



COROLLA WILD HORSE FUND

INCORPORATED

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UPDATE ON GENETIC CRISIS

Meeting Held: On October 16th, US Congressman Walter Jones called a landmark meeting to address the Corolla Wild Horse Fund's request to increase the wild herd size to a genetically healthy range of 120 – 130. This is the number recommended by Dr. E. Gus Cothran, Texas A & M, the nationally known equine geneticist who conducted a recent baseline study on the current genetic health of the herd. The Fund's request was denied by United States Fish & Wildlife Service and the NC Estuarine Research Reserve on April 16th, 2008.

CWHF contacted its state and federal legislators for assistance. Congressman Jones, who sponsored federal legislation to protect the wild horses on Shackleford Bank, Cape Lookout National Seashore in 1997, came to the aid of the horses.

Present at the October Meeting: For USFWS: Mike Hoff (Currituck National Wildlife Refuge Manager); Mike Bryant (Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Manager); Dennis Stewart (USFWS Wildlife Biologist); and Scott Linear (Alligator River Assistant Refuge Manager). Congressman Jones; Millie Lilley (District 3 Director for Jones); Josh Bowlen (Legislative Director for Jones); Dan Scanlon (County Manager); Rebecca Ellin (NC Estuarine Research Reserve); Jerry Wright (former County Commissioner who was a part of the creation of the original management plan); Betty Lane and Connie Johnson (citizen representatives from the Currituck Outer Banks Wild Horse Advisory Board); Steve Rogers (CWHF Herd Manager) and Karen McCalpin (CWHF Executive Director). Absent: NC Senator Marc Basnight; Jim Gregson, Director, Division of Coastal Management; and representatives from the Nature Conservancy.

Congressman Jones expressed his strong support for the presence of the horses.

Jerry Wright recounted that the number 60 for a herd size was “pulled out of thin air” in 1997 and spoke from his heart about the importance of the horses. He also said “They are USFWS’ greatest ally. Without them, that area would have been developed long ago.”

Outcome: A conference call between Dr. Cothran and Congressman Jones. Dr. Cothran reinforced his statement that 60 is not a genetically viable number; a conference call between Congressman Jones, Dr. Cothran, and Dennis Stewart; agreement to allow the CWHF to draft language that will allow the introduction of mares from Shackleford; and possible funding for an impact study from USGS (research arm of USFWS) that would include additional genetic study. CWHF Director, Karen McCalpin asked for the continued involvement of North Carolina State University as part of the impact study.