

## Highlights of the Coastal Zone Bus Tour in New Castle County,

The very informative tour of the New Castle County portion of Delaware's Coastal Zone (Sept 13) was a rare opportunity to experience the rewards of the Coastal Zone Act of 1971. Twenty six participants heard from Phil Cherry, DNREC Administrator, who was present in the writing of the Act's regulations in 1996, and from Lorraine Fleming, who was on the Advisory Committee helping generate the implementing regulations.



In Mr. Cherry's opinion the CZA has been very successful in protecting the Zone from a build-up of heavy industry. The CZA does not, however, prohibit residential development with its significant infrastructure and space demands. Local land use plans and policies could direct new housing development away from the Coastal Zone but would need unusually strong public support for doing so.



Seeing "grandfathered" examples of refining and heavy industry operations up close was eye opening as to how the Zone could look had it not been for the CZA. At the time there was enormous pressure (even from the

Federal Government) to make this convenient and accessible coastline home to energy operations and other important industries to serve the needs of the nation. We viewed the site of Metachem, now abandoned, and learned about the remediation process keeping the leftover contaminants contained.



Lorraine Fleming, with her extensive experience in environmental issues, pointed out examples of preserved valuable wetlands and unspoiled natural habitats. Wetlands along the coast have high value as nurseries to sea life. With sea level rise encroachment, existing wetlands now have room to begin to move inland. Unchecked industrial development, had it not been stopped by the CZA, would have already destroyed these important habitats.



Participants had an opportunity to enjoy another benefit: access to the Bay (a long walk) through the Blackbird Creek Preserve with access to a tidal marsh delta formed by the Appoquinnimink River and Blackbird Creek. While consuming Panera's box lunches on the bus as we moved from south to north we watched the video on the development and

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eventual passage of the Coastal Zone Act, a special piece of Delaware's history and legacy, thanks to then Governor Russell Peterson and the supporters of this vision for Delaware's coast. We hope to be able to complete the view of the Coastal Zone with a similar tour of Kent and Sussex coasts.



An old government Light House that used to direct ships along the Delaware River. Tour guide Phil Cherry talking to some of the tour members.



Ms. Lenni Markell enjoys a quiet moment in a freshly mowed field in front of the abandoned Light house.

