

# Assateague Island National Seashore General Management Plan

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



	Alternative 1 Continuation of Current Management	Alternative 2 Traditional Beach Recreation	Alternative 3 Sustainable Recreation and Climate Change Adaptation	Alternative 4 Natural Island Evolution and a Primitive Island Experience
<b>Response to Natural Coastal Processes and Effects of Climate Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• repair/replacement of facilities damaged by storms at or near their current location, if funding is available</li><li>• response to breaches and/or new inlet formation uncertain</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• developed area fortification to protect it from threats, as long as suitable land base exists and funding is available</li><li>• breaches and/or new inlets in the Maryland developed visitor use area are closed and/or mitigated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• climate change adaptation, letting the island evolve naturally and relocating/ designing new facilities to be more sustainable</li><li>• breaches and/or new inlets are allowed to evolve naturally</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• natural island evolution without interference, maintaining facilities only until they are lost, severely damaged, or become obsolete</li><li>• breaches and/or new inlets are allowed to evolve naturally</li></ul>
<b>Visitor Use and Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on traditional beach recreation as long as access is maintained and facilities are sustained given available funds</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on traditional beach recreation within a high density visitor use area; recreational use would become concentrated within a smaller space, increasing crowding and potentially leading to visitor use limits and increased fees</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on maintaining most recreational uses and activities; over time facilities supporting uses would likely move to new, more sustainable locations on the island; some recreational activities relocated to the mainland</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on traditional beach recreation with a shift over time to increasingly primitive day-use only experiences; some recreational activities eliminated</li></ul>
<b>OSV Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no change to OSV zone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• smaller OSV zone (KM 16 to KM 23); if access lost, no action would be taken, resulting in further reduction of OSV zone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no change to OSV zone (KM 16 to KM 35); if access lost, the OSV zone might be modified or relocated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no change to OSV zone (KM 16 to KM 35); if access lost, no action would be taken, resulting in further reduction of OSV zone</li></ul>
<b>Hunting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hunting continues subject to existing hunting program; access may become more difficult</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hunting continues subject to existing hunting program; access may become more difficult</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hunting continues subject to existing hunting program; access may become more difficult</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hunting continues subject to existing hunting program; access may become more difficult</li></ul>
<b>Park Access Short-Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• private vehicle; peak-day demand for parking exceeds capacity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• private vehicle; shuttle access once parking capacity is reached</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• private vehicle; shuttle access once parking capacity is reached</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• private vehicle; shuttle access once parking capacity is reached</li></ul>
<b>Park Access Long-Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no planning for if and when bridge access is lost; seashore could become inaccessible for months to years following major storm events</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no planning for if and when bridge access is lost; seashore could become inaccessible for months to years following major storm events</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• if and when bridge access is lost, access would transition to all water access via new passenger ferry service and a new network of public access sites</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• if and when bridge access is lost, access would transition to all water access via new passenger ferry service and by commercial service providers operating from existing mainland access sites</li></ul>
<b>Park Facilities and Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• rehabilitated administrative and maintenance facilities on the mainland</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• new administrative and maintenance facilities at a new mainland site</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• new administrative and maintenance facilities at a new mainland site</li></ul>



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Natural Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>management continues to focus on:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>protecting sensitive species</li><li>monitoring resource conditions</li><li>mitigating external threats</li><li>controlling non-native species</li><li>restoring habitats impacted by man</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>some management programs diminish as resources are re-directed to protection of recreation opportunities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>programs expand and the scope of some programs change to address issues created by global climate change</li><li>new marine research reserve stimulates cooperative research</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>programs expand and the scope of some programs change to address mitigation of human impacts and climate change adaptation</li><li>expanded cooperative research including more basic science and barrier island ecology research</li></ul>
Wilderness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>no change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>no change</li><li>OSV use eliminated from adjacent beaches</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>expanded to include most of the island south of KM 21.5 to state line (OSV use allowed on beach below winter storm berm and two cross-island sand roads)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>expanded to include the area south of developed area to state line (OSV use allowed on beach below winter storm berm and two cross-island sand roads)</li></ul>
Cultural Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coast Guard Station maintained, if funding available</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coast Guard Station protected by artificial dune fortification and habitat manipulation</li><li>hunting camps and former residences removed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coast Guard Station protected as long as possible using sustainable practices</li><li>most hunting camps and former residences removed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coast Guard Station maintained until lost due to coastal processes (no action to protect or restore)</li><li>hunting camps and former residences removed</li></ul>
Expanded/New Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>none</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</li><li>additional commercial service providers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assateague State Park</li><li>Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge</li><li>scientific and educational communities</li><li>additional commercial service providers</li><li>Worcester County and adjacent landowners on the mainland</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>scientific and educational communities</li><li>additional commercial service providers</li></ul>
Land Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>none</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>for new commercial shuttle operations base</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>for relocated Maryland headquarters complex, some relocated island facilities and infrastructure, and new public access sites for island transportation</li><li>land acquisition and conservation easements within Chincoteague Bay watershed protect natural resources important to the seashore</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>for relocated Maryland headquarters complex</li></ul>



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## Virginia District

	Alternative 1 Continuation of Current Management	Alternative 2 Traditional Beach Recreation	Alternative 3 Sustainable Recreation and Climate Change Adaptation	Alternative 4 Natural Island Evolution and a Primitive Island Experience
<b>NPS Management Authorities in Virginia and Relationship with USFWS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The authorized boundary of Assateague Island National Seashore extends out to one-half mile offshore. The NPS has authority to enforce 36 CFR parts 1-7 on the waters within the boundary. The commonwealth of Virginia owns the submerged lands within the seashore boundary.</li><li>The US FWS has primary management authority throughout Chincoteague NWR, including the size and location of the recreational beach and over-sand vehicle route.</li><li>The NPS manages recreation for the US FWS at the Toms Cove Recreational Beach under an interagency agreement. The NPS maintains the associated beach facilities and infrastructure, and the Toms Cove Visitor Center.</li></ul>			
<b>Commercial Fishing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Commercial fishing is prohibited in all units of the National Park System unless explicitly authorized.</li><li>Assateague’s enabling legislation authorizes commercial shellfishing, but is silent on other types of commercial fishing activity.</li><li>Despite the lack of authorization, the previous GMP failed to address enforcement of the commercial fishing prohibition.</li><li>Blue crabs, fin fish, and horseshoe crabs are the most common commercially harvested species.</li></ul>			
Fin Fish and Blue Crabs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>no change in management</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>seek legislative authorization for commercial harvest of fin fish and blue crabs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>collaborate with VMRC to develop regulations for commercial fishing within Assateague Island National Seashore that protect park resources and values</li><li>require commercial use authorization</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>enforce prohibition on commercial harvest of fin fish and blue crabs</li></ul>
Horseshoe Crabs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>prohibit horseshoe crab harvest within authorized boundary</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>prohibit horseshoe crab harvest within authorized boundary</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>prohibit horseshoe crab harvest within authorized boundary</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>prohibit horseshoe crab harvest within authorized boundary</li></ul>
Shellfish Aquaculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>no change in management</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>no change in management</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>collaborate with VMRC to identify sensitive resources and key visitor use areas, and designate as public oyster grounds</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>seek to have all currently un-leased submerged lands designated as public oyster grounds</li></ul>
<b>OSV Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>no change to OSV zone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>as determined by the US FWS</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>as determined by the US FWS</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>as determined by the US FWS</li></ul>
<b>Private Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ten privately owned structures are located within the seashore boundary in Virginia. Several may be associated with active oyster leases and have been referred to as ‘watch houses’.</li><li>The legal authority for these structures is not clear as none appear to be associated with privately titled lands.</li></ul>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>no change in management</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>regulate waste disposal at structures to protect resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>regulate waste disposal at authorized structures to protect resources</li><li>remove unauthorized structures</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>regulate waste disposal at authorized structures to protect resources</li><li>remove unauthorized structures</li></ul>