader. Leading staff and managing a wildlife refuge located on the front lines of climate change in a highly

complex geopolitical landscape can be demanding but is mitigated by experience, transparency and integrity.

We are embedded in a local community nearly completely dependent on the tourism attracted by the National Wildlife Refuge's wildlife, beaches, and Chincoteague ponies. This requires constant, open communication and coordination with local residents and officials. Chincoteague NWR is also

a laboratory for coastal scientists who provide solid science that will guide future land-use decisions.

Communication and coordination with coastal scientists are big parts of my job as is the translation of the coastal science they generate into a form easily understandable to the general public.

All in all, I'm honored to be managing one of the most popular wildlife refuges in the country.

Refuge Updates

Maritime Forest

Management. Southern pine beetle (SPB) infestations on Chincoteague NWR have dramatically increased, thus initiating methods to

suppress beetle populations. SPB activity is currently present at high levels and has impacted roughly 218 acres of loblolly pine forest.

Beginning this fall, contractors will be working in the following areas to remove live infested trees impacted by the SPB: White Hills, Research Natural Area, and Bivalve Trail. These measures will reduce the spread of SPB within our maritime forests.

Southern pine beetle is a native insect and its presence has challenged refuge management for decades. The current southern pine beetle infestations impact the management objectives of Chincoteague NWR,

About the Refuge

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge includes more than 14,000 acres of beach, dunes, marsh, and maritime forest. Established in 1943 to provide habitat for migratory birds (with an emphasis on conserving greater snow geese), the refuge today provides habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, and song birds as well as other species of wildlife and plants. The refuge also provides wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities such as fishing, hunting, wildlife photography and observation, interpretation, and environmental education.

including Delmarva fox squirrel habitat and recreation.

Tree mortality associated with the current southern pine beetle activity is increasing public safety risks with the presence of standing snags and increasing potential for wildfire. Despite this, actions have already been taken to remove hazard trees and reduce public safety risk.

Please be alert if you are near any of these sites.

For more information: www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth



Species Spotlight: Monarch Butterfly



The majestic monarch butterfly migrates approximately 3,000 miles from Mexico to Canada. They can typically be spotted here on the refuge stopping for fuel in the upcoming months of September and October.

Studies show that the monarch population has

fallen by 90% in the past 25 years due to habitat loss and pesticide use. In accordance with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife initiative to save the monarch, butterfly projects are in full swing here at CNWR.

Devoted volunteers, including Lue Landsberger and Martha Hill, manage the refuge pollinator garden beside the visitor center by planting milkweed, seaside goldenrod, and a variety of flowers. This provides food to fuel the

migrating monarchs and a habitat to lay their eggs and shelter caterpillars.

In September, butterfly tagging begins, which involves our volunteers placing a very small *Monarch Watch* tag on the monarch's wing. This allows researchers to track monarch migration.

Additional plans to increase pollinator habitat on refuge trails are also being developed!

For more information:
www.fws.gov/savethemonarch

Upcoming Events

- **September 24**
National Public Lands Day. Free entrance to refuge
- **October 1**
Fall hours begin. Refuge will operate 6:00am-8:00pm
- **October 9-15**
National Wildlife Refuge Week. Free entrance to refuge on October 9, along with activities and events for all ages



Recreational Beach Re-Location

Preliminary planning has begun to provide a sustainable recreational beach for current and future generations of refuge visitors.

A three-day workshop was held at the refuge in August to begin exploring design concepts for the new recreational beach, parking lots, and facilities to be located in the vicinity of C- and D-dikes, 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 throughout this process.

Planning for the new beach is a collaborative effort. Partners include: NPS, FHA, the Town of Chincoteague, Accomack County, NASA, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Important design elements discussed at the workshop include:

Visitor experience: A

great visitor experience at the new beach for the same number of visitors who use the current beach.

Walking distance: Placement of parking lots and facilities far enough away from ocean to account for storms and westward migration, while also taking visitor walking distance into consideration.

Resiliency: Incorporating a dune accommodation zone that preserves existing dunes and associated vegetative cover that will provide protection.

Environmental compatibility: Design and placement of roads, parking lots, and facilities to blend into natural surroundings.

Stay tuned for more info!



For more information:
<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/chincoteague>

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