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Photo attached. Caption provided, below.

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BERLIN, MD The Assateague Coastal Trust will pay tribute to the organization's Founders during the 32nd Annual Ilia Fehrer/Judy Johnson Memorial New Year's Day Beach Walk on Assateague Island.

Join ACT at Assateague State Park on January 1, at 1:00pm, for an entertaining guided tour of the barrier island led by Assateague Island National Seashore Ranger Christopher Seymour. The theme for the 2012 Beach Walk will be "An Island and Time of Change." Ranger Chris has been leading these beach walks for more than 20 years. This will be his last in a National Park Service uniform, as he will be retiring soon from the NPS.

In the late 1950's Assateague Island was slated for development as the resort "Ocean Beach, MD." Roads had been built and lots had been sold when a series of 1962 nor-easters interrupted construction. Prior to Assateague Island being designated a National Seashore in 1965, Judy Johnson and other citizens rallied against early plans for a park that included a 25-mile highway and a number of commercial enterprises. In the early 1970's, Judy Johnson formed the 'Committee to Preserve Assateague Island' to draw attention to Assateague's wild beauty and encourage protection of those resources.

After the national and state parks at Assateague were established in a manner compatible with sustaining wildlife and natural barrier island processes, Judy Johnson and the 'Committee To Preserve Assateague Island' focused their

attention on the land and water of Maryland's coastal bays. The Committee later joined forces with Ilia Fehrer and the Worcester Environmental Trust (WET) to oppose the proposed Harbor Town development near Chincoteague Bay. The first beach walk was organized by Ilia Fehrer, WET and the Committee to Preserve Assateague Island on January 1, 1980, when President Jimmy Carter declared it the "Year of the Coast".

The Committee later became the Assateague Coastal Trust, which is recognized today as the oldest environmental education and advocacy organization on the Delmarva Peninsula.

"We all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Ilia, Judy, and the Founders of the Committee to Preserve Assateague Island," said Assateague COASTKEEPER Kathy Phillips. "Without their vision and dedication, Assateague Island and the coastal bays we know and love today would be unrecognizable."

Join ACT and Ranger Chris Seymour for this New Year's Day tradition. Walkers will meet at the State Park concession stand at 1:00pm and will enjoy free hot chocolate and cookies after the hike, thanks to ACT volunteers.

For more information on how you can support the work of the Assateague Coastal Trust and continue the work of Ilia Fehrer and Judy Johnson, please visit www.actforbays.org.

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Photo caption: The 2010 Beach Walk starts off from the concession stand at Assateague State Park for a guided walk north up the beach on Assateague Island. (ACT photo files.)

Assateague Coastal Trust works to protect and enhance the natural resources of the Atlantic coastal bays watershed through advocacy, conservation, and education.

