



Kansas Wetlands Education Center Dedication Set for October 27th

It was a good omen. Rain in August filled Cheyenne Bottoms, an internationally recognized wetland. The water-rich wetland will serve as a backdrop for the groundbreaking for the Kansas Wetlands Education Center to be built on the east side of Highway 156, northeast of Great Bend.

The groundbreaking and dedication of the Wetlands & Wildlife Scenic Byway, one of the first in the nation, will take place at 10:30 a.m. Friday, Oct. 27 at the building site. The future location of the center is across from the Kansas Department of Transportation rest area. The Kansas Department of Transportation will unveil the signage for the national wetlands and wildlife byway.

“The project has been worked on since the late 1980s,” says Karl Grover, Field Supervisor of the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. “We now have sufficient funding for construction.”

Building construction may be complete in 2007, but it’s not expected to be open for public use until the fall of 2008.



The Center is intended to be the first stop for Cheyenne Bottoms’ visitors. They’ll learn about its history, its wildlife and its contribution to the quality of life. Interpretive displays will inform visitors about the critical value of the wetland to migratory birds, the history of market and recreational hunting and Cheyenne Bottom’s recognition as a wetland of international importance. There will be an environmental classroom and a field lab for Ft. Hays State University students. Ft. Hays faculty will help staff the facility.



“Visitor numbers varies significantly from year-to-year depending upon habitat conditions,” Grover says. In the past 10 years, it has ranged from 25,000 to 80,000, based on traffic counters placed at the four primary entrances to the Wildlife Area.

The Kansas Wetlands Education Center will be located on the mitigation marsh. Water for it will be delivered to the Cheyenne Bottoms outlet canal north of the highway. As with the Bottoms, whether it’s wet or dry will depend on the weather. “That’s a marsh,” says Grover.