

Centennial Initiative News Release



Release date: Immediate

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Date: August 23, 2007

Centennial Proposals Eligible for Matching Funds

Berlin, Maryland – Superintendent Scott J. Bentley is pleased to announce that three projects focusing on Assateague Island National Seashore are among the 201 proposals National Park Service Director Mary Bomar and Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne presented at a press conference in Yosemite National Park today. As part of the National Park Centennial Initiative, the proposals have been certified eligible for federal matching funds in 2008.

The Centennial Initiative seeks to prepare parks for the next century by more fully engaging the American public in their management and care. This concept came together in *The Future of America's National Parks*, a report that Secretary Kempthorne transmitted to the president on May 31st. The vision and goals described in the report served as the stimulus for National Park Service leaders to imagine bold new ways to manage our nation's parks. As they consulted with employees, partners, friends groups, and citizens, natural links to the centennial goals of resource stewardship, environmental leadership, education, and professional excellence emerged.

In support of the Centennial Initiative, the President's fiscal year 2008 budget has called for an additional \$100 million a year for 10 years to be dedicated to bolstering basic park operations in preparation for the NPS centennial in 2016. Congress has included the first \$100 million for park operations in the fiscal year 2008 budget awaiting final passage.

The second part of the initiative is the Centennial Challenge. Over the next ten years, this funding mechanism will match up to \$100 million a year of private donations with \$100 million a year of federal matching funds. Congress has yet to finish the legislation needed to create the public-private Centennial Challenge. However, the proposals announced today reflect a commitment of \$219 million in private donations by park visitors, friends groups and other partners.

After rigorous review, three Assateague Island National Seashore proposals were certified as eligible for Centennial Challenge matching funds. "We're extremely excited about the possibilities offered by the Challenge and hope that Congress moves quickly to make funding available," said Superintendent Bentley.

If selected for funding, the Assateague Island proposals would improve stewardship of the parks' marine resources, expand educational opportunities, and help develop sustainable recreational infrastructure. The three projects are:

- A Partnership for Marine Resource Environmental Education and Conservation. The project would create a permanent endowment and partnership between the National Park Service, Maryland Coastal Bays Program, Worcester County Board of Education, and the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore. Endowment funds would be used to support a long-term program of environmental education and conservation focusing on the marine resources of the Maryland Coastal Bays and Assateague Island National Seashore. The proposal also includes a pilot Community Youth Apprenticeship Program.
- New Educational Tools to Enhance Resource Understanding and Appreciation. With the financial support of the Assateague Mobile Sportfishermen's Association, Assateague Coastal Trust, and an anonymous donor (in memoriam), the project would redesign and rebuild Assateague's aquarium and marine life exhibits for the soon-to-be-constructed new visitor center, and complete post-production for a new film about the island's wild horses.
- Sustainable Alternatives for Wastewater Treatment on Assateague Island. Working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, this project would fund a study to identify and evaluate wastewater treatment options in both the National Seashore and Assateague State Park. The goal of the study is to find a feasible solution that reduces the quantity of nutrients and bacteria being discharged into the environment, and eliminates wastewater disposal on Assateague Island.

Together, Assateague's partners have committed \$645,000 to help ensure the future of the National Seashore. "I'm gratified by the generous response," said Bentley. "The bold efforts of our local partners demonstrate the very essence of America's passion for its National Parks, and the community's love of and commitment to Assateague."

To learn more about the National Park Centennial Initiative and to see the full list of Centennial Challenge-eligible projects, visit the National Park Service centennial web site www.nps.gov/2016

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Assateague Island National Seashore was authorized by act of Congress (Public Law 89-195) on September 21, 1965, to preserve and protect the unique Mid-Atlantic coastal resources and the natural ecosystem conditions and processes upon which they depend, while providing high quality resource-based recreational and educational opportunities. The authorized boundary includes approximately 48,700 acres of land and water in Maryland and Virginia. Located within an easy three hour drive of Washington D.C., Baltimore and Philadelphia metropolitan areas, Assateague Island offers visitors an unspoiled setting to experience the ambiance of a dynamic barrier island with its legendary wild horses and a multitude of exceptional recreational opportunities.

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