

# Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

## *Conservation Planning Update*

*August 2007*

### **Plan to be completed in 2008**

Thanks for being a part of the Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning process. We want to take this opportunity to share with you the latest progress on the plan, as well as other recent refuge news and happenings. In our last update to you in December 2006, we said we anticipated a summer 2007 release of the plan. Since that time, as most of you now know, Project Leader Jonathan Schafner left to accept the refuge manager position at Canaan Valley NWR in West Virginia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees the state's refuges, has already started the search to hire a new refuge manager for Prime Hook, but that manager will be under the umbrella of the Bombay Hook-Prime Hook refuge complex. In July, Terry Villanueva, refuge manager at Bombay Hook, became Project Leader over both Delaware refuges. We now anticipate that the plan will be completed in 2008.

### **Progress on the plan**

As before, we are still in the process of developing and evaluating alternatives. Alternatives are packages of complementary management objectives for achieving the missions of the Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Additionally, alternatives fulfill the vision and goals of the refuge while also responding to the issues and opportunities identified.

### **Visit our website**

Our website has links to information including refuge history, birding and hunting opportunities, current events, refuge activities, and more!

<http://primehook.fws.gov/>



*Standing: Governor Ruth Ann Minner; Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett; Terri and Richard Clifton; Regional Director Marvin Moriarty. Kneeling: U.S. Senator Thomas Carper; Ryan Clifton; John Tomke (President of Ducks Unlimited de Mexico).*

This year we have hosted a couple of technical workshops with diverse members of the natural resources community to discuss the importance of Prime Hook's habitat types and identifying the refuge's priority resources that merit conservation and management. One of the next steps in the planning process will be to discuss recreational objectives that will help us meet our public use goals and mandates.

### **Refuge event a success!**

On July 14, the refuge hosted the Richard Clifton Hometown Event, a celebration in honor of Richard Clifton winning the 2006 Federal Duck Stamp Competition with a pair of swimming ring-necked ducks. The event, attended by Governor Ruth Ann Minner, United States Senator Thomas Carper and Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn

Scarlett, featured duck and goose calling contests, live music, live wildlife presentations, conservation displays, and a sale of Federal duck stamps featuring Richard's artwork. A great time was had by all!

### **Upcoming photography contest**

The Friends of Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge are sponsoring the Fourth Annual Nature Photography Contest in the fall of 2007. Entries will be accepted in three categories: Delmarva Scenery (landscapes or seascapes), Native Wildlife (birds, animals, insects, amphibians, etc.), and Native Flowers and Plants. For a full account of what can or cannot be included in an entry and of what counts as "native" with respect to the flora and fauna photographed, please consult the Refuge website—<http://primehook.fws.gov>. All entries should be either



*Will Betts of Milton, Delaware, shown here, demonstrates his duck calling skills during a special duck and goose calling contest at the Richard Clifton Hometown Event at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge. Mr. Betts eventually won the duck calling portion of the contest.*

mailed to the refuge office between September 9th and October 6th, or hand-delivered between September 17th and September 28th. The judging and awarding of prizes will take place during a reception for the artists and the public on Sunday, October 14th.

### **Farming**

This year you may have noticed that the refuge appears a little different in areas that had been farmed in 2006, when approximately 600 acres were managed under two cooperative farming agreements resulting in the production of corn, soybeans, and cover crops. During the CCP process, which began in November 2005, and in response to a habitat management planning meeting held in July of 2005, we received considerable public comments regarding the cooperative farming program and cropland management. Recognizing the various viewpoints and the need for a thorough evaluation of our farming practices, we decided that pending the completion of the CCP, the refuge will not enter into annual farming cooperative agreements. As such, beginning in 2007, there has been no farming at the refuge, although

standing crops planted in 2006 to benefit wildlife were not harvested, as planned.

Through the CCP process, the refuge will thoroughly examine farming, among other things, in the context of the purposes for which the refuge was established, and habitat management. At the conclusion of that public process, with the completion of the CCP, the refuge will determine the degree to which, if any, farming will constitute a long-term refuge management tool. During all stages of the CCP and National Environmental Policy Act processes, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will: Consider and comply with applicable laws, regulations and policies; and, ensure that required documentation, including where appropriate, compatibility determinations for particular uses, is complete.

We continue to encourage you to share your perspective on this and other issues for our consideration in the drafting and finalization of the Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge CCP.

*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.*

### **For more information, contact:**

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**Federal Relay Service for the deaf and hard-of-hearing: 1 800/877 8339**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>  
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*Black-necked stilt*

Bill Buchanan/USFWS