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For immediate release

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Note: Interviews with the series producer and some individuals featured in season segments are available. In addition, production photos and graphics are available at this [LINK](#).

MPT's *Outdoors Maryland* highlights Assateague Island's history, wildlife, and landscape during December special

Special episode showcases the island's abrupt creation, rich natural life, and complicated relationship with change

OWINGS MILLS, MD – [Maryland Public Television's](#) (MPT) award-winning original series [Outdoors Maryland](#), now in its 35th anniversary season, will devote a special episode to the history, wildlife, and geology of **Assateague Island** on Tuesday, December 5. Produced in cooperation with the [Maryland Department of Natural Resources](#) (DNR), *Outdoors Maryland* continues to captivate viewers with memorable stories and dazzling videography.

Outdoors Maryland airs Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. on MPT-HD and online at mpt.org/livestream. Concurrent with their broadcast debut, episodes are also available to watch on demand using MPT's [online video player](#) and the [PBS Video App](#).



During the December 5 episode of *Outdoors Maryland*, viewers are transported to the beautifully unique and complex [Assateague Island](#). Originally connected to **Ocean City, Maryland**, the island was formed abruptly in 1933 when a major hurricane carved the Ocean City inlet, firmly establishing Assateague's reliance on change. In 1962, a powerful storm dashed plans of an oceanfront development, leading to a sale of the land to the federal government.

Even the earliest inhabitants of the island were transient, likely visiting only seasonally to hunt and fish. This episode shares with viewers the island's complicated, often contradictory relationship to change. Assateague Island's animals and plants rely on the slow transformations brought by the sea and storms, but its very existence is threatened by the acceleration of climate change.

A rare constant on the island is its rich and storied diversity of animals and plants. This special episode provides an introduction to the delightful piping plover, a small coastal bird whose federally threatened

status is held at bay by [National Park Service](#) staff on the island; the ribbed Atlantic mussels who make their home in Assateague's marshes and who serve as filters for surrounding bays; and a pair of Kemp's ridley sea turtles released into the island's waters by [The National Aquarium](#) in **Baltimore**.

Assateague Island's most famous residents, the wild ponies, have a starring role in this episode. Their history is murkier than the marsh water – their ancestors may have been moved from the mainland by farmers attempting to avoid taxes or dropped off by pirates passing through the area – but the feral horses' appeal is clear. More than three million visitors flock to the island annually, in large part for an up-close look at the horses' free roam through the [Assateague Island National Seashore](#) and [Assateague State Park](#).

The Assateague Island special highlights the work of the [United States Army Corps of Engineers](#), the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service to protect the island from the dangers of its natural fragility and the accelerated impact of climate change. There are regular efforts to replenish the island's unique sandy beaches, secure its shifting dunes, and stave off a fluctuating saltwater balance that threatens the bottom of a complex food chain. And yet, there is also an embrace of the storms that periodically bathe the sands in seawater and the winds that create small but regular shifts in the island's footprint. Viewers will come to understand that one mission of Assateague's protectors is to defend the natural forces of change and let the mercurial island do what it is destined to do.

Since debuting in 1988, MPT has produced more than 700 *Outdoors Maryland* stories on topics ranging from science-oriented environmental issues to segments about unusual people, animals, and places around the state. The series has earned more than 50 awards over nearly 35 years of production, including several Emmy® Awards from the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

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About Maryland Public Television

Maryland Public Television (MPT) is a statewide, public-supported TV network and Public Broadcasting Service member offering entertaining, educational, and inspiring content delivered by traditional broadcasting and streaming on TVs, computers, and mobile devices. A state agency, it operates under the auspices of the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission. MPT creates local, regional, and national content and is a frequent winner of regional Emmy® awards. MPT's commitment to educators, parents, caregivers, and learners of all ages is delivered through instructional events and [Thinkport.org](#). MPT's year-round community engagement activities connect viewers with resources on a wide range of topics. For more information visit [mpt.org](#).