



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Assateague Island
National Seashore

7206 National Seashore
Lane
Berlin, MD 21811
410-641-1443 Phone
410-641-1099 Fax

Assateague Island National Seashore News Release

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Carl S. Zimmerman 410-629-6071

Wild Horse Killed during Deer Hunt at Assateague Island National Seashore

Berlin, Maryland – Superintendent Trish Kicklighter today announced that one of the wild horses inhabiting Assateague Island National Seashore was shot and killed last weekend during a two day deer hunt. The 28 year old horse was found dead by a hunter on Saturday, January 15th and reported to park rangers the following day. An investigation is underway.

“We are saddened by the incident,” said Superintendent Kicklighter, “and hope that the shooting was accidental. Most hunters take pride in their role as conservationists and, to the best of my knowledge, nothing like this has ever happened before in the many, many years that public hunting has taken place in the National Seashore.”

The horse that died was a 28 year old bay mare with the identification number N2BH. During her lifetime, N2BH foaled six times, and had eleven 2nd and 3rd generation offspring. In recent years, N2BH had been treated annually with contraceptives as part of a broader effort to maintain the size of the wild horse population at a sustainable level.

The two day January deer hunt was part of the National Seashore’s annual hunting program that includes several gun seasons during the fall and early winter. In addition to providing a unique and very popular recreational opportunity, the hunting program is used to manage resident deer populations. Two species of deer are found on Assateague; the native white-tailed deer and the non-native sika deer, introduced to the island during the 1920s. Without the control provided by hunting, the sika deer population would quickly grow and harm the island environment.

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Hunting was authorized by the Federal legislation that established the National Seashore in 1965.

From the nature of the wound, it appears that the horse died almost immediately from the gun shot. “In addition to physical evidence, we have several good leads that we’re actively pursuing,” said Chief Ranger Ted Morlock. “I’m confident we’ll find out who’s responsible for this unfortunate incident. Regardless of whether the shooting was accidental or not, the failure to report the incident violates National Park Service regulations and we intend to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law.”

The National Park Service is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the responsible individual(s). Persons with information about the incident should contact Chief Ranger Morlock at (410) 629-6055, or by email at ted_morlock@nps.gov. All information provided may remain confidential.

For more information on Assateague Island National Seashore, visit www.nps.gov/asis

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