## **News of Note**





## Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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## Farewell to the Shack on Sedge Island

A building which had been out on the marsh on the John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge had to be removed due to its imminent collapse. The building had been on Sedge Island for a long period of time, but unfortunately had reached the end of its life.

The building was a remnant of a once larger building which had partially collapsed, had been vacant for decades, and was in poor condition. When the Service purchased Sedge Island in 2004, a determination was made that the building was not reasonably repairable. The sill plates had rotted, the concrete pilings were failing, the roof no longer functioned, portions of the floor were missing, and some walls were leaning.



The Building on Sedge Island, circa 2006, John H. Chafe National Wildlife Refuge

Because the Service recognized the value of the building to some in the community, rather than removing the structure we attempted to keep the building enclosed, covered the roof holes with patches, and removed materials outside of the building which had fallen off. The hope was to delay at least, further degradation of the building.

When the front half of the building collapsed in or around 2008, the Service removed the failed portion of the building, but decided to retain that part of the building which was salvageable. The decision to retain a portion of the building rather than removing the entire structure was again because of the recognition by the Service of some public interest.

For that portion of the building remaining, we attempted to enclose the structure and repair the roof again to prevent more rapid deterioration, and to prevent entry into the building for purposes of public safety.

Over the years the remnant of the building has continued to deteriorate. We did attempt additional repairs to again enclose the building, however the fruits of these efforts were short lived.

Images the Service took of the shack's condition in 2016 are included here. It has become a significant safety issue, and the potential is high for a storm event to cause the building to collapse, with the building materials subsequently being washed into the Narrow River and potentially into Narragansett Bay.

Because, in our opinion, that the next sizable storm could cause the shack to fail, the building was beyond repair, and further that equipment would be available to take the materials safely off the island, we decided to remove the building remnant at this time. If it was to remain, we doubt it would have lasted one more year. We have no plans to replace the structure; the site will be restored to native vegetation.

Prior to removal of the structure, our Archaeologist visited and evaluated the site in order to determine, consistent with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, whether removal would adversely affect a significant cultural resource. Our archaeologist's finding was that the proposed removal would have no potential for effect on significant cultural resources. The Service did solicit public input via a news release posted on our web and Facebook internet sites. The comment period was open from September 16, 2016 through September 30 2016; no negative public comments were received.

In summary, the Service has over the years attempted to retain the building by completing limited repairs which were reasonable and prudent given the poor condition of the building. In 2016 it became clear that the shack was in imminent danger of collapse. Due to overriding concern for public safety, the potential for building materials to pollute the Narrow River and Narragansett Bay, and the opportunity to use equipment placed there for restoration, the remnants of the collapsing shack were removed.

It was simply a matter of time, likely less than a year, before the shack collapsed on its own.

## Photographs taken in 2016 showing the condition of the Shack on Sedge Island before removal







