

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Proposes Fee Changes in 2017

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are seeking public input on a potential increase in entrance fees in 2017 for the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR). In accordance with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004, the proposed fee schedule for the refuge will be open for public comment until April 25, 2017.

The current refuge fees have been in place since 2008. CNWR (VA) and Assateague Island National Seashore (ASIS) in Maryland share management responsibilities of recreational lands in Virginia. Therefore, CNWR and ASIS have a reciprocal agreement, which allows visitors to use passes issued by both agencies at either site. The Daily pass will be eliminated. The entrance fee will be waived for passengers of local courtesy shuttles but won't apply to commercially operated mass transportation.

The fee increases proposed here will provide consistency in fees charged by both agencies.

The proposed fees are as follows:

Weekly Pass		Annual Pass		Taxi	
current	proposed	cur-	proposed	current	proposed
\$15	\$20	\$30	\$40	\$0/person	\$5/person

Eighty percent of all money collected from the passes with the exception of the Federal Duck Stamp remains at the refuge to be used for visitor services and facility improvements. Entrance fees have supported a wide range of projects that improve refuge conditions and visitor experience including, repairs on the historic Assateague Lighthouse, annual maintenance of roads, trails, beach parking lots, visitor health and safety services, fee collection operations; and providing ranger programs and special events. Additional revenue raised by a fee increase would be used to provide enhanced visitor services including repair and maintenance of facilities, capital improvements, enhanced amenities, resource protection, and additional visitor programs and services.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is a strong economic engine for the surrounding area. The refuge receives 1.3 million visitors annually who contribute to the local economy. The refuge generates \$155 in local economic activity for every \$1 Congress appropriates to run it (Banking on Nature 2010 report).

Refuge Manager Kevin Sloan encourages everyone to provide feedback on the proposed fee changes in 2017 which will help the refuge gain a better prospective to make decisions on how to fine tune the proposed changes. Comments may be emailed to FW5RW_CNWR@fws.gov, or write to the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 62, Chincoteague, VA 23336.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife 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.