

Assateague Island National Seashore General Management Plan

National Park Service
US Department of the Interior



Dear Friends,

Assateague Island National Seashore is beginning work on a new General Management Plan (GMP). This plan will guide our management of the Seashore for the next twenty years. We encourage you to take time from your busy schedule to participate in our open house workshops and share with us your vision for the park's future.

Congress established Assateague Island National Seashore in 1965 and further defined our role in 1976 "to preserve the outstanding Mid-Atlantic coastal resources of Assateague Island and its adjacent waters and the natural processes upon which they depend and to provide high quality resource-compatible recreational opportunities." These words still ring true. Assateague is a superb resource that is one of the largest and last surviving Mid-Atlantic barrier islands and at the same time provides an array of recreational experiences and opportunities. A visitor can take a tranquil walk beside the surf, enjoy the sun's rays while on the beach, swim in cool ocean waters, drive in the Over Sand Vehicle Zone to a favorite fishing area, enjoy solitude in the park's backcountry, paddle miles of coastal bays, count the infinite stars in the night sky, or photograph wild horses.

How can we best protect the Seashore's resources while continuing to provide high quality, nature-based recreational opportunities? This is where you come in. Share your thoughts. This is your Seashore. This is your opportunity to help create the vision for what the Seashore will be like twenty years from now.

This September we will hold three drop-in style open house workshops in the seashore's nearby communities. Please join us to learn more about the GMP process; to meet the planning team; and to share your ideas, concerns, and thoughts about the Seashore. We also ask that you read this newsletter to learn more about the GMP and how you can be added to our GMP mailing list, contact us, and submit your comments.

As the new Superintendent of Assateague, I look forward to hearing your thoughts and working together to create a vision and path for the next twenty years.

Sincerely,

Trish Kicklighter
Superintendent
Assateague Island National Seashore



Newsletter 1, Summer 2009

Please Join Us for an Open House Workshop for the Assateague Island National Seashore GMP

Three drop-in style open house workshops are being held to introduce the GMP project and to ask for comments from you. There will be a greeting from the Superintendent at 6:45pm during each open house.

**September 21, 2009
4 to 7pm**

Wor-Wic Community College
3200 Campus Drive
Salisbury, Maryland

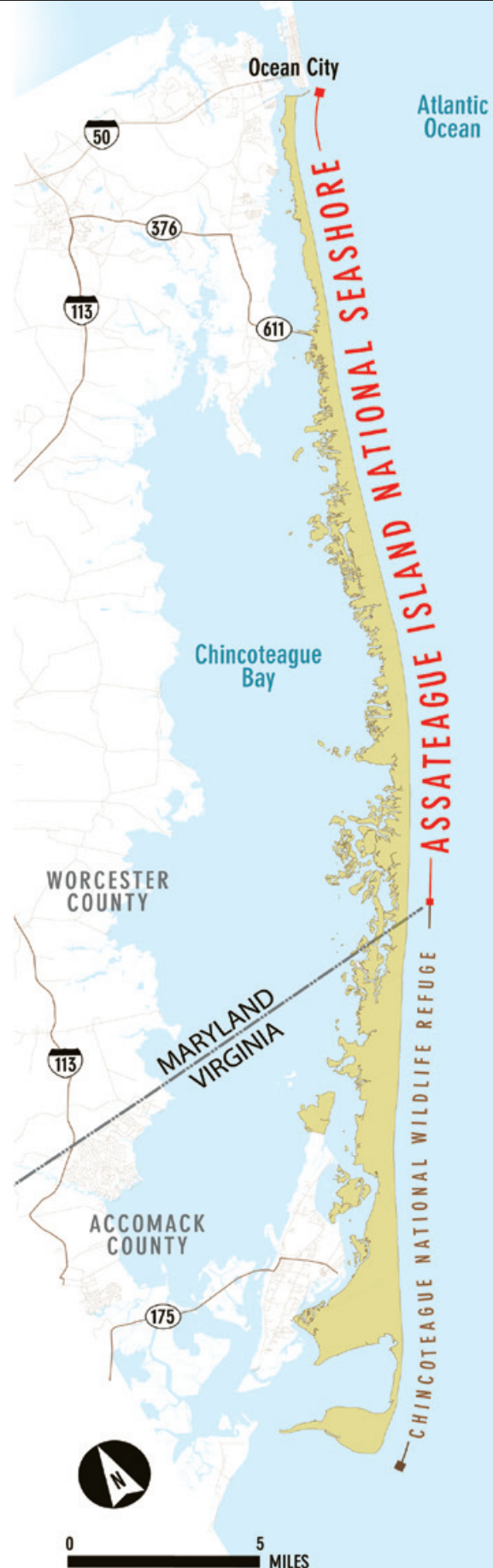
**September 22, 2009
4 to 7pm**

Paul Sarbanes
Coastal Ecology Center
11802 Marsh View Lane
Berlin, Maryland

**September 23, 2009
4 to 7pm**

Chincoteague
Community Center
6155 Community Drive
Chincoteague, Virginia

Assateague Island National Seashore encompasses a 37-mile long barrier island, adjacent marsh islands and waters in Maryland and Virginia, and the Barrier Island Visitor Center on the Maryland mainland. Approximately 50,000 acres of land and water are within the seashore's boundaries. The island consists of three public areas; Assateague Island National Seashore (managed by the National Park Service), Assateague State Park (managed by Maryland's Department of Natural Resources) and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). The Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is currently undertaking a similar long-range planning effort, called a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).



General Management Planning at Assateague Island National Seashore



A GMP identifies the overall direction for the future management of units of the National Park System. GMPs take a long-range, broad, conceptual view, answering the question, “What kind of place do we want this park to be?” They provide a framework for managers to use in making decisions about how best to protect park natural and cultural resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed, and how people should access the park. All concepts, strategies, and actions in a GMP must be consistent with the reasons for the park’s establishment—its purpose and significance.

The Assateague Island National Seashore GMP will describe the general path that the National Park Service (NPS) intends to follow in managing the park over the next 20 years. The plan will identify desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that would be appropriate for each part of the park and the broad strategies for achieving those conditions. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and NPS policy, the environmental consequences of the plan will be analyzed. The plan will present a reasonable range of alternatives, consider the environmental consequences of each of the alternatives, and select the preferred alternative from among those considered.

Assateague Island National Seashore Park Purpose and Significance



Park Purpose

Park purpose is a statement that explains why a park was established by Congress and/or the president. The purpose statement provides the most fundamental criteria against which the appropriateness of all planning recommendations, operational decisions, and actions are tested. The purpose of each park is based in the enabling legislation and legislative history.

Park Significance

Park significance statements explain why the park's resources and features are important enough to merit national park designation. Guided by legislation and the knowledge acquired through management, research, and civic engagement, statements of significance define what is most important about the park's resources and values. Each area of the park contains many significant resources, but not all these resources contribute to why the park was designated.

Assateague Island National Seashore Purpose

The purposes of Assateague Island National Seashore are:

- to preserve the outstanding Mid-Atlantic coastal resources of Assateague Island and its adjacent waters and the natural processes upon which they depend
- to provide high quality resource-compatible recreational opportunities



Assateague Island National Seashore Significance Statements

The National Seashore is one of the largest and last surviving Mid-Atlantic barrier islands possessing a continuum of intact coastal habitats where the full range of natural processes occur with little or no human interference.

The 31,000 acres of marine and estuarine waters within the National Seashore are a protected vestige of the high quality aquatic ecosystems that once occurred throughout the Mid-Atlantic coastal region of the United States.

The National Seashore's habitats support a broad array of aquatic and terrestrial species, many of which are rare, uniquely adapted to life at the edge of the sea, and dependent upon natural ecosystem processes undisturbed by humans.

Amidst the highly developed Mid-Atlantic region, the National Seashore's coastal resources provide unique opportunities for nature-based recreation, education, solitude, and inspiration.

Planning Considerations

In the early stages of a GMP, NPS staff discuss the topics they feel the plan should address, as well as ideas for making the park a better place. Sharing these preliminary ideas is a first step in ensuring that we are on the right track.

Protection of Park Resources:

Assateague Island has many spectacular natural resources including beaches, marshes, ocean and bay waters, plants, wildlife, and scenic landscapes that provide visitors with exceptional and varied recreational and educational experiences. In order to ensure that resources are preserved for future generations to learn from and enjoy, park staff work every day to ensure their protection.

- The activities of people and commerce, off the island and in its surrounding waters, can impact park resources and can threaten the health of the natural coastal ecosystems.
- Some of the park's plant and animal species that are not native to the island, such as Sika deer and the non-native common reed, *Phragmites australis*, can damage the island's natural ecosystem.
- The Park provides important habitat for a number of rare plants and animals, some of which occur in areas prized for beach recreation.

Barrier Island Dynamics:

As a barrier island, the natural processes of wind, waves, storms, and sea level rise influence and shape the park landscape. Some of the park's visitor use infrastructure such as roads, parking lots, and buildings may be at risk due to the highly dynamic nature of the island. This issue may increase as global climate change accelerates the rate of sea level rise and the intensity of coastal storms.

Visitor Experiences:

Assateague is one of the few publicly accessible coastal environments in the densely populated northeastern United States where visitors can experience unspoiled beaches, tranquil bays and marshlands, natural sounds, quiet, night skies and solitude. During the busy summer season, visitors who arrive by automobile sometimes experience delays entering the park and reaching their desired destination, or discover parking limitations.



We're Interested in Hearing from You

- What are your ideas for how NPS can better protect the natural environment and ecological values of the Seashore?
- What recreational and education opportunities do you think should be available to visitors at the Seashore?
- What are your concerns for the Seashore's future?
- What is most special to you about the Seashore?
- How can we provide better access onto and within the Seashore?

Assateague Island National Seashore GMP Schedule		
General Time Frame	Planning Phase	Ways to Be Involved
Summer 2009	Begin the GMP —We will identify ideas and opportunities related to the park in cooperation with the public, government agencies, and stakeholders	Review Newsletter 1 Participate in public open houses Send us your ideas and comments
Fall 2010	Develop and Present Preliminary Alternatives —We will outline different possible futures for the park and provide opportunities for review and comment by the public, government agencies, and stakeholders	Review Newsletters 2 and 3 Participate in public open houses Send us your ideas and comments
Summer 2011	Prepare and Distribute a Draft GMP —We will develop a draft plan and provide opportunities for review and comment by the public, partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders	Review Draft GMP Participate in public open houses Send us your ideas and comments
Winter 2012	Revise Draft Plan and Prepare a Final GMP —We will refine the draft plan based on comments received	Review Final GMP
Spring 2012	Implementation —We will begin to implement the approved plan as funding allows	Work with the Seashore to implement the GMP, as funding allows

Ways You can Help Us with the Plan:

There are many ways to be involved in the GMP process:

- Share your ideas, questions and comments by sending a letter to:
Assateague Island GMP Team
7206 National Seashore Lane
Berlin, MD 21811
or sending an email to
ASIS_GMP@nps.gov
- Follow the planning process by visiting the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/asis> or the planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/asis> for updates on the process, meeting announcements, copies of newsletters, planning documents, and to sign up for the park mailing list
- Attend an open house workshop





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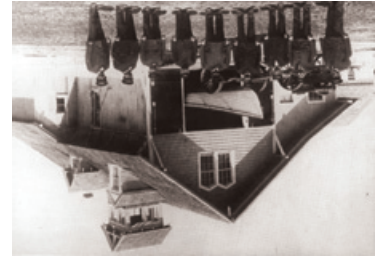
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This newsletter is a publication of the National Park Service, Assateague Island National Seashore. For additional information, please contact Superintendent, Assateague Island National Seashore, 7206 National Seashore Lane, Berlin, MD 21811 or call (410) 629-6061. Visit us on the web at www.nps.gov/asis